

sprang up from its subterranean channel. This event was long celebrated in the song recorded in verses 17 and 18. By the direction of the lawgiver (18). The words 'the direction of' are not in the Hebrew text, yet they bring out the meaning of the Hebrew phrase. Lawgiver (Heb. mehoqeq) is sometimes translated 'sceptre' or 'chieftain's staff,' but without sufficient philological justification. Even if so translated it hardly means that the sceptre was a tool used for digging, but that the bearer of the sceptre directed the work (so Dillmann). Another interpretation which has been suggested is that a well was found and its mouth covered with sand in order that there might be a formal opening of the well at which the leaders of the people would dig through the sand with their staves. It is said that such a practice is sometimes found among Bedouin of the desert. Verses 18-20 carry the journey to the northern part of Moab itself.

h. Victory over Sihon (xxi.21-32)

The region north of Moab was occupied by Amorites, under a king named Sihon. The portion of his territory which lay east of the northern part of the Dead Sea had formerly belonged to Moab, but had been conquered by Sihon not long before (26). As in the case of Edom and Moab, he was asked to grant passage through his territory, but refused, and came with an army against Israel (21-23; cf. Dt. ii. 26-32). This time the Israelites attacked, utterly destroyed the forces of Sihon, and took possession of his territory (24-26, 31-32). This was the first part of the Promised Land to be conquered by the Israelites. Verses 27-30 contain a taunting song, directed against Moab, in which the Israelites gloated over their conquest of Heshbon, Sihon's capital city (26, 27, 29-30), and recalled that its people had been victors over Moab (28-29).

i. Victory over Og, king of Bashan (xxi.33-35)

North of the river Jabbok was a region of ~~the~~ fine pasture land with many strongly walled cities (Dt. iii. 5). Bulls of Bashan are famous throughout Old Testament times.