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a *Grace Notes* course

## Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

**History 505**

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*Grace Notes*

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### Contents

II_10 Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai - The Preparations for the Covenant - The "Ten Words?" and their meaning. ....	3
<b>Exodus 19:1 to 20:17</b> .....	<b>3</b>
II_11 Civil and Social Ordinances of Israel as the People of God - Their Religious Ordinances in their National Aspect - The "Covenant made by Sacrifice" and the Sacrificial Meal of Acceptance. ....	7
<b>Exodus 20:18 to 24:12</b> .....	<b>7</b>
II_12 The Pattern seen on the Mountain - The Tabernacle, the Priesthood, and the Services in their Arrangement and Typical Meaning - The Sin of the Golden Calf - The Divine Judgment - The Plea of Moses - God's gracious Forgiveness - The Vision of the Glory of the Lord vouchsafed to Moses. ....	10
<b>Exodus 24:12; 25 to 33</b> .....	<b>10</b>
II_13 Moses a Second Time on the Mount - On his Return his Face shineth - The Rearing of the Tabernacle - Its Consecration by the seen Presence of Jehovah. ....	15
<b>Exodus 34 to 50</b> .....	<b>15</b>
II_14 Analysis of the Book of Leviticus - The Sin of Nadab and Abihu - Judgment upon the Blasphemer. ....	17
<b>Leviticus</b> .....	<b>17</b>
II_15 Analysis of the Book of Numbers - The Numbering of Israel - and that of the Levites - Arrangement of the Camp, and its Symbolical Import - The March. ....	20
<b>Numbers 1 to 4; 10:1-11</b> .....	<b>20</b>
II_16 The Offerings of the - Princes - The setting apart of the Levites - Second Observance of the Passover. ....	24
<b>Numbers 7 to 9</b> .....	<b>24</b>
II_17 Departure from Sinai - March into the Wilderness of Paran - At Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah. ....	26
<b>Number 10:29 to 11</b> .....	<b>26</b>
II_18 Murmuring of Miriam and Aaron - The Spies sent to Canaan - Their "Evil Report" - Rebellion of the People, and Judgment pronounced upon them - The defeat of Israel "unto Hormah". ....	29
<b>Numbers 12 to 14</b> .....	<b>29</b>

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## II\_10 Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai - The Preparations for the Covenant - The "Ten Words?" and their meaning.

### Exodus 19:1 to 20:17

It was the third month after leaving Egypt when the children of Israel reached that innermost mountain-group from which the Peninsula of Sinai derives its name. Roughly speaking, the whole district occupies about twice the area of Yorkshire.

<sup>1</sup>

Running through it, like roads, pass very many wadies, all seemingly leading up to the grand central sanctuary, where God was about to give His law to His people. This mountain district bears in Scripture two distinct names - Horeb and Sinai - the former applying probably to the whole group, the latter to one special mountain in it. The meaning of the name Horeb is probably "mountain of the dried-up ground," that of Sinai "mountain of the thorn." At present the whole Sinaitic group is known by the designation of Jebel Musa. It forms "a huge mountain-block, about two miles in length and one mile in breadth, with a narrow valley on either side,... and a spacious plain at the north-eastern end."

That plain, at present known as Er Rahah, is computed to be capable of accommodating a host of two millions. Right before it rises Jebel Musa, from which protrudes a lower bluff, visible from all parts of the plain. This is the modern Ras Sufsafeh (Willow-head), and was in all probability the Sinai upon which the Lord came down, and whence He spake the ten words." In that case the plain of Er Rahah must have been that on which Israel stood, and the mound in front, on the ascent to Ras Sufsafeh, the spot where Moses "separated from the elders who had accompanied him so far on his ascent."

On leaving Rephidim the main body of the Israelites would pass through what is known as Wady es Sheikh, a broad open valley, containing tamarisk trees, and "cut right through the granitic wall." As a turn in the road is reached, "the journey lies entirely through granite rocks, the

sharp, rugged outlines of which, as well as the increasing height and somber gray coloring of the mountains, impart much more solemn grandeur to the scenery." A late eloquent traveler thus describes the approach to Sinai: "At each successive advance these cliffs disengaged themselves from the intervening and surrounding hills, and at last they stood out - I should rather say, the columnar mass, which they form, stood out - alone against the sky.

On each side the infinite complications of twisted and jagged mountains fell away from it. On each side the sky compassed it round, as though it were alone in the wilderness. And to this great mass we approached through a wide valley, a long-continued plain, which, enclosed as it was between two precipitous mountain ranges of black and yellow granite, and having always at its end this prodigious mountain-block, I could compare to nothing else than the immense avenue through which the approach was made to the great Egyptian temples."

As we try to realize the scene presented at the giving of the Law, we can well understand how "all the people that was in the camp trembled." (Exodus 19:16) The vast plain of Er Rahah, and all the neighboring valleys and glens, were dotted with the tents of Israel. No more suitable camping-ground could have been found than this, the best-watered neighborhood in the whole peninsula, where "running streams are found in no less than four of the adjacent valleys." The plain itself is nearly 5,000 feet above the level of the sea. Right in front, cut off by intervening valleys from all around, rises the Horeb group (its highest point 7,363 feet), and from it projects into the valley, like some gigantic altar or pulpit, the lower bluff of Ras Sufsafeh (6,830 feet) - "the nether part of the mount" - that Sinai from which the voice of the living God was heard. In front is the mound on which Moses parted from the elders. So abruptly does Sufsafeh rise, "that you may literally stand under it and touch its base," and so thoroughly is the mountain range separated from all around, that there could be no difficulty whatever in "setting bounds unto the people round about," to prevent their going up into the mount, or even touching the border of it. (Exodus 19:12) Behind Sufsafeh, on

<sup>1</sup> According to the Ordnance Survey the triangle of the Sinaitic Peninsula covers an area of 11,600 square miles.

some peak or cleft, Moses was forty days with the Lord, and descending into the adjacent valley, he would - as the members of the Ordnance Survey record they had frequently experienced - hear the sound from the camp without being able to see what passed in it.

But now as the people gazed on it, "Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke." (Exodus 19:18) That vast isolated mountain-block - two miles in length and one in breadth - seemed all on fire! As "the smoke of a furnace" it rose to heaven, "and the whole mount quaked greatly," and "there were thunders and lightnings" and "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." But, more awful than any physical signs, "Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai," "and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount," and God Himself "spake all these words" of the commandments. For three days had the people been preparing by continued sanctification, and now they stood in readiness at the foot of, although shut off from, the mountain. But even so, "when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:18, 19) This outward sanctification of Israel had been preceded by inward and spiritual preparation. As always, the demand and the command of God had been preceded by His promise. For He ever gives what He asks. It is, as St. Augustine beautifully expresses it, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt." Arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses had gone up to a lower peak, as if to ask the commands of his Lord, and Jehovah had spoken to him from the top of the mountain. He was directed, before the people prepared to receive the Law, to remind them of their gracious deliverance from Egypt, of the judgments of God's hand, and of the mercy and kindness which they had received. For as "on eagle wings had Jehovah borne them, God's dealings being compared to the eagle, who spreads his strong pinions under the young birds when they take their first flight, lest, weary or faint, they be dashed on the rocks (comp. Deuteronomy 32:11). Yet all this mercy - Moses was to tell Israel - was but the pledge of far richer grace. For now would the Lord enter into covenant with them. And if Israel obeyed His voice, and

kept the covenant, then, in His own words, "Ye shall be to Me a precious possession <sup>2</sup> from among all nations for Mine is all the earth. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6)

The promise thus conveyed was both special and universal; and it described alike the character of God's people and their destination. All the earth was God's, not only by right of creation and possession, but as destined yet to own Him its Lord. Herein lay a promise of universal blessing to all mankind, and with this the mission of Israel was closely bound up. But while all the earth was the Lord's, Israel was to be His "precious possession from among all nations," His choice treasure - for this the Hebrew expression implies - or, as St. Paul (Titus 2:14) and St. Peter (1 Peter 2:9) explain it, "a peculiar people." The manner in which this dignity would appear, is explained by the terms in which Israel is described as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The expression "kingdom of priests" means a kingdom whose citizens are priests, and as such possess royal dignity and power, or, in the language of St. Peter, "a royal priesthood." So far as Israel was concerned, the outward and visible theocracy, which God established among them, was only the means by which this end was to be obtained, just as their observing the covenant was the condition of it. But the promise itself reached far beyond the Old Covenant, and will only be fulfilled in its completeness when "the Israel of God" - whom already the Lord Jesus, "the First-begotten of the dead and the Prince of the kings of the earth," "hath made kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Revelation 1:5, 6; 5:10) - shall share with Him His glory and sit with Him on His throne. Thus the final object of the royal priesthood of Israel were those nations, from among whom God had chosen His people for a precious possession. Towards them Israel was to act as priests. For, just as the priest is the intermediary between God and man, so Israel was to be the intermediary of the knowledge and salvation of God to all nations. And this their priesthood was to be the foundation

<sup>2</sup> The word is the same as for "choice treasure" (1 Chronicles 29:3; Ecclesiastes 2:8). We have translated the whole verse literally.

of their royalty, A still more solemn description of Israel, and of us who are called "the Israel of God," is that of "holy nation." As Calvin rightly observes, "This designation was not due to the piety or holiness of the people, but because God distinguished them by peculiar privileges from all others. But this sanctification implies another, viz., that they who are so distinguished by God's grace should cultivate holiness, so that in turn they sanctify God."

The Hebrew term for "holy" is generally supposed to mean "separated, set apart." But this is only its secondary signification, derived from the purpose of that which is holy. Its primary meaning is to be splendid, beautiful, pure, and uncontaminated. God is holy - as the Absolutely Pure, Resplendent, and Glorious One. Hence this is symbolized by the light. God dwelleth in light that is unapproachable; (1 Timothy 6:16) He is "the Father of light, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" - light which never can grow dimmer, nor give place to darkness. (James 1:17) Christ is the light that shineth in the darkness of our world, "the true light which lighteth every man." (John 1:5, 9) And Israel was to be a holy people as dwelling in the light, through its covenant-relationship to God. It was not the selection of Israel from all other nations that made them holy, but the relationship to God into which it brought the people. The call of Israel, their election and selection, were only the means. Holiness itself was to be attained through the covenant, which provided forgiveness and sanctification, and in which, by the discipline of His law and the guidance of His Holy Arm, Israel was to be led onward and upward. Thus, if God showed the excellence of His name or His glory in creation, (Psalm 8) the way of His holiness was among Israel. (Psalm 77:13; Psalm 104; Psalm 103)

This detailed consideration of what Moses was charged to say, will help us to understand both the preparations for the covenant, and the solemn manner in which it was inaugurated. When Moses intimated to the people the gracious purpose of God, they declared their readiness to obey what God had spoken. But as the Lord could only enter into covenant with the people through the mediation of Moses, on account of their weakness

and sinfulness, He spoke in a thick cloud with His servant before them all, so that they might see and hear, and forever afterwards believe. As previously indicated, the outward preparations of the people were twofold. First, they underwent certain purifications, symbolical of inward cleansing. Secondly, bounds were set round Sinai, so that none might break through nor touch the mountain.<sup>3</sup> Then, on the third day,<sup>4</sup> Moses led forth the men, and placed them "at the nether part of the mount," "that burned with fire." There God proclaimed His holy and eternal law amidst portentous signs, which indicated that He was great and terrible in His holiness, and a jealous God, though the fire of His wrath and zeal was enwrapped in a dense cloud.

The revelation of God's will, which Israel heard from Mount Sinai, is contained in the ten commandments, or, as they are called in the Hebrew original, "the ten words."<sup>5</sup> These were prefaced by this declaration of what Jehovah was and what He had done:

"I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2)

This (as Calvin says) "to prepare the souls of the people for obedience." The "ten words" were afterwards written on two tables of stone, which were to be kept within the ark of the covenant, "the mercy-seat" being significantly placed over them. (Exodus 25:16; 40:20) It is not easy to say how they were arranged on these two tables, but not improbably the first four "words" with "the Preface" (in ver. 1) may have occupied the first, and the other six commandments the second Table of the Law.<sup>6</sup> But we only know for certain, that

<sup>3</sup> When we read in Exodus 19:54, "let not the priests and the people break through," we are to understand by the former expression not the Aaronic priesthood, which had not yet been instituted, but those who hitherto discharged priestly functions - probably the heads of houses.

<sup>4</sup> According to Jewish tradition this was the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover.

<sup>5</sup> The Decalogue, comp. Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13.

<sup>6</sup> Most likely not the whole of each commandment, but in every case only the actual direction (such as "Thou shalt not steal") was graven on the tables. This would give in the

"the tables were written on both their sides, on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." <sup>7</sup>

Considering more closely these "ten words", of the covenant," we notice, first, their number, ten, as that of completeness. Next, we see that the fifth commandment (to honor our parents) forms a transition from the first to the second table - the first table detailing our duties towards God; the second those towards man. But our duty to our parents is higher than that towards men generally; indeed, in a certain sense is Divine, just as the relationship to an earthly father symbolizes that to our Father in heaven. Hence the command is to honor, whereas our duty to men only requires us to love them. Again, almost all the commands are put in a negative form ("thou shalt not"), implying that transgression, not obedience, is natural to us. But "the commandment is exceeding broad," and requires a corresponding right state of mind. Accordingly we find that the law of the ten commandments is summed up in this. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." Lastly, the first five "words" have always some reason or motive attached to them. Not so those of the second table, which are mostly put quite generally, to show that such commands as, not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, are intended to apply to all possible cases, and not only to friends or fellow-citizens.

