

Instructions for Occupying Canaan (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 33:50–56

50 The LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. He said:

51 “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

52 you must drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images, all their molten images, and demolish their high places.

53 You must dispossess the inhabitants of the land and live in it, for I have given you the land to possess it.

54 You must divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families. To a larger group you must give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group you must give a smaller inheritance. Everyone’s inheritance must be in the place where his lot falls. You must inherit according to your ancestral tribes.

55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, then those whom you allow to remain will be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your side, and will cause you trouble in the land where you will be living.

56 And what I intended to do to them I will do to you.”

Boundaries of the Promised Land (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 34:1–15

Introduction

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses:

2 “Give these instructions to the Israelites, and tell them: ‘When you enter Canaan, the land that has been assigned to you as an inheritance, the land of Canaan with its borders,

Southern Border

3 your southern border will extend from the wilderness of Zin along the Edomite border, and your southern border will run eastward to the extremity of the Salt Sea,

4 and then the border will turn from the south to the Scorpion Ascent, continue to Zin, and then its direction will be from the south to Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and pass over to Azmon.

5 There the border will turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and then its direction is to the sea.

Western Border

6 “And for a western border you will have the Great Sea. This will be your western border.

Northern Border

7 “And this will be your northern border: From the Great Sea you will draw a line to Mount Hor;

8 from Mount Hor you will draw a line to Lebo Hamath, and the direction of the border will be to Zedad.

9 The border will continue to Ziphron, and its direction will be to Hazar Enan. This will be your northern border.

Eastern Border

10 “For your eastern border you will draw a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham.

11 The border will run down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain, and the border will descend and reach the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth.

12 Then the border will continue down the Jordan River and its direction will be to the Salt Sea. This will be your land by its borders that surround it.”

Land to be Divided Between the Nine Remaining Tribes (including the half-tribe of Manasseh)

13 Then Moses commanded the Israelites: “This is the land which you will inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to be given to the nine and a half tribes,

14 because the tribe of the Reubenites by their families, the tribe of the Gadites by their families, and half of the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance.

15 The two and a half tribes have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.”

Leaders Appointed to Distribute the Land (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 34:16–29

16 The LORD said to Moses:

17 “These are the names of the men who are to allocate the land to you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun.

18 You must take one leader from every tribe to assist in allocating the land as an inheritance.

19 These are the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;

20 from the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel son of Ammihud;

21 from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Kislou;
 22 and from the tribe of the Danites, a leader, Bukki son of Jogli.
 23 From the Josephites, Haniel son of Ephod, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh;
 24 from the tribe of the Ephraimites, a leader, Kemuel son of Shiphtan;
 25 from the tribe of the Zebulunites, a leader, Elizaphan son of Parnach;
 26 from the tribe of the Issacharites, a leader, Paltiel son of Azzan;
 27 from the tribe of the Asherites, a leader, Ahihud son of Shelomi;
 28 and from the tribe of the Naphtalites, a leader, Pedahel son of Ammihud.”
 29 These are the ones whom the LORD commanded to divide up the inheritance among the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

Cities for the Levites (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 35:1–8

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Moabite plains by the Jordan near Jericho. He said:
 2 “Instruct the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites will possess. You must also give the Levites grazing land around the towns.
 3 Thus they will have towns in which to live, and their grazing lands will be for their cattle, for their possessions, and for all their animals.
 4 The grazing lands around the towns that you will give to the Levites must extend to a distance of 500 yards from the town wall.
 5 “You must measure from outside the wall of the town on the east 1,000 yards, and on the south side 1,000 yards, and on the west side 1,000 yards, and on the north side 1,000 yards, with the town in the middle. This territory must belong to them as grazing land for the towns.
 6 Now from these towns that you will give to the Levites you must select six towns of refuge to which a person who has killed someone may flee. And you must give them forty-two other towns.
 7 “So the total of the towns you will give the Levites is forty-eight. You must give these together with their grazing lands.
 8 The towns you will give must be from the possession of the Israelites. From the larger tribes you must give more; and from the smaller tribes fewer. Each must contribute some of its own towns to the Levites in proportion to the inheritance allocated to each.

