

From the Rejection of That Generation to the Death of Moses

by Flavius Josephus

The sermon recounts the story of the Hebrews' rebellion against Moses and God's intervention to resolve the crisis and demonstrate His power.

Scripture: Numbers 31:1-32

Topics: "Leadership Succession", "Conquest Of Canaan"

Description

Moses sends an army to destroy the Midianites due to their corrupting influence on the Hebrews. Phineas leads the army and defeats the Midianites, killing their kings and taking a great spoil. Moses appoints Joshua as his successor and rebukes the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh for seeking land for their cattle instead of joining the conquest of Canaan. The tribes explain their request was to secure their families and possessions before continuing the conquest, which Moses accepts.

Transcript

BOOK IV.

CONTAINING THE INTERVAL OF THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS.

FROM THE REJECTION OF THAT GENERATION TO THE DEATH OF MOSES.

CHAPTER 1.

FIGHT OF THE HEBREWS WITH THE CANAANITES WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF MOSES; AND THEIR DEFEAT.

1. NOW this life of the Hebrews in the wilderness was so disagreeable and troublesome to them, and they were so uneasy at it, that although God had forbidden them to meddle with the Canaanites, yet could they not be persuaded to be obedient to the words of Moses, and to be quiet; but supposing they should be able to beat their enemies, without his approbation, they accused him, and suspected that he made it his business to keep in a distressed condition, that they might always stand in need of his assistance. Accordingly they resolved to fight with the Canaanites, and said that God gave them his assistance, not out of regard to Moses's intercessions, but because he took care of their entire nation, on account of their forefathers, whose affairs he took under his own conduct; as also, that it was on account of their own

virtue that he had formerly procured them their liberty, and would be assisting to them, now they were willing to take pains for it. They also said that they were possessed of abilities sufficient for the conquest of their enemies, although Moses should have a mind to alienate God from them; that, however, it was for their advantage to be their own masters, and not so far to rejoice in their deliverance from the indignities they endured under the Egyptians, as to bear the tyranny of Moses over them, and to suffer themselves to be deluded, and live according to his pleasure, as though God did only foretell what concerns us out of his kindness to him, as if they were not all the posterity of Abraham; that God made him alone the author of all the knowledge we have, and we must still learn it from him; that it would be a piece of prudence to oppose his arrogant pretenses, and to put their confidence in God, and to resolve to take possession of that land which he had promised them, and not to give ear to him, who on this account, and under the pretense of Divine authority, forbade them so to do. Considering, therefore, the distressed state they were in at present, and that in those desert places they were still to expect things would be worse with them, they resolved to fight with the Canaanites, as submitting only to God, their supreme Commander, and not waiting for any assistance from their legislator.

2. When, therefore, they had come to this resolution, as being best for them, they went against their enemies; but those enemies were not dismayed either at the attack itself, or at the great multitude that made it, and received them with great courage. Many of the Hebrews were slain; and the remainder of the army, upon the disorder of their troops, were pursued, and fled, after a shameful manner, to their camp. Whereupon this unexpected misfortune made them quite despond; and they hoped for nothing that was good; as gathering from it, that this affliction came from the wrath of God, because they rashly went out to war without his approbation.

3. But when Moses saw how deeply they were affected with this defeat, and being afraid lest the enemies should grow insolent upon this victory, and should be desirous of gaining still greater glory, and should attack them, he resolved that it was proper to withdraw the army into the wilderness to a further distance from the Canaanites: so the multitude gave themselves up again to his conduct, for they were sensible that, without his care for them, their affairs could not be in a good condition; and he caused the host to remove, and he went further into the wilderness, as intending there to let them rest, and not to permit them to fight the Canaanites before God should afford them a more favorable opportunity.

CHAPTER 2.

THE SEDITION OF CORAH AND OF THE MULTITUDE AGAINST MOSES, AND AGAINST HIS BROTHER, CONCERNING THE PRIESTHOOD.