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Hebrew, for the first four commandments, along with the "Preface," seventy-three words, and for the other six commandments thirty-one words. It is well known that the Roman Catholics and the Lutheran Church combine the two first commandments into one, and divide the tenth into two. But for this there is not the shadow of ground or authority, either in the Hebrew text or even in Jewish tradition.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 32:15, 16. When we read that the law was "received by the ministration of angels" (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2), we are not to understand by it that God Himself did not speak all these words, but either to refer it to those "ten thousands" of angels who were His attendants when He spoke on Sinai (Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17); or, more probably, to the difference between the Old and the New Testament dispensations. In the former, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity appeared only in the Angel of the Covenant; in the latter, he became incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man.

Passing from general considerations to particulars, we find that the "first word" not only forbids all idolatry in thought, word, and deed, but enjoins to love, fear, serve, and cleave to the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 6:5, 13; 10:12, 20) The second word shows the manner in which the Lord will be served - more particularly, not under any image or by any outward representation. As Calvin remarks, it condemns "all fictitious worship which men have invented according to their own minds," and not according to the word of God. The third word forbids the profaning of the name of Jehovah, in which He has manifested His glory, by using it either for untruth or in vain words, that is, either in false or idle swearing, in cursing, in magic, or such like. The fourth word, which implies a previous knowledge of the Sabbath on the part of Israel, enjoins personal, domestic, and public rest from all manner of labor on God's holy day, which is to be spent in His service and for His glory. The fifth word directs honor to parents as (in the language of Luther) "the vicars of God," and hence implies similar reverence towards all God's representatives, especially magistrates and rulers. The Second Table progresses from outward deed (in the sixth, seventh, and eighth "words") to speech (ninth commandment), and finally to thought and desire. The sixth, seventh, and eighth words apply equally to what may injure our own life, chastity, or property, and those of others. The ninth word should be literally translated: "Thou shalt not answer against thy neighbor as a false witness" (or "as a witness of falsehood").

Comparing this with the statement in Deuteronomy 5:20, where the expression is "a witness of vanity," we gather that not only all untrue, but all unfounded statements against our neighbor are included in this commandment. Lastly, the tenth word sounds the inmost depths of our hearts, and forbids all wrong and inordinate desires in reference to anything that is our neighbor's. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In Deuteronomy 5:21 two different expressions are used - the "desire" being awakened from without by that which is seen to be beautiful; while the "coveting" springs from within - from the evil inclinations or supposed requirements of him who covets.



Such law was never given by man; never dreamed of in his highest conceptions. Had man only been able to observe it, assuredly not only life hereafter but happiness and joy here would have come with it. As it was, it brought only knowledge of sin. Yet, forever blessed be God: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

**II\_11 Civil and Social Ordinances of Israel as the People of God - Their Religious Ordinances in their National Aspect - The "Covenant made by Sacrifice" and the Sacrificial Meal of Acceptance.**

**Exodus 20:18 to 24:12**

THE impression produced upon the people by the phenomena accompanying God's revelation of His law was so deep, that they entreated that any further Divine communication might be made through the mediatorship of Moses. As Peter, when the Divine power of the Lord Jesus suddenly burst upon him, (Luke 5:8) felt that he, a sinful man, could not stand in the presence of his Lord, so were the children of Israel afraid of death, if they continued before God. But such feelings of fear have nothing spiritual in themselves. While Moses acceded to their request, he was careful to explain that the object of all they had witnessed had not been the excitement of fear (Exodus 20:20), but such searching of heart as might issue, not in slavish apprehension of outward consequences, but in that true fear of God, which would lead to the avoidance of sin.

And now Moses stood once more alone in the "thick darkness, where God was." The ordinances then given him must be regarded as the final preparation for that covenant which was so soon to be ratified. (Exodus 24) For, as the people of God, Israel must not be like the other nations. Alike in substance and in form, the conditions of their national life, the fundamental principles of their state, and the so-called civil rights and ordinances which were to form the groundwork of society, must be Divine. To use a figure: Israel was God's own possession. Before hallowing and formally setting it apart, God marked it out, and drew the boundary lines around His property. Such was the object and the meaning of the ordinances, (Exodus 20:22; 23) which preceded the formal conclusion

of the covenant, recorded in Exodus 24: Accordingly the principles and "judgments" (21:1), or rather the "rights" and juridical arrangements, on which national life and civil society in Israel were based, were not only infinitely superior to anything known or thought of at the time, but such as to embody the solid and abiding principles of national life for all times.

And in truth they underlie all modern legislation, so that the Mosaic ordinances are, and will remain, the grand model on which civil society is constructed.<sup>9</sup>

Without entering into details, we note the general arrangement of these ordinances. They were preceded by a general indication of the manner in which Israel was to worship God. (Exodus 20:22-26) As God had spoken to Israel "from heaven," so they were not to make any earthly representation of what was heavenly. On the other hand, as God would "come unto" them - from heaven to earth, and there hold intercourse with them, the altar which was to rise from earth towards heaven was to be simply "an altar of earth" (ver. 24), or if of stones, of such as were in the condition in which they had been found in the earth. Moreover, as the altar indicated that place on earth where God would appear for the purpose of blessing Israel, it was only to be reared where God recorded His name, that is, where He appointed it. In other words, their worship was to be regulated by His manifestation in grace, and not by their own choice or preferences. For grace lies at the foundation of all praise and prayer.

The sacrifices and worship of Israel were not to procure grace; grace had been the originating cause of their worship. And so it ever is. "We love Him, because He first loved us," and the gift of His dear Son to us sinners is free and unconditional on the part of the Father, and makes our return unto Him possible. And because this grace is free, it becomes man all the more to serve God with holy reverence, which should show itself even in outward demeanor (ver. 26).

<sup>9</sup> Fully to understand the sublime principles of the Mosaic, or rather the Divine Law, they must be examined in detail. This, of course, is impossible in this place.

"The judgments" next communicated to Moses determined, first, the civil and social position of all in Israel relatively to each other (Exodus 21:1; 23:12), and then their religious position relatively to the Lord (23: 13-19)."

The Divine legislation begins, as assuredly none other ever did, not at the topmost but at the lowest rung of society. It declares in the first place the personal rights of such individuals as are in a state of dependence - male (21:2-6) and female slaves (vers. 7-11). This is done not only with a sacred regard for the rights of the person, but with a delicacy, kindness, and strictness beyond any code ever framed on this subject. If slavery was still tolerated, as a thing existent, its real principle, that of making men chattels and property, was struck at the root, and the institution became, by its safeguards and provisions, quite other from what it has been among any nation, whether ancient or modern.

Then follow "judgments" guarding life (vers. 12-14), with crimes against which, the maltreatment and the cursing of parents (vers. 15, 17), and man-stealing (ver. 16), are put on a level. It is the sanctity of life, in itself, in its origin, and in its free possession, which is here in question, and the punishment awarded to such crimes is neither intended as warning nor as correction, but strictly as punishment, that is, as retribution. From the protection of life, the law passes to that of the body against all injuries, whether by man (vers. 18-27) or by beast (vers. 28-32). The principle here is, so far as possible, compensation, coupled with punishment in grave offenses.

Next, the safety of property is secured. But before entering upon it, the Divine law, Divine also in this, protects also the life of a beast. (Exodus 21:33-36) Property is dealt with under various aspects. First, we have the theft of cattle - most important to guard against among an agricultural people - a different kind of protection being wisely allowed to owners by day and by night (22:1-4). Then, damage to fields or their produce is considered (vers. 5, 6). After that, loss or damage of what had been entrusted for safe keeping (vers. 7-15), and along with it loss of honor (vers. 16, 17) are dealt with.

The statutes which follow (vers. 18-30) are quite different in character from those which had preceded. This appears even from the omission of the "if," by which all the previous ordinances had been introduced. In truth, they do not contemplate, as the others, any possible case, but they state and ordain what must never be allowed to take place. They are beyond the province of ordinary civil legislation, and concern Israel as being specially the people of God. As such they express what Jehovah expects from His own people, bound to Him by covenant. And this, perhaps, is the most wonderful part of the legislation, regulating and ordering what no civil rule has ever sought to influence. As before, the series of statutes begins by interdicting what is contrary to the God-consecrated character of the nation. Thus, at the outset all magic is exterminated (ver. 18), and with it all unnatural crimes (ver. 19), and idolatrous practices (ver. 20). In short, as before in worship, so now in life, heathenism, its powers, its vileness, and its corruptions are swept aside. On the other hand, in opposition to all national exclusiveness, the stranger (though not the strange god) is to be kindly welcomed (ver. 21); widows and the fatherless are not to be "humiliated" <sup>10</sup> (vers. 22-24); those in temporary need not to be vexed by usury (vers. 25-27); God as the supreme Lawgiver is not to be reviled, nor yet are those appointed to rule under Him to be cursed (ver. 28); the tribute due to the Lord as King is to be cheerfully given (vers. 29, 30); and the holy dignity of His people not to be profaned even in their daily habits (ver. 31).

Again, nothing that is untrue, unloving, or unjust is to be said, done, or attempted (23:1-3), and that not merely in public dealings, but personal dislike is not to influence conduct. On the contrary, all loving help is to be given even to an enemy in time of need (vers. 4, 5); the poor and persecuted are not to be unjustly dealt with; no bribe is to be taken, "for the gift maketh open eyes blind, and perverteth the causes of the righteous," and the same rule is to apply to the stranger as to Israel (vers. 6-9). Finally in this connection, the seventh

<sup>10</sup> This, not "afflicted," as in the Authorized Version, is the right translation, the command extending beyond oppression to all unkind treatment.



year's and the seventh day's rest are referred to, not so much in their religious character as in their bearing upon the poor and the workers (vers. 10-12).

Passing from the statutes fixing the civil and social position of all in Israel to their religious position relatively to Jehovah, (Exodus 23:13-19) we have first of all an injunction of the three great annual feasts. Although strictly religious festivals, they are here viewed, primarily, not in their symbolical and typical meaning (which is universal and eternal), but in their national bearing: the paschal feast as that of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the feast of weeks as that "of harvest, the first fruit of thy labors," and the feast of tabernacles as that of final "ingathering" (vers. 14-17). Of the three ordinances which now follow (vers. 18-19), the first refers to the Paschal sacrifice (comp. Exodus 12:15,20; 13:7; 34:25), and the second to the feast of first fruits or of weeks. From this it would follow, that the prohibition to "seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (ver. 19) must, at least primarily, have borne some reference to the festivities of the week of tabernacles; perhaps, as the learned Rabbinical commentator Abarbanel suggests, because some such practices were connected with heathen, idolatrous rites at the time of the ingathering of fruits.<sup>11</sup>

The "judgments" which the Lord enjoins upon His people are appropriately followed by promises (23:20-33), in which, as their King and Lord, He undertakes their guidance and protection, and their possession of the land He had assigned to them. First and foremost, assurance is given them of the personal presence of Jehovah in that ANGEL, in Whom is the Name of the Lord (ver. 20). This was no common angel, however exalted, but a manifestation of Jehovah Himself, prefigurative

of, and preparatory to His manifestation in the flesh in the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For all that is here said of Him is attributed to the Lord Himself in Exodus 13:21; while in Exodus 33:14, 15, He is expressly designated as "the Face" of Jehovah ("My Face" - in the Authorized Version "My presence"). Accordingly, all obedience is to be shown to His guidance, and every contact with idolatry and idolaters avoided. In that case the Lord would fulfill every good and gracious promise to His people, and cause them to possess the land in all its extent.

Such were the terms of the covenant which Jehovah made with Israel in their national capacity. when the people had ratified them by acceptance, (Exodus 24:3) Moses wrote all down in what was called "the book of the covenant" (24:7). And now the covenant itself was to be inaugurated by sacrifice, the sprinkling of blood, and the sacrificial meal. This transaction was the most important in the whole history of Israel. By this one sacrifice, never renewed, Israel was formally set apart as the people of God; and it lay at the foundation of all the sacrificial worship which followed. Only after it did God institute the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and all its services. Thus this one sacrifice prefigured the one sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, which is the ground of our access to God and the foundation of all our worship and service. Most significantly, an altar was now built at the foot of Mount Sinai, and surrounded by twelve pillars, "according to the twelve tribes of Israel" Ministering youths - for as yet there was no priesthood - offered the burnt, and sacrificed the peace offerings unto Jehovah. Half of the blood of the sacrifices was put into basins, with the other half the altar was sprinkled, thus making reconciliation with God. Then the terms of the covenant were once more read in the hearing of all, and the other half of the blood, by which reconciliation had been made, sprinkled on the people with these words: "Behold the blood of the covenant which Jehovah hath made with you upon all these words (or terms)."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> From our ignorance of the circumstances, this is perhaps one of the most difficult prohibitions to understand. The learned reader will find every opinion on the subject discussed in Bocharti Hierozoicon, vol. 1. pp. 634, 635. It is well known that the modern Jews understand it as implying that nothing made of milk is to be cooked or eaten along with any kind of meat, even knives and dishes being changed, and most punctilious precautions taken against any possible intermixture of the two. Most commentators find the reason of the prohibition in the cruelty of seething a kid in its mother's milk. But the meaning must lie deeper.

<sup>12</sup> Further details are furnished in Hebrews 9:19-22, where also transactions differing in point of time are grouped together, as all forming part of this dedication of the first

As a nation Israel was now reconciled and set apart unto God - both having been accomplished by the "blood of sprinkling." Thereby they became prepared for that fellowship with Him which was symbolized in the sacrificial meal that followed. (Exodus 24:9-11) There God, in pledge of His favor, fed His people upon the sacrifices which He had accepted. The sacrificial meal meant the fellowship of acceptance; its joy was that of the consciousness of this blessed fact. And now Moses and Aaron, and his two sons (the future priests), along with seventy of the elders of Israel, went up into the mount, "and did eat and drink" at that sacrificial meal, in the seen presence of the God of Israel, not indeed under any outward form, (Deuteronomy 4:12-15) but with heaven's own brightness underneath the Shechinah. Thus "to see God, and to eat and drink," was a foretaste and a pledge of the perfect blessedness in beholding Him hereafter. It was also a symbol and a type of what shall be realized when, as the Alleluia of the "great multitude" proclaims the reign of the "Lord God omnipotent," the gladsome, joyous bride of the Lamb now made ready for the marriage, and adorned with bridal garments, hears the welcome sound summoning her to "the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revelation 19:6-9)

**II\_12 The Pattern seen on the Mountain - The Tabernacle, the Priesthood, and the Services in their Arrangement and Typical Meaning - The Sin of the Golden Calf - The Divine Judgment - The Plea of Moses - God's gracious Forgiveness - The Vision of the Glory of the Lord vouchsafed to Moses.**

**Exodus 24:12; 25 to 33**

NEVER assuredly have we stronger proof of the Divine origin of what we call grace, and of the weakness and unprofitableness of human nature, than in the reaction which so often follows seasons of religious privilege. Readers of the New Testament will recall many instances of this in the Gospel-history, and will remember how our Lord, ever and again, at such times took His disciples aside into some desert place for quietness and

prayer. But perhaps the saddest instance of how near the great enemy lingers to our seasons of spiritual enjoyment, and how great our danger of giddiness, when standing on such heights, is furnished by the history of Israel, immediately after the solemn covenant had been ratified.

