

The Book of Numbers

Lesson 21

Chapters 34-36

Metes and Bounds of the Promised Land

Num 34:1 Then **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, 34:2 "Command the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance, *even the* land of Canaan according to its borders.

Finally, the LORD revealed to Moses the outside boundary lines of the Promised Land on the west side of the Jordan River. He described the metes and the bounds according to the four points of the compass.

Southern Sector

34:3 'Your southern sector shall extend from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom, and your southern border shall extend from the end of the Salt Sea eastward. 34:4 'Then your border shall turn *direction* from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim and continue to Zin, and its termination shall be to the south of Kadesh-barnea; and it shall reach Hazaraddar and continue to Azmon. 34:5 'The border shall turn *direction* from Azmon to the brook of Egypt, and its termination shall be at the sea.

In the southern sector the line will border the boundary of Edom's land from the Dead Sea (Salt Sea) southwest under Kadesh all the way to Hazaraddar and down to Azmon and then up to the brook of Egypt until it dead ends into the Mediterranean Sea.

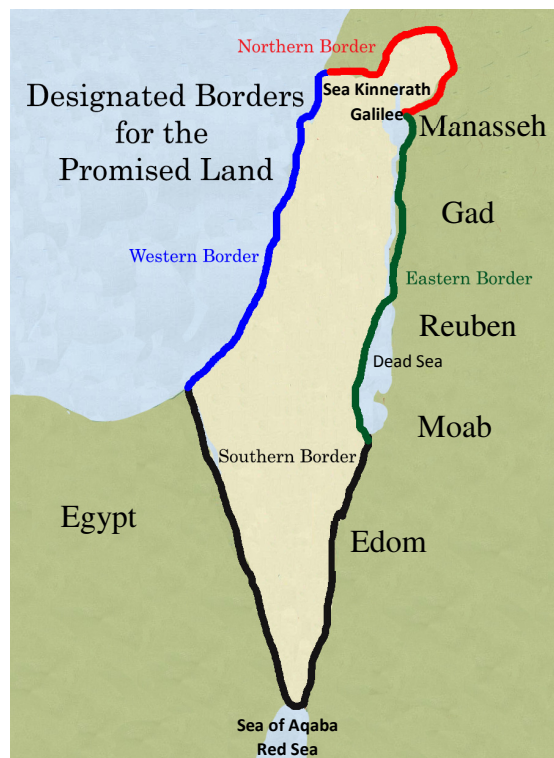
Western Border

34:6 'As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea, that is, *its* coastline; this shall be your west border.

The western boundary line was the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

North Border

34:7 'And this shall be your north border: you shall draw your *border* line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor. 34:8 'You shall draw a line from Mount Hor to the Lebohamath, and the termination of the border shall be at Zedad; 34:9 and the border shall



proceed to Ziphron, and its termination shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your north border.

The northern border was fairly straight forward although it was by no means a straight line, it followed the valleys and streams which are permanent natural landmarks. However, the beginning location starts with Mount Hor which can cause a problem if misunderstood. This is not the Mount Hor where Aaron died. That mountain was located on the southern border of the land of Edom in the very bottom of Israel's land. The mountain in this passage is at the very top of Israel's land. We know about where it was because we know the approximate location of the northern border of Ashur's land where it touched the Mediterranean Sea. However, that location is a mountain range with several peaks. This particular Mount Hor must have been one of those peaks; however, it is mentioned only here in the Scripture and its exact location is not known.

Eastern Border

^{34:10} For your eastern border you shall also draw a line from Hazar-enan to Shepham,
^{34:11} and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down and reach to the slope on the east side of the Sea of Chinnereth.
^{34:12} And the border shall go down to the Jordan and its termination shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land according to its borders all around."

The eastern border was basically the Jordan River from what we call the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea.

^{34:13} So Moses commanded the sons of Israel, saying, "This is the land that you are to apportion by lot among you as a possession, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine and a half tribes. ^{34:14} "For the tribe of the sons of Reuben have received *theirs* according to their fathers' households, and the tribe of the sons of Gad according to their fathers' households, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their possession.
^{34:15} "The two and a half tribes have received their possession across the Jordan opposite Jericho, eastward toward the sunrising."