1. THAT which is usually the case of great armies, and especially upon ill success, to be hard to be pleased, and governed with difficulty, did now befall the Jews; for they being in number six hundred thousand, and by reason of their great multitude not readily subject to their governors, even in prosperity, they at this time were more than usually angry, both against one another and against their leader, because of the distress they were in, and the calamities they then endured. Such a sedition overtook them, as we have not the like example either among the Greeks or the Barbarians, by which they were in danger of being all destroyed, but were notwithstanding saved by Moses, who would not remember that he had been almost stoned to death by them. Nor did God neglect to prevent their ruin; but, notwithstanding the indignities they had offered their legislator and the laws, and disobedience to the commandments which he had sent them by Moses, he delivered them from those terrible calamities which, without his providential care, had been brought upon them by this sedition. So I will first explain the cause whence

this sedition arose, and then will give an account of the sedition itself; as also of what settlements made for their government after it was over.

2. Corah, a Hebrew of principal account, both by his family and by his wealth, one that was also able to speak well, and one that could easily persuade the people by his speeches, saw that Moses was in an exceeding great dignity, and was at it, and envied him on that account, (he of the same tribe with Moses, and of kin to him,) was particularly grieved, because he thought he better deserved that honorable post on account of great riches, and not inferior to him in his birth. So he raised a clamor against him among the Levites, who were of the same tribe, and among his kindred, saying, "That it was a very sad thing that they should overlook Moses, while hunted after and paved the way to glory for himself, and by ill arts should obtain it, under the pretense of God's command, while, contrary to laws, he had given the priesthood to Aaron, the common suffrage of the multitude, but by his own vote, as bestowing dignities in a way on whom he pleased." He added, "That this concealed way of imposing on them was harder to be borne than if it had been done by an open force upon them, because he did now not only their power without their consent, but even they were unapprised of his contrivances against them; for whosoever is conscious to himself that he deserves any dignity, aims to get it by persuasion, and not by an arrogant method of violence; those that believe it impossible to obtain honors justly, make a show of goodness, and do not introduce force, but by cunning tricks grow wickedly powerful. That it was proper for the multitude to punish such men, even while they think themselves concealed in their designs, and not suffer them to gain strength till they have them for their open enemies. For what account," added he, "is Moses able to give, why he has bestowed the priesthood on Aaron and his sons? for if God had determined to bestow that honor on one of the tribe of Levi, I am more worthy of it than he is; I myself being equal to Moses by my family, and superior to him both in riches and in age: but if God had determined to bestow it on the eldest be, that of Reuben might have it most justly; and then Dathan, and Abiram, and [On, the son of] Peleth, would have it; for these are the oldest men of that tribe, and potent on account of their great wealth also."

3. Now Corah, when he said this, had a mind to appear to take care of the public welfare, but in reality he was endeavoring to procure to have that dignity transferred by the multitude to himself. Thus did he, out of a malignant design, but with discourse to those of his own tribe; when these words did gradually spread to more people, and when the hearers still added to what tended to the scandals that were cast upon the whole army was full of them. Now of those that conspired with Corah, there were two hundred and fifty, and those of the principal men also, who were eager to have the priesthood taken away from Moses's brother, and to bring him into disgrace: nay, the multitude themselves were provoked to be seditious, and attempted to stone Moses, and gathered themselves together after an indecent manner, with confusion and disorder. And now all were, in a tumultuous manner, raising a before the tabernacle of God, to prosecute the tyrant, and to relieve the multitude from their slavery under him who, under color of the Divine laid violent injunctions upon them; for had it been God who chose one that was to the office of a priest, he would have raised person to that dignity, and would not produced such a one as was inferior to many others nor have given him that office; and that in he had judged it fit to bestow it on Aaron, he would have permitted it to the multitude to bestow it, and not have left it to be bestowed by his own brother.