Now that God had set apart His reconciled people unto Himself, it was necessary to have some definite place where He would meet with, and dwell among them, as also to appoint the means by which they should approach Him, and the manner in which he would manifest Himself to them. To reveal all this, as well as to give those "tables of stone," on which the commandments were graven, God now called Moses once more "up into the mount." Accompanied by "Joshua, his minister," he obeyed the Divine behest, leaving the rule of the people to Aaron and Hur. For six days he had to wait, while "the glory of Jehovah abode upon the mount" On the seventh, Moses was summoned within the bright cloud, which, to the children of Israel beneath, seemed "like a devouring fire", Joshua probably remaining near, but not actually with him. "Forty days and forty nights" "Moses was in the mount," without either eating bread or drinking water. (Deuteronomy 9:9) The new revelation which he now received concerned the Tabernacle which was to be erected, the priesthood which was to serve in it, and the services which were to be celebrated. Nay, it extended to every detail of furniture, dress, and observance. And for what was needful for this service, the free-will offerings of Israel were to be invited. (Exodus 25:1-8)

We have it upon the highest authority, that, not only in its grand outlines, but in all minutest details, everything was to be made "after the pattern" which God showed to Moses on the mount. (Exodus 25:9) And so we also read in Acts 7:44, and Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, teaching us, that Moses was shown by God an actual pattern or model of all that he was to make in and for the sanctuary. This can convey only one meaning. It taught far more than the general truth, that only that approach to God is lawful or acceptable which He has indicated. For, God showed Moses every detail to indicate that every detail had its special meaning, and hence could not be altered in any,

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Covenant by blood. That this is the meaning of the passage appears from Hebrews 9:22. The sprinkling of the book and the people, as afterwards of the Tabernacle and its vessels, was made in the manner described in ver. 19.

even the minutest, particular, without destroying that meaning, and losing that significance which alone made it of importance. Nothing here was intended as a mere ornament or ceremony, all was symbol and type. As symbol, it indicated a present truth; as type, it pointed forward (a prophecy by deed) to future spiritual realities, while, at the same time, it already conveyed to the worshipper the firstfruits, and the earnest of their final accomplishment in "the fullness of time." We repeat, everything here had a spiritual meaning - the material of which the ark, the dresses of the priesthood, and all else was made; colors, measurements, numbers, vessels, dresses, services, and the priesthood itself - and all proclaimed the same spiritual truth, and pointed forward to the same spiritual reality, viz., God in Christ in the midst of His Church. The Tabernacle was "the tent of meeting" (Ohel Moed) where God held intercourse with His people, and whence He dispensed blessing unto them. The priesthood, culminating in the high-priest, was the God-appointed mediatorial agency through which God was approached and by which He bestowed His gifts; the sacrifices were the means of such approach to God, and either intended to restore fellowship with God when it had been dimmed or interrupted, or else to express and manifest that fellowship. But alike the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the altar pointed to the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as the Tabernacle itself was concerned, the court with the altar of burnt-offering was the place by which Israel approached God; the Holy Place that in which they held communion with God; and the Most Holy Place that in which the Lord Himself visibly dwelt among them in the Shechinah, as the covenant-God, His Presence resting on the mercy-seat which covered the Ark.

It is most instructive to mark the order in which the various ordinances about the Tabernacle and its furniture were given to Moses. First, we have the directions about the Ark, as the most holy thing in the Most Holy Place; (Exodus 25:10-22) then, similarly, those about the table of shewbread and the golden candlestick (25:23-40), not only as belonging to the furniture of the Holy Place, but because spiritually the truths which they symbolized - life and light in the Lord - were the

outcome of God's Presence between the cherubim. After that, the dwelling itself is described, and the position in it of Ark, table, and candlestick. (Exodus 26)

Then only comes the altar of burnt-offering, with the court that was to surround the sanctuary (27:1-19). We now enter, as it were, upon a different section, that of ministry. here directions are first given about the burning of the lamps on the seven-branched candlestick (27:20, 21); after which we have the institution of, and all connected with, the priesthood. (Exodus 28; 29) The last, because the highest, point in the ministry is that about the altar of incense and its service (30:1-10). This symbolized prayer, and hence could only come in after the institution of the mediatorial priesthood. Thus far it will be noticed, that the arrangement is always from within outwards - from the Most Holy Place to the court of the worshippers, symbolizing once more that all proceeds from Him Who is the God of grace, Who, as already quoted in the language of St. Augustine, "gives what He commands," and that the highest of all service, to which everything else is subservient, or rather to which it stands related as the means towards the end, is that of fellowship in prayer - the worshipful beholding of God.

These directions are followed by some others strictly connected with the character of Israel as the people of God. Israel is His firstborn among the nations, (Exodus 4:22, 23) and, as such, must be redeemed, like the firstborn son of a family, (Exodus 22:29; 34:20; Numbers 3:12, 13, 16) to indicate, on the one hand, that the people are really His own property, and that the life entrusted to them belongeth to Him and, on the other hand, to express that, in the firstborn, all the family is hallowed to God. (Romans 11:16) This was the import of the "atonement money." (Exodus 30:11-6)

But even so, each approach to Him needed special washing - hence the laver (30:17-21). Again, within Israel, the priests were to be the sacred representatives of the people. As such, they, and all connected with their service, must be anointed with a peculiar oil, symbolical of the Holy Spirit, all counterfeit of which was to be visited with such punishment as reminds us of that following upon

the sin against the Holy Ghost (vers. 22-33). Lastly, the material for the highest symbolical service, that of incensing, is described (vers. 34-38). The whole section closes by designating the persons whom the Lord had raised up for doing all the work connected with the preparation of His Sanctuary. (Exodus 31:1-11)

The institutions thus made were, in reality, the outcome and the consequences of the covenant which the Lord had made with Israel. As "a sign" of this covenant between Jehovah and the children of Israel, (Exodus 31:17) God now ordered anew the observance of the Sabbath (31:12-17) - its twofold provision of rest and of sanctification (ver. 15) being expressive of the civil and the religious aspects of that covenant, and of their marvelous combination. Thus furnished with all needful directions, Moses finally received, at the Hand of the Lord, the "two tables of testimony," "written with the finger of God" (ver. 18).

While these sacred transactions were taking place on the mount, a far different scene was enacted below in the camp of Israel. Without attempting the foolish and wrongful task of palliating the sin of making the Golden Calf, (Exodus 32:1-6) it is fight that the matter should be placed in its true light. The prolonged absence of Moses had awakened peculiar fears in the people. They had seen him pass more than a month ago into the luminous cloud that covered the mount.

"And the sight of the glory of Jehovah was like a devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exodus 24:17)

What more natural than for those who waited, week after week, in unexplained solitude, within sight of this fire, to imagine that Moses had been devoured by it. Their leader was gone, and the visible symbol of Jehovah was high up on the mountain top, like "a devouring fire." They must have another leader; that would be Aaron. But they must also have another symbol of the Divine Presence. One only occurred to their carnal minds, besides that which had hitherto preceded them. It was the Egyptian Apis, who, under the form of a calf, represented the powers of nature. To his worship they had always been accustomed; indeed, its principal seat was the immediate neighborhood of the district in Egypt where, for

centuries, they and their fathers had been settled. Probably, this also was the form under which many of them had, in former days, tried, in a perverted manner, to serve their ancestral God, combining the traditions of the patriarchs with the corruptions around them (compare Joshua 24:14; Ezekiel 20:8; 23:3, 8). It is quite evident that Israel did not mean to forsake Jehovah, but only to serve Him under the symbol of Apis. This appears from the statement of the people themselves on seeing the Golden Calf: (Exodus 32:4) "This is thy God,"<sup>13</sup> and from the proclamation of Aaron (32:5): "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah."

Their great sin consisted in not realizing the Presence of an unseen God, while the fears of their unbelief led them back to their former idolatrous practices, unmindful that this involved a breach of the second of those commandments so lately proclaimed in their hearing, and of the whole covenant which had so solemnly been ratified. Some expositors have sought to extenuate the guilt of Aaron by supposing that, in asking for their golden ornaments to make "the calf," he had hoped to enlist their vanity and covetousness, and so to turn them from their sinful purpose. The text, however, affords no warrant for this hypothesis. It is true that Aaron was, at the time, not yet in the priesthood, and also that his proclamation of "a feast to Jehovah" may have been intended to bring it out distinctly, that the name of Jehovah was still, as before, acknowledged by Israel. But his culpable weakness - to say the least of it - only adds to his share in the people's sin. Indeed, this appears from Aaron's later confession to Moses, (Exodus 32:21-24) than which nothing more humiliating is recorded, even throughout this sad story. Perhaps, however, it was well that, before his appointment to the priesthood, Aaron, and all after him, should have had this evidence of natural unfitness and unworthiness, that so it might appear more clearly that the character of all was typical, and in no way connected with the worthiness of Aaron or of his house.

<sup>13</sup> Both here and in ver.1 the rendering should be in the singular ("God"), and not in the plural ("Gods"), as in the Authorized Version.

While Israel indulged in the camp in the usual licentious dances and orgies which accompanied such heathen festivals yet another trial awaited Moses. It had been God Himself Who informed Moses of the "quick" apostasy of His people (32:7, 8), accompanying the announcement by these words: "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them. and I will make of thee a great nation" (ver. 10). One of the fathers has already noticed, that the Divine words, "Now therefore let Me alone," seemed to imply a call to Moses to exercise his office as intercessor for his people. Moreover, it has also been remarked, that the offer to make of Moses a nation even greater than Israel, (Deuteronomy 9:14) was, in a sense, a real temptation, or rather a trial of Moses' singleness of purpose and faithfulness to his mission. We know how entirely Moses stood this trial, and how earnestly, perseveringly, and successfully he pleaded for Israel with the Lord (vers. 11-14). But one point has not been sufficiently noticed by commentators. When, in announcing the apostasy of Israel, God spake of them not as His own but as Moses' people - "thy people, whom thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt" (ver. 7) - He at the same time furnished Moses with the right plea in his intercession, and also indicated the need of that severe punishment which was afterwards executed, lest Moses might, by weak indulgence, be involved in complicity with Israel's sin. The latter point is easily understood. As for the other, we see how Moses, in his intercession, pleaded the argument with which God had furnished him.

Most earnestly did he insist that Israel was God's people, since their deliverance from Egypt had been wholly God-wrought. Three special arguments did he use with God, and these three may to all time serve as models in our pleading for forgiveness and restoration after weaknesses and falls. These arguments were: first, that Israel was God's property, and that His past dealings had proved this (ver. 11); secondly, that God's own glory was involved in the deliverance of Israel in the face of the enemy (ver. 12); and, thirdly, that God's gracious promises were pledged for their salvation (ver. 13). And such pleas God never refuses to accept (ver. 14). But, although informed

of the state of matters in the camp of Israel, Moses could have been scarcely prepared for the sight which presented itself, when, on suddenly turning an eminence,<sup>14</sup> the riotous multitude, in its licentious merriment, appeared full in view. The contrast was too great, and as 'Moses' wrath waxed hot, he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (ver. 19). It is not necessary to suppose that what follows in the sacred text is related in the strict order of time.

Suffice it, that, after a short but stern reproof to Aaron, Moses took his station "in the gate of the camp," summoning to him those who were "on the side of Jehovah." All the sons of Levi obeyed, and were directed to go through the camp and "slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor" (ver. 27). On that terrible day no less than 3,000 men fell under the sword of Levi. As for the Golden Calf, its wooden framework was burnt in the fire and its gold covering ground to powder, and strewed upon the brook which descended from Sinai. Of this Israel had to drink, in symbol that each one must receive and bear the fruits of his sin, just as, later on, the woman suspected of adultery was ordered to drink the water into which the writing of the curses upon her sin had been washed. (Numbers 5:24)

There is one point here which requires more particular inquiry than it has yet received. As commonly understood, the slaughter of these 3,000 stands out as an unexplained fact. Why just these 3,000? Did they fall simply because they happened to stand by nearest, on the principle, as has been suggested, of decimating an offending host; and why did no one come to their aid? Such indiscriminate punishment seems scarcely in accordance with the Divine dealings. But the text, as it appears to us, furnishes hints for the right explanation. When Moses stood in the camp of Israel and made proclamation for those who were

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<sup>14</sup> Often in descending this (the so-called "Hill of the Golden Calf," close by the spot whence the Law was given), "while the precipitous sides of the ravine hid the tents from my gaze, have I heard the sound of voices from below, and thought how Joshua had said unto Moses as he came down from the mount, 'There is a noise of war in the camp.'" - Mr. Palmer in *The Desert of the Exodus*, vol. 1 p. 115.



on Jehovah's side, we read that "he saw that the people were naked" (ver. 25), or unreined, licentious (comp. ver. 6; 1 Corinthians 10:7, 8). In short, there stood before him a number of men, fresh from their orgies, in a state of licentious attire, whom even his appearance and words had not yet sobered into quietness, shame, and repentance. These, as we understand it, still thronged the open roadway of the camp, which so lately had resounded with their voices; these were met by the avenging Levites, as, sword in hand, they passed from gate to gate, like the destroying angel through Egypt on the Paschal night; and these were the 3,000 which fell on that day, while the vast multitude had retired to the quietness of their tents in tardy repentance and fear, in view of him whose presence among them betokened the nearness of that holy and jealous God, Whose terrible judgments they had so much cause to dread.