Here, Moses simply reiterates that Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh would take their land on the east side of the Jordan River.

Apportion of Land by Tribes and Tribal Leaders

^{Num 34:16} Then **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, ^{34:17} "These are the names of the men who shall apportion the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. ^{34:18} "You shall take one leader of every tribe to apportion the land for inheritance. ^{34:19} "These are the names of the men: of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. ^{34:20} "Of the tribe of the sons of Simeon, Samuel the son of Ammihud. ^{34:21} "Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. ^{34:22} "Of the tribe of the sons of Dan a leader, Bukki the son of Jogli. ^{34:23} "Of the sons of Joseph: of the tribe of the sons of Manasseh a leader, Hanniel the son of Ephod. ^{34:24} "Of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim a leader, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. ^{34:25} "Of the tribe of the sons of Zebulun a leader, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. ^{34:26} "Of the tribe of the sons of Issachar a leader,

Paltiel the son of Azzan. ^{34:27} "Of the tribe of the sons of Asher a leader, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. ^{34:28} "Of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali a leader, Pedahel the son of Ammihud." ^{34:29} These are those whom the LORD commanded to apportion the inheritance to the sons of Israel in the land of Canaan.

The High Priest, Eleazar and the nation's leader, Joshua, were given the responsibility of dividing the land among the 12 tribal heads. They would then distribute the land to the families of their tribes.

Cities for the Levites

Num 35:1 Now **the LORD spoke to Moses** in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying, ^{35:2} "Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities. ^{35:3} "The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their herds and for all their beasts.

The Levites did not receive land in the Promised Land, yet, it was necessary that they live on land to tend the flocks that came from their work in the service of the LORD and also have a place to live. According to Leviticus 25:32-34, their land was to be the first section on the east and west sides of the city lines out about 1500 feet. In the following verses we will see this command was restricted to 48 cities in the Promised Land – not all the cities and villages. The land was to be theirs for 50 years and then revert to the tribe. It would then be given again to the Levites for another 50 years.

Metes and Bounds of Levites Pasture Land

Num 35:4 "The pasture lands of the cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits around. ^{35:5} "You shall also measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits, with the city in the center. This shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities.

In addition to the first 1500 feet from the city, another 1500 feet were given to the Levites for their pastures. That means that the first 3000 feet from any city line were living and pasture land for the Levites to use, not own.

Forty-eight Levite Cities – Six Cities of Refuge

Num 35:6 "The cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities. ^{35:7} "All the cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands. ^{35:8} "As for the cities which you shall give from the possession of the sons of Israel, you shall take more from the larger and you shall take less from the smaller; each shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his possession which he inherits." ^{35:9} Then **the LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, ^{35:10} "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ^{35:11} then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the

manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there. ^{35:12} 'The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial. ^{35:13} 'The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge. ^{35:14} 'You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

Only 48 cities were to provide land for the Levites. Another six cities were to be temporary property of the Levites as “cities of refuge.” A city of refuge was a place where a person who had killed someone could retreat to in safety until his case was settled and a fair judgment rendered. Three of these cities of refuge were to be east of the Jordan River, three were to be west of it.

Purpose of Cities of Refuge

Murder with Intent and Blood Avenger

Num ^{35:15} 'These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there. ^{35:16} 'But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. ^{35:17} 'If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. ^{35:18} 'Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. ^{35:19} 'The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him. ^{35:20} 'If he pushed him of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait and *as a result* he died, ^{35:21} or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death, he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

Intentional killing is murder and the penalty for murder is death. However, intentional murder did not mean that the city of refuge was not a source of safety until the judgment was rendered. It was! But after the judgment of murder was rendered, the murderer was put to death by the “blood avenger.” Who held that position in the community? It was the next of kin of the one who was murdered. The slain was avenged by his father, brother, cousin or any other male tribal relative.