4. Now although Moses had a great while ago foreseen this calumny of Corah, and had seen the people were irritated, yet was he not affrighted at it; but being of good courage, because given them right advice about their affairs, and knowing that his brother had been made partaker of the priesthood at the command of God, and not by his own favor to him, he came to the assembly; and as for the multitude, he said not a word to them, but spake as loud to Corah as he could; and being very skillful in making

speeches, and having this natural talent, among others, that he could greatly move the multitude with his discourses, he said, "O Corah, both thou and all these with thee (pointing to the two hundred and fifty men) seem to be worthy of this honor; nor do I pretend but that this whole company may be worthy of the like dignity, although they may not be so rich or so great as you are: nor have I taken and given this office to my brother because he excelled others in riches, for thou exceedest us both in the greatness of thy wealth; (1) nor indeed because he was of an eminent family, for God, by giving us the same common ancestor, has made our families equal: nay, nor was it out of brotherly affection, which another might yet have justly done; for certainly, unless I had bestowed this honor out of regard to God, and to his laws, I had not passed by myself, and given it to another, as being nearer of kin to myself than to my brother, and having a closer intimacy with myself than I have with him; for surely it would not be a wise thing for me to expose myself to the dangers of offending, and to bestow the happy employment on this account upon another.

But I am above such base practices: nor would God have overlooked this matter, and seen himself thus despised; nor would he have suffered you to be ignorant of what you were to do, in order to please him; but he hath himself chosen one that is to perform that sacred office to him, and thereby freed us from that care. So that it was not a thing that I pretend to give, but only according to the determination of God; I therefore propose it still to be contended for by such as please to put in for it, only desiring that he who has been already preferred, and has already obtained it, may be allowed now also to offer himself for a candidate.

He prefers your peace, and your living without sedition, to this honorable employment, although in truth it was with your approbation that he obtained it; for though God were the donor, yet do we not offend when we think fit to accept it with your good-will; yet would it have been an instance of impiety not to have taken that honorable employment when he offered it; nay, it had been exceedingly unreasonable, when God had thought fit any one should have it for all time to come, and had made it secure and firm to him, to have refused it.

However, he himself will judge again who it shall be whom he would have to offer sacrifices to him, and to have the direction of matters of religion; for it is absurd that Corah, who is ambitious of this honor, should deprive God of the power of giving it to whom he pleases. Put an end, therefore, to your sedition and disturbance on this account; and tomorrow morning do every one of you that desire the priesthood bring a censer from home, and come hither with incense and fire: and do thou, O Corah, leave the judgment to God, and await to see on which side he will give his determination upon this occasion, but do not thou make thyself greater than God.

Do thou also come, that this contest about this honorable employment may receive determination. And I suppose we may admit Aaron without offense, to offer himself to this scrutiny, since he is of the same lineage with thyself, and has done nothing in his priesthood that can be liable to exception. Come ye therefore together, and offer your incense in public before all the people; and when you offer it, he whose sacrifice God shall accept shall be ordained to the priesthood, and shall be clear of the present calumny on Aaron, as if I had granted him that favor because he was my brother."

CHAPTER 3.

HOW THOSE THAT STIRRED UP THIS SEDITION WERE DESTROYED, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD; AND HOW AARON, MOSES'S BROTHER BOTH HE AND HIS POSTERITY, RETAINED THE

PRIESTHOOD.

1. WHEN Moses had said this, the multitude left off the turbulent behavior they had indulged, and the suspicion they had of Moses, and commended what he had said; for those proposals were good, and were so esteemed of the people. At that time therefore they dissolved the assembly. But on the next day they came to the congregation, in order to be present at the sacrifice, and at the determination that was to be made between the candidates for the priesthood. Now this congregation proved a turbulent one, and the multitude were in great suspense in expectation of what was to be done; for some of them would have been pleased if Moses had been convicted of evil practices, but the wiser sort desired that they might be delivered from the present disorder and disturbance; for they were afraid, that if this sedition went on, the good order of their settlement would rather be destroyed; but the whole body of the people do naturally delight in clamors against their governors, and, by changing their opinions upon the harangues of every speaker, disturb the public tranquillity. And now Moses sent messengers for Abiram and Dathan, and ordered them to come to the assembly, and wait there for the holy offices that were to be performed. But they answered the messenger, that they would not obey his summons; nay, would not overlook Moses's behavior, who was growing too great for them by evil practices. Now when Moses heard of this their answer, he desired the heads of the people to follow him, and he went to the faction of Dathan, not thinking it any frightful thing at all to go to these insolent people; so they made no opposition, but went along with him. But Dathan, and his associates, when they understood that Moses and the principal of the people were coming to them, came out, with their wives and children, and stood before their tents, and looked to see what Moses would do. They had also their servants about them to defend themselves, in case Moses should use force against them.