Thus ended the day of Moses' return among his people. On the morrow he gathered them to speak, not in anger but in sorrow, of their great sin. Then returning from them to the Lord, he entreated forgiveness for his brethren, with an intensity and self-denial of love (vers. 31, 32), unequaled by that of any man except St. Paul.<sup>15</sup>

Thus far he prevailed, that the people were not to be destroyed, nor the covenant to cease; but God would not personally go in the midst of a people so incapable of bearing His holy Presence; He would send a created angel to be henceforth their leader. And still would this sin weight the scale in the day of visitation, which the further rebellion of this people would only too surely bring. The first words of the final sentence, that their carcasses were to fall in the wilderness, (Numbers 14:29) were, so to speak, already uttered in this warning of the Lord on the morrow of the slaughter of the 3,000: "Nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them." "Thus," in the language of Scripture (ver. 35), "Jehovah smote the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made."

<sup>15</sup> Romans 9:3. "It is not easy," writes Bengel, "to estimate the love of a Moses or a Paul. Our small measure of capacity can scarcely take it in, just as an infant cannot realize the courage of a hero."

That the Lord would not go personally with Israel because of their stiffneckedness, was, indeed, felt to be "evil tidings." (Exodus 33:4) The account of the people's repentance and of God's gracious forgiveness (Exodus 33) forms one of the most precious portions of this history. The first manifestation of their godly sorrow was the putting away of their "ornaments," not only temporarily but permanently. Thus we read: "The children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from the mount Horeb onward" (33:6). Israel was, so to speak, in permanent mourning, ever after its great national sin. Next, as the Lord would not personally be in the midst of Israel, Moses removed the tent - probably his own - outside the camp, that there he might receive the Divine communications, when "the cloudy pillar descended," "and Jehovah talked with Moses." Moses called this "the tent of meeting" (rendered in the Authorized Version "the tabernacle of the congregation:" ver. 7). It is scarcely necessary to say, that this was not "the Tabernacle" (as the Authorized Version might lead one to infer), since the latter was not yet constructed.

To this "tent of meeting" all who were of the true Israel, and who regarded Jehovah not merely as their national God, but owned Him personally and felt the need of Him, were wont to go out. This must not be looked upon as either a protest or an act of separation on their part, but as evidence of true repentance and of their desire to meet with God, who no longer was in the camp of Israel. Moreover, all the people, when they saw the cloudy pillar descend to Moses, "rose up and worshipped." Altogether, this was perhaps the period of greatest heart-softening during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness.

And God graciously had respect to it. He had already assured Moses that he stood in special relationship to Him ("I know thee by name"), and that his prayer for Israel had been heard ("thou hast also found grace in My sight"). But as yet the former sentence stood, to the effect that an angel, not Jehovah Himself, was to be Israel's future guide. Under these circumstances Moses now entreated Jehovah to show him His way, that is, His present purpose in regard to Israel, adding, that if God would bring them into the Land of

Promise, He would "consider that this is Thy people," and hence He their God and King. This plea also prevailed, and the Lord once more promised that His own presence would go with them, and that He Himself would give them the rest of Canaan (ver. 14; comp. Deuteronomy 3:20; Hebrews 4:8). And Moses gave thanks by further prayer, even more earnest than before, for the blessing now again vouchsafed (vers. 15, 16).

But one thing had become painfully evident to Moses by what had happened. However faithful in his Master's house, (Hebrews 3:5) he was but a servant; and a servant knoweth not the will of his master. The threat of destruction if Jehovah remained among Israel, and the alternative of sending with them an angel, must have cast a gloom over his future mediatorship. It was, indeed, only that of a servant, however highly favored, not of a son. (Hebrews 3:5, 6) Oh, that he could quite understand the Being and character of the God of Israel - see, not His likeness, but His glory! (Exodus 33:18) Then would all become clear, and, with fuller light, joyous assurance fill his heart. That such was the real meaning of Moses' prayer, "Show me Thy glory" (ver. 18), appears from the mode in which the Lord answered it. "And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of Jehovah before thee." Then was Moses taught, that the deepest mystery of Divine grace lay not in God's national, but in His individual dealings, in sovereign mercy, "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (ver. 19). Yet no man could see the face, the full outshining of Jehovah. Neither flesh nor spirit, so long as it dwelt in the flesh, could bear such glory. While that glory passed by, God would hold Moses in a cleft of the rock, perhaps in the same in which a similar vision was afterwards granted to Elijah, (1 Kings 19:9) and there He would support, or "cover" him with His hand. Only "the back parts" - the after-glory, the luminous reflection of what Jehovah really was - could Moses bear to see. But what Moses witnessed, hid in the cleft of the rock, and Elijah, the representative of the prophets, saw more clearly, hiding his face in his mantle, while he worshipped, appears fully revealed to us in the

Face of Jesus Christ, in Whom "the whole fullness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily."

## **II\_13 Moses a Second Time on the Mount - On his Return his Face shineth - The Rearing of the Tabernacle - Its Consecration by the seen Presence of Jehovah.**

### **Exodus 34 to 50**

THE covenant relationship between God and Israel having been happily restored, Moses was directed to bring into the mount other two tables - this time of his own preparing - instead of those which he had broken, that God might once more write down the "ten words." (Exodus 34:1-4) Again he passed forty days and forty nights on Sinai without either eating or drinking (34:28). The communications which he received were preceded by that glorious vision of Jehovah's brightness, which had been promised to him. What he saw is nowhere told us; only what he, heard, when Jehovah "proclaimed" before him what Luther aptly designates as "the sermon about the name of God." It unfolded His inmost being, as that of love unspeakable - the accumulation of terms being intended to present that love in all its aspects. And, in the words of a recent German writer "Such as Jehovah here proclaimed, He also manifested it among Israel at all times, from Mount Sinai until He brought them into the land of Canaan; and thence till He cast them out among the heathen. Nay, even now in their banishment, He is 'keeping mercy for thousands, who turn to the Redeemer that has come out of Zion.'"

When Moses thus fully understood the character of Jehovah, he could once more plead for Israel, now converting into a plea for forgiveness even the reason which had seemed to make the presence of Jehovah among Israel dangerous - that they were a stiff-necked people (ver. 9). In the same manner had the Lord, in speaking to Noah, made the sin of man, which had erst provoked judgment, the ground for future forbearance. (Genesis 6:5, 6; Genesis 8:21) And the Lord now graciously confirmed once more His covenant with Israel. In so doing He reminded them of its two conditions, the one negative, the other positive, but both strictly connected, and both applying to the time when Moses should be no more, and Israel had entered on possession of the Promised Land.

These two conditions were always to be observed, if the covenant was to be maintained. The one was avoidance of all contact with the Canaanites and their idolatry (vers. 11-16); the other, observance of the service of Jehovah in the manner prescribed by Him (vers. 17-26).

Another confirmation of the Divine message which Moses bore from the mount, appeared on his return among Israel. All unknown to himself, the reflection of the Divine glory had been left upon him, and "the skin of his face shone <sup>16</sup> (shot out rays) because of His (God's) talking with him."

As Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid of this reflection of the Divine glory, Moses had to use a covering for his face while speaking to them, which he only removed when conversing with the Lord. It is to this that the apostle refers (2 Corinthians 3:7) when he contrasts the Old Testament glory on the face of Moses, which "was to be done away" at any rate at the death of Moses - and which was connected with what, after all, was "the ministration of death," with "the ministration of the Spirit" and its exceeding and enduring glory. Moreover, the veil with which Moses had to cover his face was symbolical of the veil covering the Old Testament, which is only "done away in Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:13, 14).

Everything was now ready for the construction of the Tabernacle and of all requisite for its services. We can understand how, especially in view of the work before them, the Sabbath rest should now be once more enjoined. (Exodus 35:2, 3) Then a proclamation was made for voluntary contributions of all that was needful, to which the people responded with such "willing offerings" (35:29), that soon not only "sufficient" but "too much" "for all the work" was gathered. (Exodus 36:5-7) The amount of gold and silver actually used is expressly mentioned in Exodus 38:24-26. The sum total of the gold amounts in present value to at least 131,595l., and that of the silver to about 75,444l., or both together to 207,039l., And it must be borne in mind, that this sum does not

indicate the whole amount offered by Israel - only that actually employed. In regard to the silver, either less of it was offered or none at all may have been required, since the 75,444l. in silver represent the exact amount of the "ransom money" (Exodus 30:12) which every Israelite had to pay on their being first numbered (38:26). Nor was it only gold, silver, and other material which the people brought. All "wise-hearted" men and women "whose heart the Lord stirred up" - that is, all who understood such work, and whose zeal was kindled by love for God's sanctuary - busied themselves, according to their ability, under the direction of Bezaleel, the grandson of Hur, and Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan. But what chiefly impresses us in the sacred narrative is the evidence of spiritual devotion, which appeared alike in the gifts and in the labor of the people.

"And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as Jehovah had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them." (Exodus 39:43)

Under such willing hands, the whole work was completed within an almost incredibly short period. On comparing Exodus 19:1, which fixes the arrival of Israel at Mount Sinai as in the third month (of the first year), with Exodus 40:2, which informs us that the Tabernacle was ready for setting up "on the first day of the first month" (of the second year), we find that an interval of nine months had elapsed. From this, however, must be deducted twice forty days, during which Moses was on the mount, as well as the days when Israel prepared for the covenant, and those when it was ratified and the law given, and also the interval between Moses' first and second stay on the mountain. Thus the whole of the elaborate work connected with the Tabernacle and its services must have been done within six months. And now that "the Tabernacle was reared up, Moses first placed within the Most Holy Place the Ark holding "the testimony," and covered it with the mercy-seat; next, he ranged in the Holy Place, to the north, the table of shewbread, setting "the bread in order upon it before the Lord;" then, to the south, "the candlestick," lighting its lamps before the Lord; and finally "the golden altar" "before the veil" of the Most Holy Place, "and he

<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew word is derived from a horn, and some versions actually translate; "he wist not that his face was horned." From this the representation of Moses with horns on his forehead has had its origin.

burnt sweet incense thereon." All this being done, and the curtain at the entrance to the Tabernacle hung up, (Exodus 40:28) the altar of burnt-offering was placed "by the door of the Tabernacle," and "the laver" between it and that altar, although probably not in a straight line, but somewhat to the side of the altar of burnt-offering. And on the altar smoked the burnt and the meat-offering, and the laver was filled with water, in which Moses, and Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and their feet.

All was now quite in readiness means, ordinances, and appointed channels of blessing, and all was in waiting. One thing only was needed; but upon that the meaning and the efficacy of everything else depended. But God was faithful to His promise. As in believing expectancy Israel looked up, "the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle." Outside, visible to all, rested "upon the tent" that Cloud and Pillar, in which Jehovah had hitherto guided them, and would continue so to do. For, as the cloud by day and the appearance of fire by night tarried over the Tabernacle, the children of Israel "abode in their tents," "and journeyed not." But "when it was taken up," then Israel's camp was speedily broken up, and, journeying, they followed their Divine Leader (comp. Numbers 9:15-23). A constant, visible, and guiding Presence of Jehovah this among His professing people, resting above the outer tent that covered the Tabernacle. But within that Tabernacle itself there was yet another and unapproachable Presence. For "the glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34, 35) Presently it withdrew within the Most Holy Place, into which none could enter but the high-priest once a year, and that on the day and for the purpose of atonement, and where it rested between the cherubim of glory, above the mercy-seat, that covered the ark with the testimony. For "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." "But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once

into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:8, 11, 12)

## **II\_14 Analysis of the Book of Leviticus - The Sin of Nadab and Abihu - Judgment upon the Blasphemer.**

### **Leviticus**

THE Book of Exodus was intended to tell how the Lord God redeemed and set apart for Himself "a peculiar people." Accordingly, it appropriately closes with the erection of the Tabernacle and the hallowing of it by the visible Presence of Jehovah in the Holy Place. It yet remained to show the other aspect of the covenant. For the provisions and the means of grace must be accepted and used by those for whom they are designed, and the "setting apart" of the people by Jehovah implied, as it's converse, consecration on the part of Israel. And this forms the subject matter of the Book of Leviticus, <sup>17</sup> which a recent German writer has aptly described as "the code regulating the spiritual life of Israel, viewed as the people of God."

To sum up its general contents - it tells us in its first Part (1-16.) how Israel was to approach God, together with what, symbolically speaking, was inconsistent with such approaches; and in its second Part (17-27.) how, having been brought near to God, the people were to maintain, to enjoy, and to exhibit the state of grace of which they had become partakers. Of course, all is here symbolical, and we must regard the directions and ordinances as conveying in an outward form so many spiritual truths. Perhaps we might go so far as to say, that Part 1 of Leviticus exhibits, in a symbolical form, the doctrine of justification, and Part that of sanctification; or, more accurately, the manner of access to God, and the holiness which is the result of that access.