Murder without Intent and Blood Avenger

Num ^{35:22} 'But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or threw something at him without lying in wait, ^{35:23} or with any deadly object of stone, and without seeing it dropped on him so that he died, while he was not his enemy nor seeking his injury, ^{35:24} then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the blood avenger according to these ordinances. ^{35:25} 'The congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. ^{35:26} 'But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee, ^{35:27} and the blood avenger finds him outside the border

of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kills the manslayer, he will not be guilty of blood ^{35:28} because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return to the land of his possession. ^{35:29} 'These things shall be for a statutory ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Accidental murder did not result in death by the hand of the blood avenger. However, even accidental murder had its consequences. The penalty for accidental murder was a sentence that required never leaving the city of refuge until the current high priest died. When he died, the murderer could go home free and clear. But while the high priest he was judged under was still alive, he could not go past the border of the city; if he did, and if the blood avenger found him, the blood avenger would kill him. The blood avenger would not be guilty of murder.

Death Penalty and Witnesses

Num 35:30 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

In order to find a person guilty of murder, there was a process. There had to be at least two or more witnesses who testified that they saw the killing. If just one person pointed the finger at the killer, that was not good enough, there had to be at least two.

No Ransom for Murder

Num 35:31 'Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. ^{35:32} 'You shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest. ^{35:33} 'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. ^{35:34} 'You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.'

No amount of money could free a murderer from the penalty of death. In addition, no amount of money could free a person who committed accidental murder from city arrest before the death of the High Priest who judged him guilty. Any such money changing was considered a defilement of the land and against the desire of the LORD.

Question About Land Given to Daughters of Zelophehad

Num 36:1 And the heads of the fathers' *households* of the family of the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the heads of the fathers' *households* of the sons of Israel, ^{36:2} and they said, "The LORD commanded my lord to give the land by lot to the sons of Israel as an inheritance, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. ^{36:3} "But if they marry one of the sons of the *other* tribes of the sons of Israel, their inheritance will be withdrawn from the inheritance of our fathers and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belong; thus it will be withdrawn from our allotted inheritance. ^{36:4} "When the

jubilee of the sons of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belong; so their inheritance will be withdrawn from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers."

Back in Numbers 27, the five daughters of Zelophehad complained that they did not have a man attached to them who could take an inheritance for them to live on in the Promised Land. Moses declared that the five daughters would receive a plot of land and then detailed restrictions were imposed about the future inheritors of that land after their deaths. Over the past few months, Manasseh's tribe, the tribe of the five daughters, thought through the process and found a troublesome loophole. With that in mind, they approached Moses in this passage and stated their concerns. Why? Under the original instruction, if the daughters married outside the tribe of Manasseh, the land would become the property of the other tribe.

Special Instruction Concerning Daughters of Zelophehad

Daughters to Marry Within Tribe of Manasseh

Num 36:5 Then Moses commanded the sons of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph are right in *their* statements. 36:6 "This is what the LORD has commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whom they wish; only they must marry within the family of the tribe of their father.' 36:7 "Thus no inheritance of the sons of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe, for the sons of Israel shall each hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 36:8 "Every daughter who comes into possession of an inheritance of any tribe of the sons of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that the sons of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. 36:9 "Thus no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel shall each hold to his own inheritance."

Moses decided on the matter and made this declaration. The five daughters could marry whom they wished as long as their husbands-to-be were of the tribe of Manasseh. With that decision, years later, upon the death of all the daughters, the land would still belong to the tribe of Manasseh.

Daughters Married Within Tribe of Manasseh

Num 36:10 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so the daughters of Zelophehad did: 36:11 Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad married their uncles' sons. 36:12 They married *those* from the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained with the tribe of the family of their father.

The five daughters of Zelophehad heard the report and decided to obey Moses' decision. We do not know when they decided to marry, that day, that month, that year or years later, but they did, in fact, marry their second cousins, the sons of their grandfather's brothers. If we take this passage at face value, they immediately married and the whole problem was solved before they actually took possession of the land.

Final Word Concerning Commands on the East Side of the Jordan

^{36:13} These are the commandments and the ordinances which the LORD commanded to the sons of Israel through Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho.

As we have said before, Moses ended this book rather abruptly with a simple statement about the instructions given at the camp on the east side of the Jordan River. It is not a statement that encompassed the entirety of the book but rather this last portion that began in Chapter 34. However, Moses was not through with the task of reminding the Israelites not only of where they came from but also where they were going. Neither would he allow them to forget the laws that had been given to them. That will occur in the next book he will begin to write shortly, one which Joshua will be required to finish, called Deuteronomy.