

“PREPARE FOR THE PROMISE LAND!”

Numbers Chapters 33 – 36

CHAPTER 33 – “Israel’s Journey From Egypt to the Jordan River”

(v1-49) Here we have a summary of all the places Israel sojourned throughout their wilderness wanderings. Once again we must reflect on Israel’s judgment due to fear, unbelief and rebellion; all the while the great lesson was simple, “victory through faith in God!” (Let’s gain insight for our lives today through the New Testament teaching in Hebrews chapter 3.)

(v50-55) God gives the strategy for complete victory, as the children of Israel are about to venture into the “Promise Land.” However, if they do not obey there will be a heavy price to pay (v55-56).

CHAPTER 34 – “The Promise Land” (It’s Boundaries & Inheritance)

(v1-12) God gives the boundaries of the land. (See Map)

(v13-29) How the land is to be inherited. (See Map)

CHAPTER 35 – “The Levites Forty-Eight Cities & Cities of Refuge”

(v1-5) **LEVITICAL CITIES — 48 cities assigned to the tribe of Levi.** When the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of Israel, each tribe, except Levi, received a specific region or territory for its inheritance. The tribe of Levi, however, was made up of priests who were to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the other tribes. Thus, instead of receiving a territory of their own, they were scattered throughout the entire land. Numbers 35:1-8 sets forth a plan whereby the tribe of Levi was to live in 48 cities scattered throughout Palestine. (This plan was fulfilled according to assignments described in Joshua 20-21 and 1 Chronicles 6:54-81.) The 48 cities were apportioned in this way: the AARONITES, one of the families of the Kohathites, received 13 cities (Joshua 21:4,9-19; 1 Chronicles 6:54-60); the rest of the KOHATHITES received 10 cities (Joshua 21:5,20-26; 1 Chronicles 6:61). The GERSHONITES received 13 cities (Joshua 21:6,27-33; 1 Chronicles 6:62), and the MERARITES received 12 cities (Joshua 21:7,34-40; 1 Chronicles 6:63). These 48 cities and their surrounding common-lands-pastures, fields, and vineyards-were to be used exclusively by the Levites.

(v6-15) **Six of these Levitical cities were to be CITIES OF REFUGE (Numbers 35:6,9-34; Joshua 20:1-21:45).** A person who caused the death of another could flee to one of these cities for protection from anyone who wanted to avenge the life of the person killed. The refugee thus was protected until he received a fair trial, or until the high priest of that particular city of refuge died (after which he was free to return home and claim the protection of the authorities). According to this plan, the Levites were situated throughout the land and could assist the other Israelites in spiritual matters. As a practical matter, since six of these Levitical cities were cities of refuge, citizens living in every part of Palestine had a refuge that was relatively near their homes. A look at a map will demonstrate how carefully the cities were spaced out to facilitate ease of access. (from Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

(v16-34) **God’s instructions regarding capital punishment and accidental death.**

CHAPTER 36 – “The Legalese of the Inheritance”

(v1-13) The daughters of Zelophehad, regarding their father who had died, of whom he had no sons, raised this issue of inheritance thus they were asking for an inheritance of land (Numbers 27:1-11); which was authorized for them. Since a tribe would lose an allotted inheritance in the year of Jubilee if an inheriting woman had married into another tribe, the woman of any tribe who inherited land must marry within her own tribe; the daughters followed the orders and married into the same tribe, Manasseh (v12).

(F.Y.I. – Regarding **JUBILEE** - The 50th year was a special year in which to “proclaim liberty throughout all the land” (Leviticus 25:10). Specifically, individuals who had incurred debts and had sold themselves as slaves or servants to others were released from their debts and were set at liberty. Since all land belonged to God (Leviticus 25:23), land could not be sold; but land could be lost to another for reasons of debt. In the Year of Jubilee such land was returned to the families to whom it was originally given. Part of the reason why God established the Jubilee Year was to prevent the Israelites from oppressing one another (Leviticus 25:17). One effect of the Jubilee Year was to prevent a permanent system of classes. The Jubilee Year had a leveling effect on Israel’s culture; it gave everyone a chance to start over, economically and socially. The Jubilee Year reminds one of God’s interest in liberty; God wants people to be free (Luke 4:18-19). It also stands as a witness to God’s desire for justice on earth and calls into question any social practices that lead to permanent bondage and loss of economic opportunity.)