It has already been pointed out, that the Book of Leviticus consists of two Parts; the one ending

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<sup>17</sup> The Book of Leviticus, or about the Levitical ordinances, derives its designation from the corresponding Greek term in the LXX translation, and its Latin name in the Vulgate. It corresponds to the Rabbinical designation of "Law of the Priests," and "Book of the Law of Offerings." Among the Jews it is commonly known as *Vajikra*, from the first word in the Hebrew text: "Vajikra," "He called."

with chapter 16; the other, properly speaking, with chapter 25; chapter 26 being a general conclusion, indicating the blessings of faithful adherence to the covenant, while chapter 27, which treats of vowing unto the Lord, forms a most appropriate appendix. At the close of the book itself, (Leviticus 26:46) and of the chapter which, for want of a better name, we have termed its appendix (27:34), we find expressions indicating the purpose of the whole, and that the book of Leviticus forms in itself a special and independent part of the Pentateuch. We repeat it, the Book of Leviticus is intended for Israel as the people of God; it is the statute-book of Israel's spiritual life; and, on both these grounds, it is neither simply legal, in the sense of ordinary law, nor yet merely ceremonial, but throughout symbolical and typical. Accordingly, its deeper truths apply to all times and to all men.

Part I (1-16.), which tells Israel how to approach God so as to have communion with Him, appropriately opens with a description of the various kinds of sacrifices. (Leviticus 1-7) It next treats of the priesthood.

(Leviticus 8-10) The thoroughly symbolical character of all, and hence the necessity of closest adherence to the directions given, are next illustrated by the judgment which befell those who offered incense upon "strange fire." (Leviticus 10:1-6) From the priesthood the sacred text passes to the worshippers. (Leviticus 11-15) These must be clean - personally (11:1-47), in their family-life, (Leviticus 12) and as a congregation. (Leviticus 13-15) Above and beyond all is the great cleansing of the Day of Atonement, (Leviticus 16) with which the first part of the book, concerning access to God, closes.

The Second Part of the Book of Leviticus, which describes, in symbolical manner, the holiness that becometh the people of God, treats, first, of personal holiness, (Leviticus 17) then of holiness in the family, (Leviticus 18) of holiness in social relations, (Leviticus 19, 20) and of holiness in the priesthood. (Leviticus 21, 22) Thence the sacred text proceeds to holy seasons. (Leviticus 23, 24) As the duty of close adherence to the Divine directions in connection with the priesthood had been illustrated by the judgment upon Nadab and

Abihu, (Leviticus 10:1-6) so now the solemn duty, incumbent on all Israel, to treat the Name of Jehovah as holy, is exhibited in the punishment of one who had blasphemed it. (Leviticus 24:10-end) Finally, Leviticus 25 describes the holiness of the land. Thus Part II. treats more especially of consecration. As Part I., describing access to God, had culminated in the ordinance of the Day of Atonement, so Part II. in that of the Jubilee Year. Lastly, Leviticus 26 dwells on the blessing attaching to faithful observance of the covenant; while Leviticus 27, reaching, as it were, beyond ordinary demands and consecrations, speaks of the free-will offerings of the heart, as represented by vows.

It now only remains to describe the two illustrative instances already referred to - the one connected with the priesthood, the other with the people.

Aaron and his sons had just been solemnly consecrated to their holy office, and the offering, which they had brought, consumed in view of the whole people by fire from before Jehovah, to betoken His acceptance thereof. (Leviticus 9) All the more did any transgression of the Lord's ordinance, especially if committed by His priests, call for signal and public punishment. But, Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, attempted to offer "strange fire before Jehovah, which He commanded them not." (Leviticus 10:1)

Some writers have inferred from the prohibition of wine or of any strong drink to the priests during the time of their ministry, which immediately follows upon the record of this event (10:8-11), that these two had been under some such influence at the time of their daring attempt. The point is of small importance, comparatively speaking. It is not easy to say what the expression "strange fire" exactly implies. Clearly, the two were going to offer incense on the golden altar (ver. 1), and as clearly this service was about to be done at a time not prescribed by the Lord. For a comparison of vers. 12 and 16 shows that it took place between the sacrifice offered by Aaron (Leviticus 9) and the festive meal following that sacrifice; whereas incense was only to be burnt at the morning and evening sacrifices. Besides, it may be, that they also took "strange fire" in the sense of taking the burning coals otherwise than from the altar of



burnt-offering. In the ceremonial for the Day of Atonement the latter is expressly prescribed, (Leviticus 16:12) and it is a fair inference that the same direction applied to every time of incensing. At any rate, we know that such was the invariable rule in the Temple at the time of Christ.

But Nadab and Abihu were not allowed to accomplish their purpose. The same fire, which a little ago had consumed the accepted sacrifice, (Leviticus 9:24) now struck them, "and they died before Jehovah," that is, in front of His dwelling-place, most probably in the court (comp. Leviticus 1:5), just as they were about to enter the Holy Place. Thus, on the very day of their consecration to the priesthood, did the oldest sons of Aaron perish, because they had not sanctified the Lord in their hearts, but had offered Him a worship of their own devising, instead of that holy incense consumed by fire from off the altar, which symbolized prayer, offered up on the ground of accepted sacrifice. And this twofold lesson did the Lord Himself teach in explanation of this judgment (10:3). So far as the priesthood was concerned - "I will sanctify Myself in those who stand near to Me,<sup>2</sup> and" (so far as all the people were concerned) "before all the people I will glorify Myself." In other words, if those who had been consecrated to Him would not sanctify Him in heart and life, He would sanctify Himself in them by judgments (comp. also Ezekiel 38:16), and thus glorify His Name before all, as the Holy One, Who cannot with impunity be provoked to anger.

So deeply was Aaron solemnized, that, in the language of Scripture, he "held his peace." Not a word of complaint escaped his lips; nor yet was a token of mourning on his part, or on that of his sons, allowed to cast the shadow of personal feelings, or of latent regret, upon this signal vindication of Divine holiness (10:6). Only their "brethren, the whole house of Israel" were permitted to "bemoan this burning (of His anger) which Jehovah hath kindled."

The history of the judgment upon the blasphemer (Leviticus 24:10-14) was inserted in the portion of Leviticus where it stands, either because it happened at the time when the laws there recorded were given, or else because it forms a suitable

introduction to, and illustration of, the duty of owning Jehovah, which finds its fullest outward expression in the rest of the Sabbatical and in the arrangements of the Jubilee Year, enjoined in Leviticus 25. It also affords another instance of the dangers accruing to Israel from the presence among them of that "mixed multitude" which had followed them from Egypt. (Exodus 12:38) There seems no reason to doubt the Jewish view, that the latter occupied a separate place in the camp; the children of Israel being ranged according to their tribes, "every man by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." (Numbers 2:2) But as the blasphemer was only the son of a Danite mother - Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri - his father having been an Egyptian,<sup>18</sup> he would not have been entitled to pitch his tent among the tribe of Daniel.

Hebrew tradition further states, that this had been the cause of the quarrel, when the blasphemer" went out among the children of Israel; and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp." Finally, it adds, that the claim to dwell among the Danites having been decided by Moses against him, the man "blasphemed the Name<sup>19</sup> (of Jehovah), and cursed." Whatever truth, if any, there be in this tradition, the crime itself was most serious. If even cursing one's parents was visited with death, what punishment could be too severe upon one who had "reviled" Jehovah, and "cursed!" But just because the case was so solemn, Moses did not rashly

<sup>18</sup> A very ancient Jewish tradition has it, that the father of this blasphemer was the Egyptian whom Moses slew on account of his maltreatment of an Hebrew (Exodus 2:11, 12). Legendary details are added about the previous offenses of that Egyptian, which need not be here repeated. Their evident object is, on the one hand, to render the passionate anger of Moses excusable, and, on the other, to account for the fact that an Egyptian was the father of a child of which a Hebrewess was the mother.

<sup>19</sup> The Rabbis and the LXX version render the expression "blasphemed" by "uttered distinctly," and Jewish traditionalism has based upon this rendering the prohibition ever to pronounce the name Jehovah - an ordinance so well observed that even the exact pronunciation of the word is not certainly known. Most probably it should be pronounced Jahveh. In our English Version, as in the LXX and Vulgate it is rendered by "the LORD," the latter word being printed in capitals.

adjudicate in it (comp. the corresponding delay in Numbers 15:34)

"They put him inward to determine about them (i.e. about blasphemers), according to the mouth (or command) of Jehovah." Then by Divine direction the blasphemer was taken without the camp; those who had heard his blasphemy laid "their hands upon his head," as it were to put away the blasphemy from themselves, and lay it on the head of the guilty (comp. Deuteronomy 21:6); and the whole congregation shared in the judgment by stoning him.

But the general law which decreed the punishment of death upon blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16) was to apply to native Israelites as well as to the stranger, as indeed all crimes that carried retributive punishment - specially those against the life or the person - were to be equally visited, whether the offender were a Jew or a foreigner. This is the object of the repetition of these laws in that connection. (Leviticus 24:17-22) For Jehovah was not a national deity, like the gods of the heathen; nor were Israel's privileges those of exceptional favor in case of offenses; but Jehovah was the Holy One of Israel, and holiness became His house forever.

## **II\_15 Analysis of the Book of Numbers - The Numbering of Israel - and that of the Levites - Arrangement of the Camp, and its Symbolical Import - The March.**

### **Numbers 1 to 4; 10:1-11**

THE Book of Numbers reads almost like a chronicle of the principal events during the thirty-eight years which elapsed between Israel's stay in the wilderness of Sinai, and their arrival on the borders of Canaan.

What took place during the journey to Mount Sinai had been intended to prepare the people for the solemn events there enacted. Similarly, the thirty-eight years wanderings which followed were designed to fit Israel for entering on possession of the Land of Promise. The outward history of the people during that period exhibited, on the one hand, the constant care and mercy of Jehovah, and on the other, His holiness and His judgments; while the laws and ordinances given them were needful for the organization of the commonwealth

of Israel in its future relations. A brief analysis of the whole book will show the connection of all.

In general, the Book of Numbers seems to consist of three parts, the first, (Numbers 1-10:10) detailing the preparations for the march from Sinai; the second, (Numbers 10:11-21) The history of the journeyings of Israel through the wilderness; and the third, (Numbers 22-26) the various occurrences on the east of the Jordan. If we examine each of these parts separately, we find that Part I consists of four sections, detailing - 1. The numbers and the outward arrangement of each of the tribes, (Numbers 1, 2) and the appointment of the Levites to their service (3, 4.); 2. Laws concerning the higher and spiritual order of the people, culminating in the priestly blessing (5, 6.); 3. The three last occurrences before leaving Mount Sinai (7, 8, 9:1-14); 4. The signals for the march in the wilderness (9:15 -10: 10).

Part II tells the history of the wanderings of Israel, in their three stages 1. From Sinai to Paran, near Kadesh, detailing all that happened there (10:10-14); 2. From the announcement of the death of the generation which had 125 come out from Egypt to the re-assembling of the people at Kadesh in the fortieth year after the Exodus (15-19); 3. The march from Kadesh to Mount Hor, with the events during its course (20, 21). Lastly, Part III. consists of five sections detailing -

1. The attempts of Moab and Midian against Israel (22-25.);
2. A fresh census and the ordinances connected with it (25-27.);
3. Certain sacred laws given in view of settling in Palestine (28-30.);
4. The victory over Midian, the division of the territory gained, along with a review of the past (31-33:49);
5. Some prospective directions on taking possession of the Land of Promise (33:50-36.).<sup>20</sup>

Before leaving the encampment at Mount Sinai, God directed Moses and Aaron to take a census of

<sup>20</sup> We have substantially followed the arrangement of Keil, which agrees with that of the best modern commentators. In our remarks as to the numbering of the tribes, we have also availed ourselves of the same help.

all who constituted the host of Israel in the language of Scripture. "All that are able to go forth to war," "their armies," (Numbers 1:3) that is, "every male from twenty years old and upwards." In this they were to be assisted by one delegate from each tribe, "every one head of the house of his fathers" (1:4); or, as they are designated in ver. 16, "the called (representatives) of the congregation, princes of their paternal tribes, heads of thousands in Israel."

The latter expression indicates that the census was taken on the plan proposed by Jethro, (Exodus 18:21, 25) by which Israel was arranged into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. This also accounts for the even numbers assigned to each tribe as the final result of the numbering. Manifestly, the census was made on the basis of the poll taken, nine months before, for the purpose of the "atonement money." (Exodus 30:11-16) This poll had yielded a total of 603,550, (Exodus 38:26) which is precisely the same number as that in Numbers 1:46. Probably, therefore, the census was substantially only a re-arrangement and registration of the people according to their tribes, in thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, made with the co-operation of the hereditary rulers of the tribes. The above number of men capable of bearing arms would, if we may apply modern statistical results, imply a total population of upwards of two millions. Thirty-eight years later, just before entering upon possession of the land, a second census was taken, (Numbers 26) which yielded a total number of 601,730 capable of bearing arms (26:51), thus showing a decrease of 1820 during the years of wandering in the wilderness. Arranging these two census according to the tribes, and placing them side by side, we gather some interesting information:

#### First Census (Exodus 30; Numbers 1)

REUBEN.....46,500 (Elizur, "My God the Rock.")  
 Simeon.....59,300 (Shelumiel, "God my Salvation.")  
 Gad.....45,650 (Eliasaph, "My God that gathers.")  
 JUDAH <sup>21</sup> .....74,600 (Nahshon, "The Diviner.")