2. But he came near, and lifted up his hands to heaven, and cried out with a loud voice, in order to be heard by the whole multitude, and said, "O Lord of the creatures that are in the heaven, in the earth, and in the sea; for thou art the most authentic witness to what I have done, that it has all been done by thy appointment, and that it was thou that affordedst us assistance when we attempted any thing, and showedst mercy on the Hebrews in all their distresses; do thou come now, and hear all that I say, for no action or thought escapes thy knowledge; so that thou wilt not disdain to speak what is true, for my vindication, without any regard to the ungrateful imputations of these men.

As for what was done before I was born, thou knowest best, as not learning them by report, but seeing them, and being present with them when they were done; but for what has been done of late, and which these men, although they know them well enough, unjustly pretend to suspect, be thou my witness. When I lived a private quiet life, I left those good things which, by my own diligence, and by thy counsel, I enjoyed with Raguel my father-in-law; and I gave myself up to this people, and underwent many miseries on their account.

I also bore great labors at first, in order to obtain liberty for them, and now in order to their preservation; and have always showed myself ready to assist them in every distress of theirs. Now, therefore, since I am suspected by those very men whose being is owing to my labors, come thou, as it is reasonable to hope thou wilt; thou, I say, who showedst me that fire at mount Sinai, and madest me to hear its voice, and to see the several wonders which that place afforded thou who commandedst me to go to Egypt, and declare thy will to this people; thou who disturbest the happy estate of the Egyptians, and gavest us the opportunity of flying away from our under them, and madest the dominion of Pharaoh inferior to my dominion; thou who didst make the sea dry land for us, when we knew not whither to go, and didst overwhelm the Egyptians with those destructive waves which had been divided for us; thou who didst

bestow upon us the security of weapons when we were naked; thou who didst make the fountains that were corrupted to flow, so as to be fit for drinking, and didst furnish us with water that came out of the rocks, when we were in want of it; thou who didst preserve our lives with [quails, which was] food from the sea, when the fruits of the ground failed us; thou didst send us such food from heaven as had never been seen before; thou who didst suggest to us the knowledge of thy laws, and appoint to us a of government, - come thou, I say, O Lord of the whole world, and that as such a Judge and a Witness to me as cannot be bribed, and show how I never admitted of any gift against justice from any of the Hebrews; and have never condemned a man that ought to have been acquitted, on account of one that was rich; and have never attempted to hurt this commonwealth.

I am now and am suspected of a thing the remotest from my intentions, as if I had given the priesthood to Aaron, not at thy command, but out own favor to him; do thou at this time demonstrate that all things are administered by thy providence and that nothing happens by chance, but is governed by thy will, and thereby attains its end: as also demonstrate that thou takest care that have done good to the Hebrews; demonstrate this, I say, by the punishment of Abiram and Dathan, who condemn thee as an insensible Being, and one overcome by my contrivances.

This thou do by inflicting such an open punishment on these men who so madly fly in the face of thy glory, as will take them out of the world, not in an manner, but so that it may appear they do die after the manner of other men: let that ground which they tread upon open about them and consume them, with their families and goods. This will be a demonstration of thy power to all and this method of their sufferings will be an instruction of wisdom for those that entertain profane sentiments of thee.

By this means I shall be a good servant, in the precepts thou hast given by me. But if the calumnies they have raised against me be true, mayst thou preserve these men from every evil accident, and bring all that destruction on me which I have imprecated upon them. And when thou hast inflicted punishment on those that have endeavored to deal unjustly with this people, bestow upon them concord and peace. Save this multitude that follow thy commandments, and preserve them free from harm, and let them not partake of the punishment of those that have sinned; for thou knowest thyself it is not just, that for the wickedness of those men the whole body of the Israelites should suffer punishment."

