

Numbers 33 Bible Study Notes

1 These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Why would God here reiterate the journeys of Israel? As I ponder this thought, I remember that God is:

- Renewing the minds of a new generation of people, and their new leadership, with a memory lesson of how God has led and protected them their life journey until now.
- Pointing out along the journey how, when Israel is in obedience God blessed; and when disobedient God's wrath of judicial judgment was severe.
- God is reminding Israel of why they made the wilderness journey; because of the hardness and unwillingness of the hearts of their forefathers who have died in the wilderness as God said.
- God is also reminding them that part of the troubles that they have had along the way was their own disobedience.
- God is laying the groundwork for some prophetic pictures for us. Several commentators have pointed out something I probably would not have noticed.

Adam Clarke's Commentary: *Israel was the Church of God in the wilderness, and its unsettled, wandering state under Moses may point out the unsettled state of religion under the law.*

Their being brought, after the death of Moses, into the promised rest by Joshua, may point out the establishment, fixedness, and certainty of that salvation provided by Jesus Christ, of whom Joshua, in name and conduct, was a remarkable type.

Mr. Ainsworth imagines that the forty-two stations here enumerated, through which the Israelites were brought to the verge of the promised land, and afterwards taken over Jordan into the rest which God had promised, point out the forty-two generations from Abraham unto Christ, through whom the Saviour of the world came, by whose blood we have an entrance into the holiest, and enjoy the inheritance among the saints in light.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible:

This is a review and brief rehearsal of the travels of the children of Israel through the wilderness. It was a memorable history and well worthy to be thus abridged, and the abridgment thus preserved, to the honour of God that led them and for the encouragement of the generations that followed. Observe here,

How the account was kept: Moses wrote their goings out, Nu 33:2. When they began this tedious march, God ordered him to keep a journal or diary, and to insert in it all the remarkable occurrences of their way, that it might be a satisfaction to himself in the review and an instruction to others when it should be published. It may be of good use to private Christians, but especially to those in public stations, to preserve in writing an account of the providences of God concerning them, the constant series of mercies they have experienced, especially those turns and changes which have made some days of their lives more remarkable. Our memories are deceitful and need this help, that we may remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us in this wilderness, De 8:2.

Some things are observed here concerning their departure out of Egypt, which they are reminded of upon all occasions, as a work of wonder never to be forgotten.

- *That they went forth with their armies (Nu 33:1), rank and file, as an army with banners.*
- *Under the hand of Moses and Aaron, their guides, overseers, and rulers, under God.*
- *With a high hand, because God's hand was high that wrought for them, and in the sight of all the Egyptians, Nu 33:3. They did not steal away clandestinely (Isa 55:12), but in defiance of their*

enemies, to whom God had made them such a burdensome stone that they neither could, nor would, nor durst, oppose them.

- *They went forth while the Egyptians were burying, or at least preparing to bury, their first-born, Nu 33:4. They had a mind good enough, or rather bad enough, still to have detained the Israelites their prisoners, but God found them other work to do. They would have God's first-born buried alive, but God set them a burying their own first-born.*
- *To all the plagues of Egypt it is added here that on their gods also the Lord executed judgments. Their idols which they worshipped, it is probable, were broken down, as Dagon afterwards before the ark, so that they could not consult them about this great affair. To this perhaps there is reference, Isa 19:1, The idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence.*

Concerning their travels towards Canaan. Observe,

- *They were continually upon the remove. When they had pitched a little while in one place they departed from that to another. Such is our state in this world; we have here no continuing city.*
- *Most of their way lay through a wilderness, uninhabited, untracked, unfurnished even with the necessities of human life, which magnifies the wisdom and power of God, by whose wonderful conduct and bounty the thousands of Israel not only subsisted for forty years in that desolate place, but came out at least as numerous and vigorous as they went in.*
- *They were led to and fro, forward and backward, as in a maze or labyrinth, and yet were all the while under the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire. He led them about (De 33:10), and yet led them the right way, Ps 107:7. The way which God takes in bringing his people to himself is always the best way, though it does not always seem to us the nearest way.*
- *Some events are mentioned in this journal, as their want of water at Rephidim (Nu 33:14), the death of Aaron (Nu 33:38-39), the insult of Arad (Nu 33:40); and the very name of Kibrothhattaavah--the graves of lusts (Nu 33:16), has a story depending upon it. Thus we ought to keep in mind the providences of God concerning us and our families, us and our land, and the many instances of that divine care which has led us, and fed us, and kept us, all our days hitherto. Shittim, the place where the people sinned in the matter of Peor (Nu 25:1), is here called Abel-shittim. Abel signifies mourning (as Ge 50:11), and probably this place was so called from the mourning of the good people of Israel on account of that sin and of God's wrath against them for it. It was so great a mourning that it gave a name to the place.*

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Aren't these some beautiful pictures to be laid out before us? Jesus told us that the Old Testament scriptures were a testimony of himself in: ***Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*** Here we see some of that testimony revealed. We also can make application, to our own walks as a Christian, as we compare the journeys of Israel to our own lives, and its trials, troubles, and tribulations.