<sup>21</sup> The names printed in capitals are those of the standard-bearers (see further on). It will be seen that of the twelve princes he of Judah bears a peculiar name. The name Nahshon is derived from a serpent. Without indulging in fanciful

Issachar .....54,400 (Nethaneel, "God the Giver.")  
 Zebulon .....57,400 (Eliab, "My God the Father.")  
 EPHRAIM.....40,500 (Elishama, "My God the Hearer.")  
 Manasseh.....32,200 (Gamaliel, "My God the Rewarder.")  
 Benjamin .....35,400 (Abidan, "My Father is Judge.")  
 DAN.....62,700 (Ahiezer, "My Brother is Help.")  
 Asher .....41,500 (Pagiel, either "My Fate is God," or "My prayer-God.")  
 Naphtali .....53,400 (Ahira, "My Brother is Friend.")  
 TOTAL 603,550

#### Second Census (Numbers 26)

REUBEN.....43,730  
 Simeon.....22,200  
 Gad.....40,500  
 JUDAH 2 .....76,500  
 Issachar .....64,300  
 Zebulon .....60,500  
 EPHRAIM.....32,500  
 Manasseh.....52,700  
 Benjamin .....45,600  
 DAN.....64,400  
 Asher .....53,400  
 Naphtali .....45,400  
 TOTAL 601,730

A comparison of the foregoing figures will show, that, while some of the tribes remarkably increased, others equally remarkably decreased, during the thirty-eight years' wanderings. Thus, for example, Issachar increased nineteen per cent., Benjamin and Asher twenty-nine per cent., and Manasseh about sixty-three per cent.; while Reuben decreased six per cent., Gad twelve per cent., Naphtali fifteen per cent., and Simeon almost sixty-three per cent. Some interpreters have connected the large decrease in the latter tribe with the judgment following upon the service of Baal Peor; the fact that Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, had been such a notable offender (Numbers 25:6-14) leading to the inference that

speculations, we may be allowed to suggest that this may bear prophetic reference to the Great Prophet who was to bruise the head of the serpent. With this also agrees the name of his father Amminadab, "my people is noble."

the tribe itself had been largely implicated in the sin.

It has already been noted, that the Levites were taken for the ministry of the sanctuary in place of the firstborn of Israel. (Numbers 3:11, 12) The number of the latter amounted to 22,273. (Numbers 3:43) But this statement is not intended to imply that, among all the Jewish males, amounting to upwards of a million <sup>22</sup> of all ages - from the grandfather to the infant lately born - there were only 22,273 "firstborns." The latter figure evidently indicates only the number of the firstborn since the departure from Egypt. With reference to those born previously to the Exodus we are expressly told: (Numbers 3:13; 8:17) "all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I smote all the firstborn of Egypt I hallowed unto Me all the firstborn in Israel."

Hence the fresh hallowing of the firstborn of Israel, and their subsequent numbering with a view to the substitution of the Levites for them, must have dated from after the Paschal night. Thus the 22,273 firstborn sons, for whom the Levites were substituted, represent those born after the departure from Egypt. If this number seems proportionally large, it should be remembered that the oppressive measures of Pharaoh would tend to diminish the number of marriages during the latter part of Israel's stay in Egypt, while the prospect of near freedom would, in a corresponding manner, immensely increase them. <sup>23</sup> Besides, it is a well-known fact that even now the proportion of boys to girls is very much greater among Jews than among Gentiles. <sup>24</sup> Viewed in this light, the

<sup>22</sup> The total number of the people being computed at about two millions, about one million of males would be the ordinary proportion.

<sup>23</sup> It is indeed unsafe to draw from present statistical data definite inferences as to the state of Israel at that time. But nothing is so remarkable as the influence of outward circumstances upon the annual number of marriages. Thus in Austria there were, in 1851, 361,249 marriages among a population of 36\_ millions; while in 1854, among a population of upwards of 37 millions, only 279,202 occurred. In England the population increased between 1866 and 1869 by about a million, while in the latter year there were nearly 11,000 marriages less than in the former.

<sup>24</sup> The proportion of boys to girls born in England varies most curiously from year to year, and in different counties. The

account of Scripture on this subject presents no difficulties to the careful reader.

As already explained, the Levites were not numbered with the other tribes, but separately, (Numbers 3:15) and appointed ministers to Aaron the priest "for the service of the Tabernacle," in room of the firstborn of Israel (3:5-13). Not being regarded as part of the host, they were counted "from a month old and upward," the number of their males amounting to 22,000, which at the second census (after the thirty-eight years' wanderings) had increased to 23,000. (Numbers 3:39; 26:62) This has been computed to imply about 13,000 men, from twenty years and upwards - a number less than half that of the smallest of the other tribes (Benjamin, 35,400).

With this computation agrees the statement (Numbers 4:48) that the number of Levites "from thirty years old and upwards, even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry," amounted in all to 8,580. <sup>25</sup>

The same proportion between Levi and the rest of the people seems to have continued in after times, as we gather from the results of the census taken by King David, (1 Chronicles 23:3) when Levi had only increased from 23,000 to 38,000, while the rest of the tribes had more than doubled. The Levites were arranged into families after their ancestors, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the three sons of Levi. (Numbers 3:14-43) The Gershonites (again subdivided into two families, and amounting to 7,500), under their leader Eliasaph - "My God that gathers" <sup>26</sup> - had charge of "the Tabernacle," or rather of "the dwelling-place;" of "the tent," of "the covering thereof;" and of "the

lowest during the last ten years has been in Huntingdonshire in the year 1868, when it descended to 94.3 boys to 100 girls. But the mean proportion during the last ten years shows from 102 to 106 boys (the latter number in Cornwall) to 100 girls. In the year 1832 the proportion in Geneva was 157 boys born to 100 girls. Among the Jews in some places the mean proportion has, on an average of 16 years, been as high as 145 boys to 100 girls.

<sup>25</sup> We cannot here enter into further numerical details. But this we can and do assert, that all supposed difficulties on this subject vanish before a careful study of the sacred text.

<sup>26</sup> The significance of the names of "the princes," as indicative of the spiritual hopes of Israel while in Egypt, has already been pointed out in a former chapter.



hanging (or curtain) for the door of the tent of meeting;" as also of "the hangings of the court" (in which the Tabernacle stood); of the curtain for its door; and of all the cordage necessary for these "hangings."

We have been particular in translating this passage, because it proves that the common view, which places the curtains "of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet," (Exodus 26:1) outside the boards that constituted the framework of the Tabernacle, is entirely erroneous. Evidently these hangings, and not the boards, constituted "the Tabernacle," or rather "the dwelling" <sup>27</sup> - "the tent," outside the framework, consisting of the eleven curtains of goats' hair, (Exodus 26:7) and "the covering" of the whole being twofold - one "of rams' skins dyed red," and another "of badgers' skins." (Exodus 26:14)

Whilst the Gershonites had charge of "the dwelling," "the tent," and the hangings of the outer court, the care of the "boards of the dwelling," with all that belonged thereto, and of "the pillars of the court round about" - in short, of all the outer solid framework of the Tabernacle and of the court - devolved upon the Merarites, under their chief, Zuriel ("My Rock is God"). Finally, the most important charge - that of the contents and vessels of the sanctuary - was committed to the Kohathites, under their chief Elizaphan ("My God watcheth round about").

Viewed as a whole, the camp of Israel thus formed a threefold square - a symbolical design, further developed in the Temple of Solomon, still more fully in that of Ezekiel, and finally shown in all its completeness in "the city that lieth foursquare." <sup>28</sup>

The innermost square - as yet elongated and therefore not perfect in its width (or comprehension), nor yet having the perfect form of a cube, except so far as the Most Holy Place itself was concerned (which was a cube) - was

occupied by "the dwelling," covered by "the tent," and surrounded by its "court." Around this inner was another square, occupied by the ministers of the Tabernacle in the East, or at the entrance to the court, by Moses, Aaron, and his sons; in the South by the Kohathites, who had the most important Levitical charge; in the West by the Gershonites; and in the North by the Merarites. Finally, there was a third and outermost square, which formed the camp of Israel. The eastern or most important place here was occupied by Judah, bearing the standard of the division. With Judah were Issachar and Zebulun (the sons of Leah), the three tribes together a host of 186,400 men. The southern place was held by Reuben, with the standard of that division, camped probably nearest to Zebulun, or at the south-eastern corner. With Reuben were Simeon and Gad (the sons of Leah and of Zilpah, Leah's maid), forming altogether a host of 151,450 men. The western post was occupied by Ephraim, with the standard of his division, being probably camped nearest to Gad, or at the south-western corner. With Ephraim were Manasseh and Benjamin (in short, the three descendants of Rachel), forming altogether a host of 108,100 men. Lastly, the northern side was occupied by Dan, with his standard, camping probably nearest to Benjamin, or at the north-western corner. With Dan were Asher and Naphtali (the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah), forming altogether a host of 157,600 men. This was also the order of march, Judah with his division leading, after which came Reuben, with his division, then the sanctuary with the Levites in the order of their camping, the rear consisting of the divisions of Ephraim and of Daniel. The sacred text does not specially describe the banners carried by the four leading tribes. According to Jewish tradition they bore as emblems "the likeness of the four living creatures," seen by Ezekiel in his vision of the Chariot, (Ezekiel 1:10) the color of the standard being the same as that of the precious stones on the high-priest's breastplate, on which the names of the standard-bearing tribes were graven. (Exodus 28:15-21) In that case Judah would have had on its standard a lion on a blood-red ground (the sardian stone or sard); Reuben the head of a man on a ground of dark red color (the ruby or carbuncle); Ephraim the head of a bullock on a

<sup>27</sup> So it should be rendered both in Numbers 3:25 and in Exodus 26:1, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Revelation 20:9; 21:16. We cannot here enter further into this subject, but the symbolism of the threefold square, and the symbolical meaning of the prophetic visions in Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation will readily present themselves to the thoughtful student of Scripture.



ground of hyacinth (the ligury, according to some, Ligurian amber); and Dan an eagle on a ground of bright yellow, like gold (the ancient chrysolith, perhaps our topaz). This, supposing the names to have been graven in the order in which the tribes camped. But Josephus and some of the Rabbis range the names on the breastplate in the same order as on the ephod of the high-priest, (Exodus 28:10) that is, "according to their birth." In that case Reuben would have been on the sardian stone or sard, Judah on the ruby or carbuncle, Dan on a sapphire, or perhaps lapis-lazuli (blue), and Ephraim on an onyx, or else a beryl,<sup>29</sup> the color of the banners, of course, in each case corresponding. Altogether the camp is supposed to have occupied about three square miles.

The direction either for marching or for resting was, as explained in a former chapter, given by the Cloud in which the Divine Presence was. But for actual signal to move, two silver trumpets were to be used by the sons of Aaron. A prolonged alarm indicated the commencement of the march. At the first alarm the eastern, at the second the southern part of the camp was to move forward, then came the Tabernacle and its custodians, the western, and finally the northern part of the camp, Naphtali closing the rear. On the other hand, when an assembly of the people was summoned, the signal was only one blast of the trumpets in short, sharp tones. In general, and for all times, the blast of these silver trumpets, whether in war, on festive, or on joyous occasions, had this spiritual meaning: "ye shall be remembered before Jehovah your God." (Numbers 10:1-10) In other words, Israel was a host, and as such summoned by blast of trumpet. But Israel was a host of which Jehovah was Leader and King, and the trumpets that summoned this host were silver trumpets of the sanctuary, blown by the priests of Jehovah. Hence these their blasts brought Israel as the Lord's host in remembrance before their God and King.

<sup>29</sup>

It will be perceived that interpreters differ as to the exact equivalent of the precious stones mentioned in the sacred text. As to the arrangement of the stones on the high-priest's breastplate, we prefer the view that the order in the camp indicated that of the names on the breastplate.

## **II\_16 The Offerings of the - Princes - The setting apart of the Levites - Second Observance of the Passover.**

### **Numbers 7 to 9**

THREE other occurrences are recorded, before the camp of Israel broke up from Mount Sinai, although they may not have taken place in the exact order in which, for special reasons, they are told in the sacred text. These events were: the offering of certain gifts on the part of "the princes" of Israel: (Numbers 7) the actual setting apart of the Levites to the service for which they had been already previously designated; (Numbers 7) and a second observance of The Passover." (Numbers 9:1-14) The offerings of the princes of Israel commenced immediately after the consecration of the tabernacle. (Leviticus 8:10-9:1; Numbers 7:1) But their record is inserted in Numbers 7, partly in order not to interrupt the consecutive series of Levitical ordinances, which naturally followed upon the narrative of the consecration of the tabernacle, (Leviticus 11-end of book) and partly because one of the offerings of the princes bore special reference to the wilderness-journey, which was then about to be immediately resumed. Probably these offerings may have been brought on some of the days on which part of the Levitical ordinances was also proclaimed. We know that the presentation of gifts by the princes occupied, altogether, the mornings of twelve, or rather of thirteen days.

On the first day (Numbers 7:1-9) they brought in common "six covered wagons and twelve oxen," for the transport of the Tabernacle during the journeyings of the children of Israel. Four of these wagons with eight oxen were given to the Merarites, who had charge of the heavy framework and of the pillars; the other two wagons and four oxen to the Gershonites, who had the custody of the hangings and curtains. As for the vessels of the sanctuary, they were to be carried by the Kohathites on their shoulders. Then, during the following twelve days "the princes" offered successively each the same gift, that so "there might be equality," anticipating in this also the New Testament principle. (2 Corinthians 8:14) Each offering consisted of a "silver charger," weighing about four and a half pounds, a "silver bowl," weighing about two and a quarter pounds,

both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat-offering, and a "golden spoon," about a third of a pound in weight, "full of incense." These gifts were accompanied by burnt, sin, and peace-offerings, which no doubt were sacrificed each day, as the vessels were presented in the sanctuary. And as they brought their precious offerings, with humble confession of sin over their sacrifices, with thanksgiving and with prayer, the Lord graciously signified His acceptance by speaking unto Moses "from off the mercy-seat," "from between the cherubim." (Numbers 7:89)

The second event was the formal setting apart of the Levites, (Numbers 8:5, etc.) which was preceded by a significant direction to Aaron in reference to the lighting of the seven-branched candlestick in the sanctuary.

To make the meaning of this symbol more clear, it was added, "the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick" - that is, each of the seven lamps (the number being also significant) shall be so placed as to throw its light into the darkness over against it. Each separately - and yet each as part of the one candlestick in the Holy Place, and burning the same sacred oil, was to shed light into the darkness over against the candlestick. For the light on the candlestick was symbolical of the mission of Israel as the people of God, and the Levites were really only the representatives of all Israel, having been substituted instead of their firstborn. (Numbers 3:11-13) On this account, also, the Levites were not specially "hallowed," as the priests had been,<sup>30</sup> but only "cleansed" for their ministry, and after that presented to the Lord.