3. When Moses had said this, with tears in his eyes, the ground was moved on a sudden; and the agitation that set it in motion was like that which the wind produces in waves of the sea. The people were all affrighted; and the ground that was about their tents sunk down at the great noise, with a terrible sound, and carried whatsoever was dear to the seditious into itself, who so entirely perished, that there was not the least appearance that any man had ever been seen there, the earth that had opened itself about them, closing again, and becoming entire as it was before, insomuch that such as saw it afterward did not perceive that any such accident had happened to it. Thus did these men perish, and become a demonstration of the power of God. And truly, any one would lament them, not only on account of this calamity that befell them, which yet deserves our commiseration, but also because their kindred were pleased with their sufferings; for they forgot the relation they bare to them, and at the sight of this sad accident approved of the judgment given against them; and because they looked upon the people about Dathan as pestilent men, they thought they perished as such, and did not grieve for them.

4. And now Moses called for those that contended about the priesthood, that trial might be made who should be priest, and that he whose sacrifice God was best pleased with might be ordained to that function. There attended two hundred and fifty men, who indeed were honored by the people, not only on

account of the power of their ancestors, but also on account of their own, in which they excelled the others: Aaron also and Corah came forth, and they all offered incense, in those censers of theirs which they brought with them, before the tabernacle. Hereupon so great a fire shone out as no one ever saw in any that is made by the hand of man, neither in those eruptions out of the earth that are caused by subterraneous burn-rags, nor in such fires as arise of their own accord in the woods, when the agitation is caused by the trees rubbing one against another: but this fire was very bright, and had a terrible flame, such as is kindled at the command of God; by whose irruption on them, all the company, and Corah himself, were destroyed, (2) and this so entirely, that their very bodies left no remains behind them. Aaron alone was preserved, and not at all hurt by the fire, because it was God that sent the fire to burn those only who ought to be burned. Hereupon Moses, after these men were destroyed, was desirous that the memory of this judgment might be delivered down to posterity, and that future ages might be acquainted with it; and so he commanded Eleazar, the son of Aaron, to put their censers near the brazen altar, that they might be a memorial to posterity of what these men suffered, for supposing that the power of God might be eluded. And thus Aaron was now no longer esteemed to have the priesthood by the favor of Moses, but by the public judgment of God; and thus he and his children peaceably enjoyed that honor afterward.

CHAPTER 4.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HEBREWS DURING THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS.

1. HOWEVER, this sedition was so far from ceasing upon this destruction, that it grew much stronger, and became more intolerable. And the occasion of its growing worse was of that nature, as made it likely the calamity would never cease, but last for a long time; for the men, believing already that nothing is done without the providence of God, would have it that these things came thus to pass not without God's favor to Moses; they therefore laid the blame upon him that God was so angry, and that this happened not so much because of the wickedness of those that were punished, as because Moses procured the punishment; and that these men had been destroyed without any sin of theirs, only because they were zealous about the Divine worship; as also, that he who had been the cause of this diminution of the people, by destroying so many men, and those the most excellent of them all, besides his escaping any punishment himself, had now given the priesthood to his brother so firmly, that nobody could any longer dispute it with him; for no one else, to be sure, could now put in for it, since he must have seen those that first did so to have miserably perished. Nay, besides this, the kindred of those that were destroyed made great entreaties to the multitude to abate the arrogance of Moses, because it would be safest for them so to do.

2. Now Moses, upon his hearing for a good while that the people were tumultuous, was afraid that they would attempt some other innovation, and that some great and sad calamity would be the consequence. He called the multitude to a congregation, and patiently heard what apology they had to make for themselves, without opposing them, and this lest he should embitter the multitude: he only desired the heads of the tribes to bring their rods, (3) with the names of their tribes inscribed upon them, and that he should receive the priesthood in whose rod God should give a sign. This was agreed to. So the rest brought their rods, as did Aaron also, who had written the tribe of Levi on his rod. These rods Moses laid up in the tabernacle of God. On the next day he brought out the rods, which were known from one another by those who brought them, they having distinctly noted them, as had the multitude also; and as to the rest, in the same form Moses had received them, in that they saw them still; but they also saw buds and branches grown out of Aaron's rod, with ripe fruits upon them; they were almonds, the rod having been cut

out of that tree. The people were so amazed at this strange sight, that though Moses and Aaron were before under some degree of hatred, they now laid that hatred aside, and began to admire the judgment of God concerning them; so that hereafter they applauded what God had decreed, and permitted Aaron to enjoy the priesthood peaceably. And thus God ordained him priest three several times, and he retained that honor without further disturbance. And hereby this sedition of the Hebrews, which had been a great one, and had lasted a great while, was at last composed.

