

life and any normal activities (19-24; cf. notes on Nu.v.1-4). It was also necessary to cleanse all the plunder, both for ceremonial and for sanitary reasons. Whatever was not inflammable must be cleansed by fire. All of it had to be thoroughly washed (22-24).

Verses 25-54 described the apportionment of the plunder. The mathematical details of the system of division are interesting and fair to all (27-47). After the distribution had been made, the men who had taken part in the expedition, happy at finding that not one of them had perished in the attack on Midian, came to Moses and offered a further oblation, in addition to the portion of the spoil that had already been designated as belong in to God (48-54).

XX. THE APPORTIONMENT OF TRANSJORDAN. xxxii.1-42

The two tribes of Reuben and Gad noticed that the land which had already been conquered was remarkably well suited for their large herds of cattle and began to desire that it might be given to them. Although God had brought them out of Egypt and promised them a share of the Promised Land they did not see the desirability of leaving the choice of their possession in His hand but hurriedly made request for what suited them (1-5). This brought their descendants into constant trouble in later times. The land they asked was one of the finest sections of Palestine, but it had a fatal defect--it lacked natural frontiers, and was somewhat isolated from the rest of the tribes. Time after time in later centuries the other tribes had to send armies to rescue them from foreign conquerors (e.g. 1 Sa. xi; 1 Ki. xxii.3).

Moses was not at all pleased with the action of Reuben and Gad. The conquest of Canaan was a tremendous task. If these tribes remained behind it might jeopardize the entire conquest (6-7) and put Israel in a situation comparable to that which followed the return of the spies at Kadesh-barnea (8-13). In any