The first part of this symbolical service consisted in sprinkling on them "water of sin" (rendered in our Authorized Version "water of purifying"), alike to confess the defilement of sin and to point to its removal. After that they were to shave off all their hair and to wash their clothes. The Levites were now "unsinced" (8:21), so far as their

persons were concerned. Then followed their dedication to the work.

For this purpose the Levites were led "before the Tabernacle" (8:9), that is, probably into the outer court, bringing with them two young bullocks - the one for a burnt, the other for a sin-offering, and each with its meat-offering. The people, through their representatives - the princes - now laid their hands upon them, as it were to constitute them their substitutes and representatives. Then Aaron took them "before Jehovah" (ver. 10), that is, into the Holy Place, and "waved them for a wave-offering of the children of Israel" - probably by leading them to the altar and back again - after which, the Levites would lay their hands upon the sacrifices which were now offered by Aaron, who so "made an atonement for them" (ver. 21). The significance of all these symbols will be sufficiently apparent. "And after that, the Levites went in to do service in the Tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 22).

The third event recorded was a second celebration of the Passover on the anniversary of Israel's deliverance from Egypt - "in his appointed season, according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof." (Numbers 9:3) We specially mark how the Lord now again directed all - the injunction to "keep the Passover" being expressly repeated here, perhaps to obviate the possibility of such a misunderstanding as that the Passover was not to be observed from year to year. Again, when certain men, "defiled by a dead body," complained that they had thereby been excluded from the feast, Moses would not decide the matter himself, but brought their case before God. The direction given was, that, under such or similar circumstances, the Passover should be observed exactly a month later, it being at the same time added, to guard against any willful, not necessary, neglect, that whoever omitted the ordinance without such reason should "be cut off from among His people." (Numbers 9:13) For, as the significance of symbolical rites depended upon their entirety, so that if any part of them, however small, had been omitted, the whole would have been nullified, so, on the other hand, Israel's compliance with the prescribed rites required to be complete in every detail to secure the benefits

<sup>30</sup> We read in Exodus 29:1, in reference to Aaron and his sons, "Hallow them to minister unto Me in the priest's office", literally, "consecrate them to priest unto Me" (we use the word "priest" as a verb). In the case of the Levites there was neither consecration nor priesting, but cleansing unto ministry or service. Of course, the Aaronic priesthood pointed to and has ceased in Christ, our one great High-Priest.

promised to the obedience of faith. But not to receive these benefits was to leave an Israelite outside the covenant, or exposed to the Divine judgment. More than that, being caused by unbelief or disobedience, it involved the punishment due to open rebellion against God and His Word.

## **II\_17 Departure from Sinai - March into the Wilderness of Paran - At Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah.**

### **Number 10:29 to 11**

AT length, on the twentieth day of the second month,<sup>31</sup> the signal for departure from Sinai was given. The cloud which had rested upon the Tabernacle moved; the silver trumpets of the priests summoned "the camps" of Israel to their march, and as the Ark itself set forward, Moses, in joyous confidence of faith, spake those words of mingled prayer and praise which, as they marked the progress of Israel towards the Land of Promise, have ever been the signal in every forward movement of the Church:<sup>32</sup>

Arise, O Jehovah, let Thine enemies be scattered:  
Let them also that hate Thee flee before Thee.

The general destination of Israel was, in the first place, "the wilderness of Paran," a name known long before. (Genesis 14:6; 21:21) This tract may be described as occupying the whole northern part of the Sinaitic peninsula, between the so-called Arabah<sup>33</sup> on the east, and the wilderness of Shur in the west, (Genesis 16:7; Exodus 15:22) which separates Philistia from Egypt.

Here Israel was, so to speak, hedged in by the descendants of Esau - on the one side by the Edomites, whose country lay east of the Arabah, and on the other by the Amalekites, while right before them were the Amorites. The whole district still bears the name Badiet et Tih, "the desert of

the wanderings." Its southern portion seems, as it were, driven in wedgeways into the Sinaitic peninsula proper, from which it is separated by a belt of sand. Ascending from the so-called Tot, which had been the scene of the first year of Israel's pilgrimage and of the Sinaitic legislation, the Tih might be entered by one of several passes through the mountains which form its southern boundary. The Et Tih itself "is a limestone plateau of irregular surface."<sup>34</sup> It may generally be described as "open plains of sand and gravel... broken by a few valleys," and is at present "nearly waterless, with the exception of a few springs, situated in the larger wadies," which, however, yield rather an admixture of sand and water than water... "The ground is for the most part hard and unyielding, and is covered in many places with a carpet of small flints, which are so worn and polished... as to resemble pieces of black glass." In spring, however, there is a scanty herbage even here, while in the larger wadies there is always sufficient for camels, and even "a few patches of ground available for cultivation." Such was "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions,"<sup>35</sup> and drought, where there was no water," (Deuteronomy 8:15) through which Jehovah their God safely led Israel!

A still earlier retrospect on the part of Moses brings the events about to be described most vividly before us. Addressing Israel, he reminds them: (Deuteronomy 1:19) "when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as Jehovah our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea."

This "mountain of the Amorites" is the most interesting spot in the whole Et Tih, or "wilderness of the wanderings." Arrived there, it seemed as if Israel were just about to take possession of the Promised Land. Thence the spies went forth to view the land. But here also the sentence was

<sup>31</sup> That is, the month after the Passover; probably about the middle of May.

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 68:1 "In order to arm the Church with confidence, and to strengthen it with alacrity against the violent attacks of enemies." - Calvin.

<sup>33</sup> The deep valley which runs from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah.

<sup>34</sup> When not otherwise stated, the quotations within inverted commas are from Palmer's Desert of the Exodus.

<sup>35</sup> In the course of the day we caught and bottled a large specimen of the cerastes, or horned snake, a very poisonous species which abounds in the desert." - Desert of the Exodus, p. 310.

spoken which doomed all that unbelieving, faint-hearted generation to fall in the wilderness, and thither Israel had to return at the end of their forty years wanderings to start, as it were, anew on their journey of possession. "The mountain of the Amorites" is a mountain plateau in the north-east of the Et Tih, about seventy miles long, and from forty to fifty broad, which extends northward to near Beersheba. It contains many spots known to us from patriarchal history, and also celebrated afterwards. According to the description of travelers, we are here, literally, in a land of ruins, many of them dating far back, perhaps from the time of the Exodus, if not earlier.

Even the old name of the Amorites is still everywhere preserved as 'Amir and 'Amori. It leaves a peculiar impression on the mind to find not only the old Scripture names of towns continued these thousands of years, but actually to hear the wells which Abraham and Isaac had dug still called by their ancient names! About half way towards Beersheba the whole character of the scenery changes. Instead of the wilderness we have now broad valleys, with many and increasing evidences of former habitation all around. Indeed, we are now in the Negeb, or "south country" (erroneously rendered "the south" in our Authorized Version), which extends from about Kadesh to Beersheba. If "certain primeval stone remains" found throughout the Sinaitic peninsula have been regarded by the latest travelers as marking the journeyings, or rather the more prolonged settlements of Israel in "the wilderness," there is one class of them which deserves special attention. These are the so-called "Hazereth," or "fenced enclosures," consisting of "a low wall of stones in which thick bundles of thorny acacia are inserted, the tangled branches and long needle-like spikes forming a perfectly impenetrable hedge around the encampment" of tents and cattle which they sheltered. These "Hazereth," so frequently referred to in Scripture, abound in this district.

Such then was the goal and such the line of march before Israel, when, on that day in early summer, the Ark and the host of the Lord moved forward from the foot of Sinai. At the reiterated request of Moses, Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, had consented to accompany Israel, and to act as their

guide in the wilderness, in the faith of afterwards sharing "what goodness Jehovah" would do unto His people. (Numbers 10:32) This we learn from such passages as Judges 1:16; 1 Samuel 15:6; 27:10; 30:9. Although the pillar of cloud was the real guide of Israel in all their journeying, yet the local knowledge of Hobab would manifestly prove of the greatest use in indicating springs and places of pasturage. And so it always is. The moving of the cloud or its resting must be our sole guide; but under its direction the best means which human skill or knowledge can suggest should be earnestly sought and thankfully used.

For three days Israel now journeyed without finding "a resting-place." By that time they must have fairly entered upon the "great and terrible wilderness." The scorching heat of a May sun reflected by such a soil, the fatigues of such a march, with probably scarcity of water and want of pasturage for their flocks - all combined to depress those whose hearts were not strong in faith and filled with longing for the better country. Behind and around was the great wilderness, and, so far as could be seen, no "resting-place" before them! In truth, before inheriting the promises, Israel had now to pass through a trial of faith analogous to that which Abraham had undergone. Only as in his case each victory had been marked by increasing encouragements, in theirs each failure was attended by louder warnings, until at last the judgment came which deprived that unbelieving generation of their share in the enjoyment of the promise. Three days journey under such difficulties,<sup>36</sup> and "the people were as they who complain of evil in the ears of Jehovah." (Numbers 11:1)

But as this really reflected upon His guidance, it displeased the Lord, and a fire, sent by Jehovah, "consumed in the ends of the camp." At the intercession of Moses "the fire was quenched." But the lesson which might have been learned, and the warning conveyed in the judgment which had begun in the uttermost parts of the camp, remained unnoticed. Even the name Taberah (burning), with

<sup>36</sup> The distance of "three days' journey" (Numbers 10:33) prevents our accepting Professor Palmer's theory, who identifies Taberah with the present Erweis el Ebeirig. - Desert of the Exodus, pp. 257, 312.



which Moses had intended to perpetuate the memory of this event, was unheeded. Possibly, the quenching of the fire may have deadened their spiritual sensibility, as formerly the removal of the plagues had hardened the heart of Pharaoh and of his people. And so Taberah soon became Kibroth-hattaavah,<sup>37</sup> and the fire of wrath that had burned in the uttermost parts raged fiercely within the camp itself.

The sin of Israel at Kibroth-hattaavah was due to lust, and manifested itself in contempt for God's provision and in a desire after that of Egypt.

The "mixed multitude" which had come up with Israel were the first to lust. From them it spread to Israel. The past misery of Egypt - even its cruel bondage - seemed for the moment quite forgotten, and only the lowest thoughts of the abundant provision which it had supplied for their carnal wants were present to their minds. This impatient question of disappointed lustfulness, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" repeated even to weeping, can only be accounted for by such a state of feeling. But if it existed, it was natural that God's gracious provision of manna should also be despised. As if to mark their sin in this the more clearly, scripture here repeats its description of the manna, and of its miraculous provision. (Numbers 11:7-9) When Moses found "the weeping" not confined to any particular class, but general among the people (11:10), and that "the anger of Jehovah was kindled greatly," his heart sank within him. Yet, as has been well observed, he carried his complaint to the Lord in prayer, and therefore his was not the language of unbelief, only that of utter depression. Rightly understood, these words of his, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them?" implied that not he but God was their father and their provider, (Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 63:16) and that therefore he must cast their care upon the Lord. But even so the trial of Moses had in this instance become a temptation, although God gave him "with the temptation a way of escape."

<sup>37</sup>

The locality of the two is evidently the same, as appears even from the omission of Taberah from the list of encampments in Numbers 33:16.

Two things would the Lord do in answer to the appeal of Moses. First, He would, in His tender mercy, support and encourage His servant, and then manifest His power and holiness. With this twofold purpose in view, Moses was directed to place seventy of the elders of Israel - probably in a semi-circle - around the entrance to the Tabernacle. These "elders" were henceforth to help Moses in bearing the burden of the people. He had wished help, and he was now to receive it, although he would soon experience that the help of man was vain, and God alone the true helper. And then, to show in sight of all men that He had appointed such help, yet only as a help to Moses, God "came down in a cloud," spake unto Moses, and then put of his spirit upon these "elders." In manifestation of this new gift "they prophesied," by which, however, we are to understand not the prediction of future events, but probably that "speaking in the spirit" which in the New Testament also is designated as "prophesying." (1 Corinthians 12; 14) Further, lest in the mind of the people this should be connected with any miraculous power inherent in Moses, the same spirit descended, and with the same effect, upon two (Eldad and Medad) who had been "written," that is, designated for the office, but who for some reason had been prevented from appearing at the door of the Tabernacle. The lesson, it was evident, was required, for even Joshua had misunderstood the matter. When he found that Eldad and Medad prophesied "in the camp," he deemed the authority of his master compromised, and wished to "forbid them," since these men had not received the gift through Moses. We are here reminded of the similar conduct of John, who would have forbidden one "casting out devils" in the name of Christ, because he followed not with the other disciples, and of the Lord's rebuke of such mistaken zeal, (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49) - a mistake too often repeated, and a rebuke too much forgotten in the Christian Church at all times. Far different were the feelings of Moses. As a faithful servant, he emphatically disclaimed all honor for himself, and only expressed the fervent wish that the same spiritual gifts might be shared by all the Lord's people.