Cities of Refuge (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 35:9–34

Establishment of Six Cities of Refuge

9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses:
 10 “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When you cross over the Jordan River into the land of Canaan,
 11 you must then designate some towns as towns of refuge for you, to which a person who has killed someone unintentionally may flee.
 12 And they must stand as your towns of refuge from the avenger in order that the killer may not die until he has stood trial before the community.
 13 These towns that you must give shall be your six towns for refuge.
 14 “You must give three towns on this side of the Jordan, and you must give three towns in the land of Canaan; they must be towns of refuge.
 15 These six towns will be places of refuge for the Israelites, and for the foreigner, and for the settler among them, so that anyone who kills any person accidentally may flee there.

Laws Governing Murder Cases

16 “But if he hits someone with an iron tool so that he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death.
 17 If he strikes him by throwing a stone large enough that he could die, and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death.
 18 Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon so that he could die, and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death.
 19 The avenger of blood himself must kill the murderer; when he meets him, he must kill him.
 20 “But if he strikes him out of hatred or throws something at him intentionally so that he dies,
 21 or with enmity he strikes him with his hand and he dies, the one who struck him must surely be put to death, for he is a murderer. The avenger of blood must kill the murderer when he meets him.

Laws Governing Manslaughter Cases

22 “But if he strikes him suddenly, without enmity, or throws anything at him unintentionally,
 23 or with any stone large enough that a man could die, without seeing him, and throws it at him, and he dies, even though he was not his enemy nor sought his harm,

24 then the community must judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood according to these decisions.
 25 The community must deliver the slayer out of the hand of the avenger of blood, and the community must restore him to the town of refuge to which he fled, and he must live there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the consecrated oil.
 26 But if the slayer at any time goes outside the boundary of the town to which he had fled,
 27 and the avenger of blood finds him outside the borders of the town of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the slayer, he will not be guilty of blood,
 28 because the slayer should have stayed in his town of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest, the slayer may return to the land of his possessions.
 29 So these things must be a statutory ordinance for you throughout your generations, in all the places where you live.

Proper Legal Procedure (Witnesses) and Prohibition of Ransoming the Guilty

30 “Whoever kills any person, the murderer must be put to death by the testimony of witnesses; but one witness cannot testify against any person to cause him to be put to death.
 31 Moreover, you must not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; he must surely be put to death.
 32 And you must not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a town of refuge, to allow him to return home and live on his own land before the death of the high priest.

Theological Rationale Behind the Laws

33 “You must not pollute the land where you live, for blood defiles the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed there, except by the blood of the person who shed it.
 34 Therefore do not defile the land that you will inhabit, in which I live, for I the LORD live among the Israelites.”

Epilogue—Daughters of Zelophehad (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 36

Historical Background (see Numbers 27:1–11)

1 Then the heads of the family groups of the Gileadites, the descendant of Machir, the descendant of Manasseh, who were from the Josephite families, approached and spoke before Moses and the leaders who were the heads of the Israelite families.
 2 They said, “The LORD commanded my lord to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the Israelites; and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters.

The Case Presented by the Gileadite Clans

3 Now if they should be married to one of the men from another Israelite tribe, their inheritance would be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. As a result, it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance.
 4 And when the Jubilee of the Israelites is to take place, their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of our ancestral tribe.”

Moses Presents the Case Adjudication at Yahweh’s Command

5 Then Moses gave a ruling to the Israelites by the word of the LORD: “What the tribe of the Josephites is saying is right.
 6 This is what the LORD has commanded for Zelophehad’s daughters: ‘Let them marry whomever they think best, only they must marry within the family of their father’s tribe.
 7 In this way the inheritance of the Israelites will not be transferred from tribe to tribe. But every one of the Israelites must retain the ancestral heritage.
 8 And every daughter who possesses an inheritance from any of the tribes of the Israelites must become the wife of a man from any family in her father’s tribe, so that every Israelite may retain the inheritance of his fathers.
 9 No inheritance may pass from tribe to tribe. But every one of the tribes of the Israelites must retain its inheritance.’
 10 As the LORD had commanded Moses, so the daughters of Zelophehad did.
 11 For the daughters of Zelophehad—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah—were married to the sons of their uncles.
 12 They were married into the families of the Manassehites, the descendants of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father’s family.

Conclusion of the Case and the Book of Numbers

13 These are the commandments and the decisions that the LORD commanded the Israelites through the authority of Moses, on the plains of Moab by the Jordan River opposite Jericho.