3. And now Moses, because the tribe of Levi was made free from war and warlike expeditions, and was set apart for the Divine worship, lest they should want and seek after the necessaries of life, and so neglect the temple, commanded the Hebrews, according to the will of God, that when they should gain the possession of the land of Canaan, they should assign forty-eight good and fair cities to the Levites; and permit them to enjoy their suburbs, as far as the limit of two thousand cubits would extend from the walls of the city. And besides this, he appointed that the people should pay the tithe of their annual fruits of the earth, both to the Levites and to the priests. And this is what that tribe receives of the multitude; but I think it necessary to set down what is paid by all, peculiarly to the priests.

4. Accordingly he commanded the Levites to yield up to the priests thirteen of their forty-eight cities, and to set apart for them the tenth part of the tithes which they every year receive of the people; as also, that it was but just to offer to God the first-fruits of the entire product of the ground; and that they should offer the first-born of those four-footed beasts that are appointed for sacrifices, if it be a male, to the priests, to be slain, that they and their entire families may eat them in the holy city; but that the owners of those first-born which are not appointed for sacrifices in the laws of our country, should bring a shekel and a half in their stead: but for the first-born of a man, five shekels: that they should also have the first-fruits out of the shearing of the sheep; and that when any baked bread corn, and made loaves of it, they should give somewhat of what they had baked to them. Moreover, when any have made a sacred vow, I mean those that are called Nazarites, that suffer their hair to grow long, and use no wine, when they consecrate their hair, (4) and offer it for a sacrifice, they are to allot that hair for the priests [to be thrown into the fire]. Such also as dedicate themselves to God, as a corban, which denotes what the Greeks call a gift, when they are desirous of being freed from that ministration, are to lay down money for the priests; thirty shekels if it be a woman, and fifty if it be a man; but if any be too poor to pay the appointed sum, it shall be lawful for the priests to determine that sum as they think fit. And if any slay beasts at home for a private festival, but not for a religious one, they are obliged to bring the maw and the cheek, [or breast,] and the right shoulder of the sacrifice, to the priests. With these Moses contrived that the priests should be plentifully maintained, besides what they had out of those offerings for sins which the people gave them, as I have set it down in the foregoing book. He also ordered, that out of every thing allotted for the priests, their servants, [their sons,] their daughters, and their wives, should partake, as well as themselves, excepting what came to them out of the sacrifices that were offered for sins; for of those none but the males of the family of the priests might eat, and this in the temple also, and that the same day they were offered.

5. When Moses had made these constitutions, after the sedition was over, he removed, together with the whole army, and came to the borders of Idumea. He then sent ambassadors to the king of the Idumeans, and desired him to give him a passage through his country; and agreed to send him what hostages he should desire, to secure him from an injury. He desired him also, that he would allow his army liberty to buy provisions; and, if he insisted upon it, he would pay down a price for the very water they should drink. But the king was not pleased with this embassy from Moses: nor did he allow a passage for the army, but brought his people armed to meet Moses, and to hinder them, in case they should endeavor to force

their passage. Upon which Moses consulted God by the oracle, who would not have him begin the war first; and so he withdrew his forces, and traveled round about through the wilderness.

6. Then it was that Miriam, the sister of Moses, came to her end, having completed her fortieth year (5) since she left Egypt, on the first (6) day of the lunar month Xanthicus. They then made a public funeral for her, at a great expense. She was buried upon a certain mountain, which they call Sin: and when they had mourned for her thirty days, Moses purified the people after this manner: He brought a heifer that had never been used to the plough or to husbandry, that was complete in all its parts, and entirely of a red color, at a little distance from the camp, into a place perfectly clean. This heifer was slain by the high priest, and her blood sprinkled with his finger seven times before the tabernacle of God; after this, the entire heifer was burnt in that state, together with its skin and entrails; and they threw cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet wool, into the midst of the fire; then a clean man gathered all her ashes together, and laid them in a place perfectly clean. When therefore any persons were defiled by a dead body, they put a little of these ashes into spring water, with hyssop, and, dipping part of these ashes in it, they sprinkled them with it, both on the third day, and on the seventh, and after that they were clean. This he enjoined them to do also when the tribes should come into their own land.