One thing was still required. God would manifest His power in providing for the wants of the



people, and His holiness in taking vengeance on their lust. The lesson was specially needed, for even Moses had, when first told, questioned the full promise of providing for the whole people flesh sufficient to last for a month. (Numbers 11:18-23) And now the Lord again showed how easily He can bring about supernatural results by what we call natural means. As explained in a former chapter, in spring the quails migrate in immense numbers from the interior of Africa northwards. An east wind, blowing from the Arabian Gulf, now drove them, in vast quantities, just over the camp of Israel. Here they fell down exhausted by the flight, and lay, to the distance of a day's journey "on this side and on that," in some places two cubits high. It is the same lesson which we have so often learned in this history. The "wind" which brought the quails" went forth from the Lord," and the number brought was far beyond what is ordinarily witnessed, although such a flight and drooping of birds are by no means uncommon. And so God can, by means unthought of, send sudden deliverances unexpectedly, even to one like Moses. But as for Israel, they had now their wishes more than gratified. The supply of flesh thus provided sufficed not only for the present, but was such that the greater part of it was preserved for after use (11:32). Thus had God shown the folly of those who murmured against His provision or questioned His ability. It still remained to punish the presumption and sin of their conduct. "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah (the graves of lust): because there they buried the people that lusted." But how deeply the impression of this judgment sunk into the hearts of the godly in Israel appears from such passages as Psalm 78:26-31, while its permanent lesson to all times is summed up in these words: "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." (Psalm 106:15)

## **II\_18 Murmuring of Miriam and Aaron - The Spies sent to Canaan -Their "Evil Report" - Rebellion of the People, and Judgment pronounced upon them - The defeat of Israel "unto Hormah".**

### **Numbers 12 to 14**

HITHERTO the spirit of rebellion on the part of the people had been directed against Jehovah Himself. If Moses had lately complained of continual trials in connection with those to whom he stood in no way closely related, (Numbers 11:12) he was now to experience the full bitterness of this,

"A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10:36)

From Kibroth-hattaavah Israel had journeyed to Hazeroth, a station the more difficult to identify from the commonness of such "fenced enclosures" in that neighborhood.<sup>38</sup> Here Miriam and - apparently at her instigation,<sup>39</sup> - Aaron also "spake against Moses," as it is added, "because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married," referring most likely to a second marriage which Moses had contracted after the death of Zipporah.

For the first time we here encounter that pride of Israel after the flesh and contempt for all other nations, which has appeared through-out their after history, and in proportion as they have misunderstood the spiritual meaning of their calling. Thus, as Calvin remarks, Miriam and Aaron now actually boasted in that prophetic gift, which should have only wrought in them a sense of deep humility. (Numbers 12:2) But Moses was not like any ordinary prophet, although in his extreme meekness he would not vindicate his own position (12:3). He "was faithful," or approved, "to Him that appointed him," (Hebrews 3:2, 5) not merely in any one special matter, but "in all the house" of Jehovah, that is, in all pertaining to the kingdom of God. And the Lord now vindicated His servant both by public declaration, and by

<sup>38</sup> For the reason mentioned in a previous chapter we are unable to accept Professor Palmer's identification of Hazeroth with 'Ain Hadherah, however interesting the notices.

<sup>39</sup> We gather this from the name of Miriam being first mentioned, and from the fact that Numbers 12:1 reads in the original: "And she spake, Miriam and Aaron, against Moses."

punishing Miriam with leprosy. At the entreaty of Aaron, who owned his sister's and his own guilt, and at the intercession of Moses, this punishment was indeed removed. But the isolation of Miriam from the camp of Israel would teach all, how one who had boasted in privileges greater than those of others might be deprived even of the ordinary fellowship of Israel's camp.

The seven days of Miriam's separation were past, and Israel again resumed the march towards the Land of Promise. They had almost reached its boundary, when the event happened which not only formed the turning-point in the history of that generation, but which, more than any other, was typical of the future of Israel. For as that generation in their unbelief refused to enter the Land of Promise when its possession lay open before them, and as they rebelled against God and cast off the authority of Moses, so did their children reject the fulfillment of the promises in Christ Jesus, disown Him whom God had exalted a Prince and a Savior, and cry out: "Away with Him! away with Him!" And as the carcasses of those who had rebelled fell in the wilderness, so has similar spiritual judgment followed upon the terrible cry: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" But, blessed be God, as mercy was ultimately in store for the descendants of that rebellious generation, so also, in God's own time, will Israel turn again unto the Lord and enjoy the promises made unto the fathers.

The scene of this ever-memorable event was "the wilderness of Paran," or, to define the locality more exactly, Kadesh-barnea. (Numbers 13:26; Deuteronomy 1:19) The spot has first been identified by Dr. Rowlands and Canon Williams, and since so fully described by Professor Palmer, that we can follow the progress of events, step by step. Kadesh is the modern 'Ain Gadis, or spring of Kadesh, and lies in that north-eastern plateau of the wilderness of Paran, which formed the stronghold of the Amorites.<sup>40</sup> A little north of it begins the Negeb or "south country" of Palestine which, as already explained, reaches to about

<sup>40</sup> Kadesh was formerly called En Mishpat, "Well of Judgment," Genesis 14:7.

Beersheba, and where the Promised Land really begins.

The district is suited for pasturage, and contains abundant traces of former habitation, and, in the north, also evidence of the former cultivation of vines. Here, and not, as is usually supposed, in the neighborhood of Hebron, we must look for that valley of Eshcol,<sup>41</sup> whence the spies afterwards on their return brought the clusters of grapes, as specimens of the productiveness of the country, Kadesh itself is the plain at the foot of the cliff whence the 'Ain Gadis springs.

To the east is a ridge of mountains, to the west stretches a wide plain, where the Canaanites had gathered to await the advance of Israel. Hence, if the spies were to "get up this Negeb" ("south country"), they had "to go up by the mountain," (Numbers 13:17, 22) in order to avoid the host of Canaan. In so doing they made a detour, passing south of 'Ain Gadis, through what is called in Scripture the wilderness of Zin (13:21), from which they ascended into the mountains. Thus much seems necessary to understand the localization of the narrative.

But to return. From Deuteronomy 1:22, we gather that the proposal of sending spies "to search out the land" had originally come from the people. By permission of the Lord, Moses had agreed to it, (Numbers 13:1) adding, however, a warning to "be of good courage" (Numbers 13:20), lest this should be associated with fear of the people of the land. Twelve persons, seemingly the most suitable for the work, - spiritually and otherwise - were chosen from "the rulers" of the tribes.

Of these we only know Caleb and Joshua, the "minister of Moses," whose name Moses had formerly changed from Hoshea, which means "help," to Joshua, or "Jehovah is help." Detailed and accurate directions having been given them, the spies left the camp of Israel "at the time of the first-ripe grapes," that is, about the end of July. Thus far they were successful. Eluding the Canaanites, they entered Palestine, and searched the land to its northernmost boundary., "unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath," that is, as far as

<sup>41</sup> Eshcol means in Hebrew a bunch of grapes.

the plain of Coele-Syria. On their way back, coming from the north, they would of course not be suspected. Accordingly they now descended by Hebron, and explored the route which led into the Negeb by the western edge of the mountains. "In one of these extensive valleys -perhaps in Wady Hanein, where miles of grape-mounds even now meet the eye - they cut the gigantic cluster of grapes, and gathered the pomegranates and figs, to show how goodly was the land which the Lord had promised for their inheritance."

After forty days absence the spies returned to camp. The report and the evidence of the fruitfulness of the land which they brought, fully confirmed the original promise of God to Israel. (Exodus 3:8) But they added: (Numbers 13:28) "Only that the people is strong which occupieth the land, and the cities fortified, very great, and also descendants of the Anak have we seen there,"<sup>42</sup> whom, in their fear, they seem to have identified (ver. 33) with the Nephilim of the antediluvian world.<sup>43</sup>

This account produced immediate terror, which Caleb sought in vain to allay. His opposition only elicited stronger language on the part of the other "spies," culminating in their assertion, that, even if Israel were to possess the land, it was one "that eateth up its inhabitants," that is, a country surrounded and peopled by fierce races in a state of constant warfare for its possession. Thus the most trustworthy and the bravest from among their tribes, with only the exception of Caleb and of Joshua (whose testimony might be set aside on the ground of his intimate relationship to Moses), now declared their inability either to conquer or to hold the land, for the sake of which they had left the comforts of Egypt and endured the hardships and dangers of "the great and terrible wilderness. A night of complete demoralization followed - the result being open revolt against Moses and Aaron, direct rebellion against Jehovah, and a proposal to

elect a fresh leader and return to Egypt! In vain Moses and Aaron "fell on their faces" before God in sight of all the congregation; in vain Joshua and Caleb "rent their clothes" in token of mourning, and besought the people to remember that the Presence of Jehovah with them implied certain success. The excited people only "spake" of stoning them, when of a sudden "the glory of Jehovah visibly appeared in the tent of meeting to all the children of Israel." (Numbers 14:10) Almost had the Lord destroyed the whole people on the spot, when Moses again interposed - a type of the great Leader and Mediator of His people. With pleadings more urgent than ever before, he wrestled with God - his language in its intensity consisting of short, abrupt sentences, piled, as it were, petition on petition, but all founded on the glory of God, on His past dealings, and especially on the greatness of His mercy, repeating in reference to this the very words in which the Lord had formerly condescended to reveal His inmost Being, when proclaiming His "Name" before Moses. (Exodus 33:17, 19) Such plea could not remain unheeded; it was typical of the great plea and the great Pleader. But as, when long afterwards Israel called down upon themselves and their children the blood of Jesus, long and sore judgments were to befall the stiffnecked and rebellious, even although ultimately all Israel should be saved, so was it at Kadesh. According to the number of days that the spies had searched the land, were to be the years of their wanderings in the wilderness, and of all that generation which had come out from Egypt, at the age of twenty and upwards, not one was to enter the Land of Promise,<sup>44</sup> but their carcasses were to fall in that wilderness, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua.<sup>45</sup> But as for the other ten searchers of the land, quick destruction overtook them, and they "died by the plague before Jehovah."

<sup>42</sup> So literally. "The Anak" were probably a race or tribe, perhaps remnants of the original-inhabitants of Palestine before the Canaanites took possession of it. The meaning of Anak is probably "long-necked."

<sup>43</sup> Genesis 6:4. Rendered in the Authorized Version "giants," in Numbers 13:33.

<sup>44</sup> It may be instructive to know that Numbers 14:21 should be rendered: "but as truly as I live, and all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah."

<sup>45</sup> As the tribe of Levi was not numbered with the rest (Numbers 1), they did not apparently fall within the designation of those who were to die in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29). Comp. Joshua 14:1, etc. The Rabbis enumerate literally ten temptations on the part of Israel (Numbers 14:22); it need scarcely be said, very fancifully.

This commencement of Divine judgment, coupled as it was with abundant evidence of its reality - especially in the immediate destruction of the ten spies, while Caleb and Joshua were preserved alive - produced an effect so strange and unlooked for, that we could scarcely understand it, but for kindred experience in all ages of the Church. It was now quite plain to Israel what they might, and certainly would have obtained, had they only gone forward. Yesterday that Land of Promise - in all its beauty and with all its riches - so close at hand as to be almost within sight of those mountain ranges, was literally theirs. Today it was lost to them. Not one of their number was even to see it. More than that, their carcasses were to fall in that wilderness! All this simply because they would not go forward yesterday! Let them do so today. If they had then done wrong, let them do the opposite today, and they would do right. Moreover, it was to Israel that God had pledged His word, and as Israel, He would have brought them into the land. They were Israel still let them now go forward and claim Israel's portion. But it was not so; and never is so in kindred circumstances. The wrong of our rebellion and unbelief is not turned into right by attempting the exact opposite. His still the same spirit, which prompted the one, that influences the other. The obedience which is not of simple faith is of self-confidence, and only another kind of unbelief and self-righteousness. It is not the doing of this or that, nor the circumstance of outwardly belonging to Israel, which secures victory over the enemy, safety, or possession of the land. It is that "Jehovah is among us." (Numbers 14:42) And the victory is ever that of faith. Not a dead promise to the descendants of Jacob after the flesh, but the presence of the living God among His believing Israel secured to them the benefits of the covenant. And Israel's determination to go up on the morrow, and so to retrieve the past, argued as great spiritual ignorance and unfitness, and involved as much rebellion and sin, as their former faint-heartedness and rebellion at the report of the spies.

In vain Moses urged these considerations on the people. The people "presumed<sup>46</sup> to go up to the head of the mountain," although Moses and the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah remained behind in the camp.

From Kadesh it is only about twenty miles to Hormah, to which place their enemies afterwards "smote and discomfited them." As we know from the descriptions of travelers, increasing fertility, cultivation, and civilization must have met the host as it advanced into the Negeb. The Israelites were in fact nearing what they must have felt home-ground - sacred to them by association with Abraham and Isaac. For a little to the north of Hormah are the wells of Rehoboth, Sitnah, and Beersheba, which Abraham and Isaac had dug, the memory of which is to this day preserved in the modern names of Ruheibeh, Shutneh, and Bir Seba. Abraham himself had "journeyed toward the Negeb, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur," (Genesis 20:1) and Isaac had followed closely in his footsteps. (Genesis 26:17-end) And of the next occupants of the land, the Amorites, we find almost constantly recurring mementoes, and nowhere more distinctly than in the immediate neighborhood of Hormah. From Judges 1:17, we know that that city, or probably rather the fort commanding it, had originally borne the name of Zephath, which simply means "watch-tower." The name Hormah, or "banning," was probably given it on a later occasion, when, after the attack of the king of Arad, Israel had "vowed the vow" utterly to destroy the cities of the Canaanites (Numbers 21:1-3). But, as Dr. Rowlands and Canon Williams have shown, the name Zephath has been preserved in the ruins of Sebaita, while Professor Palmer has discovered, close by, the ancient "watch-tower," which was a strong fort on the top of a hill commanding Sebaita. It is intensely interesting, amid the ruins of later fortifications, to come upon these primeval remains, which mark not only the ancient site of Zephath, but may represent the very fort behind which the Amorites and Canaanites defended themselves against Israel, and whence they issued to this war. As if to

<sup>46</sup> "Raised themselves up to go." This rendering seems the best. Others have translated, "they despised, so as," etc., or, "they persistently contended."

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make it impossible to mistake this "mountain of the Amorites," the valley north of Sebaita bears to this day the name Dheigat el 'Amerin, or Ravine of the Amorites, and the chain of mountains to the south-west of the fort that of Ras Amir, "head" or top "of the Amorites."

Israel had presumed to go up into this mountain-top without the presence of Jehovah, without the Ark of the Covenant, and without Moses. Yesterday they had been taught the lesson that

their seeming weakness would be real strength, if Jehovah were among them. To-day they had in bitter experience to find out this other and equally painful truth - that their seeming strength was real weakness. Smitten and discomfited by their enemies, they fled "even unto Hormah."

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