2 And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these are their journeys according to their goings out.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: In this chapter we have the travel of Israel, from the time they left Egypt until they come to Canaan, the land of Promise.

Notice that God commanded Moses to write all their history down. Thus, when people want to cast doubt on the portion of scripture recorded by Moses; we have here the commandment of God and know that Moses did as directed.

3 And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. 4 For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments. 5 And the children of Israel removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth. 6 And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. 7 And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pihahiroth, which is before Baalzephon: and they pitched before Migdol. 8 And they departed from before Pihahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Pihahiroth is where they were encamped and then God parted the waters of the sea and they went over on dry ground. When they crossed over they went 3 days journey to Marah where the bitter waters were made sweet by God. Ex 15:22-25

9 And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there. 10 And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea. 11 And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. 12 And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. 13 And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush. 14 And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: A reminder of God's providence and care for Israel by furnishing water from the rock. Ex 17:1-7

15 And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai. 16 And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at Kibrothhattaavah. 17 And they departed from Kibrothhattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth. 18 And they departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah. 19 And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmonparez. 20 And they departed from Rimmonparez, and pitched in Libnah. 21 And they removed from Libnah, and pitched at Rissah. 22 And they journeyed from Rissah, and pitched in Kehelathah. 23 And they went from Kehelathah, and pitched in mount Shapher. 24 And they removed from mount Shapher, and encamped in Haradah. 25 And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth. 26 And they removed from Makheloth, and encamped at Tahath. 27 And they departed from Tahath, and pitched at Tarah. 28 And they removed from Tarah, and pitched in Mithcah. 29 And they went from Mithcah, and pitched in Hashmonah. 30 And they departed from Hashmonah, and encamped at Moseroth. 31 And they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Benejaakan. 32 And they removed from Benejaakan, and encamped at Horhagidgad. 33 And they went from Horhagidgad, and pitched in Jotbathah. 34 And they removed from Jotbathah, and encamped at Ebronah. 35 And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Eziongaber. 36 And they removed from Eziongaber, and pitched in the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh. 37 And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom. 38 And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: There had been some discussion on how long the children of Israel were on the wilderness March. Here God affirms that it is 40 years, as he said it would be.

Nu 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

39 And Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in mount Hor. 40 And king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel. 41 And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah. 42 And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon. 43 And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth. 44 And they departed from Oboth, and pitched in Ijeabarim, in the border of Moab. 45 And they departed from Iim, and pitched in Dibongad. 46 And they removed from Dibongad, and encamped in Almondiblathaim. 47 And they removed from Almondiblathaim, and pitched in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. 48 And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. 49 And they pitched by Jordan, from Bethjesimoth even unto Abelshittim in the plains of Moab. 50 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places:

Clarke Lee's Commentary: God here again gives explicit instruction of what to do with the idols that are in the land they go to possess. They are to destroy the people, their idols, and every evidence of these idols.

This is a good lesson for us today to remember that we, like Israel, have been removed from a land of bondage and given a land of rest. However, we don't inhabit this land without some work being accomplished by our God directed efforts. We too should drive out all the idols that inhabit our hearts and minds as we begin to inhabit the Promised Land, the Church of Grace established by Jesus Christ upon himself.

53 And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. 54 And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. 55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: This verse tells us the same thing that God told Israel. If you don't completely destroy the current inhabitants of the land of promise and their idols, they shall be a thorn in your side in every way.

56 Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We notice, as we think about all the journey of Israel, from Egypt until now, that Israel having come into, or having been lately in, the presence of idolatry, always fell right into its trap. Remember; fresh out of Egypt they made the molten calf, and at different times they were near others and fell into idolatry. We remember, Israel has just been through this with the Moabites.

We see in verses 50-56 a promise of God that should make our hair stand on end at the thought of its execution in our own lives. "Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."

How careful we should be, having been born again, to purge our own hearts and minds as we are instructed in: ***1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:***

2Ti 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

These New Testament texts are saying the same thing to us that God says to Israel in these verses here in Numbers. No wonder is it that we have trials, troubles, and tribulations, in this life.

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