7. Now when this purification, which their leader made upon the mourning for his sister, as it has been now described, was over, he caused the army to remove and to march through the wilderness and through Arabia; and when he came to a place which the Arabians esteem their metropolis, which was formerly called Arce, but has now the name of Petra, at this place, which was encompassed with high mountains, Aaron went up one of them in the sight of the whole army, Moses having before told him that he was to die, for this place was over against them. He put off his pontifical garments, and delivered them to Eleazar his son, to whom the high priesthood belonged, because he was the elder brother; and died while the multitude looked upon him. He died in the same year wherein he lost his sister, having lived in all a hundred twenty and three years. He died on the first day of that lunar month which is called by the Athenians Hecatombaeon, by the Macedonians Lous, but by the Hebrews Abba.

CHAPTER 5.

HOW MOSES CONQUERED SIHON AND OG KINGS OF THE AMORITES, AND DESTROYED THEIR WHOLE ARMY AND THEN DIVIDED THEIR LAND BY LOT TO TWO TRIBES AND A HALF OF THE HEBREWS.

1. THE people mourned for Aaron thirty days, and when this mourning was over, Moses removed the army from that place, and came to the river Arnon, which, issuing out of the mountains of Arabia, and running through all that wilderness, falls into the lake Asphaltitis, and becomes the limit between the land of the Moabites and the land of the Amorites. This land is fruitful, and sufficient to maintain a great number of men, with the good things it produces. Moses therefore sent messengers to Sihon, the king of this country, desiring that he would grant his army a passage, upon what security he should please to require; he promised that he should be no way injured, neither as to that country which Sihon governed, nor as to its inhabitants; and that he would buy his provisions at such a price as should be to their advantage, even though he should desire to sell them their very water. But Sihon refused his offer, and put his army into battle array, and was preparing every thing in order to hinder their passing over Arnon.

2. When Moses saw that the Amorite king was disposed to enter upon hostilities with them, he thought he ought not to bear that insult; and, determining to wean the Hebrews from their indolent temper, and

prevent the disorders which arose thence, which had been the occasion of their former sedition, (nor indeed were they now thoroughly easy in their minds,) he inquired of God, whether he would give him leave to fight? which when he had done, and God also promised him the victory, he was himself very courageous, and ready to proceed to fighting.

Accordingly he encouraged the soldiers; and he desired of them that they would take the pleasure of fighting, now God gave them leave so to do. They then, upon the receipt of this permission, which they so much longed for, put on their whole armor, and set about the work without delay. But the Amorite king was not now like to himself when the Hebrews were ready to attack him; but both he himself was affrighted at the Hebrews, and his army, which before had showed themselves to be of good courage, were then found to be timorous: so they could not sustain the first onset, nor bear up against the Hebrews, but fled away, as thinking this would afford them a more likely way for their escape than fighting, for they depended upon their cities, which were strong, from which yet they reaped no advantage when they were forced to fly to them; for as soon as the Hebrews saw them giving ground, they immediately pursued them close; and when they had broken their ranks, they greatly terrified them, and some of them broke off from the rest, and ran away to the cities.

Now the Hebrews pursued them briskly, and obstinately persevered in the labors they had already undergone; and being very skillful in slinging, and very dexterous in throwing of darts, or any thing else of that kind, and also having nothing but light armor, which made them quick in the pursuit, they overtook their enemies; and for those that were most remote, and could not be overtaken, they reached them by their slings and their bows, so that many were slain; and those that escaped the slaughter were sorely wounded, and these were more distressed with thirst than with any of those that fought against them, for it was the summer season; .and when the greatest number of them were brought down to the river out of a desire to drink, as also when others fled away by troops, the Hebrews came round them, and shot at them; so that, what with darts and what with arrows, they made a slaughter of them all.

Sihon their king was also slain. So the Hebrews spoiled the dead bodies, and took their prey. The land also which they took was full of abundance of fruits, and the army went all over it without fear, and fed their cattle upon it; and they took the enemies prisoners, for they could no way put a stop to them, since all the fighting men were destroyed. Such was the destruction which overtook the Amorites, who were neither sagacious in counsel, nor courageous in action. Hereupon the Hebrews took possession of their land, which is a country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembled an island: the river Arnon being its southern ; the river Jabbok determining its northern side, which running into Jordan loses its own name, and takes the other; while Jordan itself runs along by it, on its western coast.

3. When matters were come to this state, Og, the king of Gilead and Gaulanitis, fell upon the Israelites. He brought an army with him, and in haste to the assistance of his friend Sihon: but though he found him already slain, yet did he resolve still to come and fight the Hebrews, supposing he should be too hard for them, and being desirous to try their valor; but failing of his hope, he was both himself slain in the battle, and all his army was destroyed. So Moses passed over the river Jabbok, and overran the kingdom of Og. He overthrew their cities, and slew all their inhabitants, who yet exceeded in riches all the men in that part of the continent, on account of the goodness of the soil, and the great quantity of their wealth. Now Og had very few equals, either in the largeness of his body, or handsomeness of his appearance. He was also a man of great activity in the use of his hands, so that his actions were not unequal to the vast largeness and handsome appearance of his body. And men could easily guess at his strength and magnitude when they took his bed at Rabbath, the royal city of the Ammonites; its structure was of iron, its breadth four

cubits, and its length a cubit more than double thereto. However, his fall did not only improve the circumstances of the Hebrews for the present, but by his death he was the occasion of further good success to them; for they presently took those sixty cities, which were encompassed with excellent walls, and had been subject to him, and all got both in general and in particular a great prey.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCERNING BALAAM THE PROPHET AND WHAT KIND OF MAN HE WAS,

1. NOW Moses, when he had brought his army to Jordan; pitched his camp in the great plain over against Jericho. This city is a very happy situation, and very fit for producing palm-trees and balsam. And now the Israelites began to be very proud of themselves, and were very eager for fighting. Moses then, after he had offered for a few days sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, and feasted the people, sent a party of armed men to lay waste the country of the Midianites, and to take their cities. Now the occasion which he took for making war upon them was this that follows :--

2. When Balak, the king of the Moabites, who had from his ancestors a friendship and league with the Midianites, saw how great the Israelites were grown, he was much affrighted on account of his own and his kingdom's danger; for he was not acquainted with this, that the Hebrews would not meddle with any other country, but were to be contented with the possession of the land of Canaan, God having forbidden them to go any farther (7) So he, with more haste than wisdom, resolved to make an attempt upon them by words; but he did not judge it prudent to fight against them, after they had such prosperous successes, and even became out of ill successes more happy than before, but he thought to hinder them, if he could, from growing greater, and so he resolved to send ambassadors to the Midianites about them. Now these Midianites knowing there was one Balaam, who lived by Euphrates, and was the greatest of the prophets at that time, and one that was in friendship with them, sent some of their honorable princes along with the ambassadors of Balak, to entreat the prophet to come to them, that he might imprecate curses to the destruction of the Israelites. So Balsam received the ambassadors, and treated them very kindly; and when he had supped, he inquired what was God's will, and what this matter was for which the Midianites entreated him to come to them. But when God opposed his going, he came to the ambassadors, and told them that he was himself very willing and desirous to comply with their request, but informed them that God was opposite to his intentions, even that God who had raised him to great reputation on account of the truth of his predictions; for that this army, which they entreated him to come and curse, was in the favor of God; on which account he advised them to go home again, and not to persist in their enmity against the Israelites; and when he had given them that answer, he dismissed the ambassadors.

3. Now the Midianites, at the earnest request and fervent entreaties of Balak, sent other ambassadors to Balaam, who, desiring to gratify the men, inquired again of God; but he was displeased at [second] trial (8) and bid him by no means to contradict the ambassadors. Now Balsam did not imagine that God gave this injunction in order to deceive him, so he went along with the ambassadors; but when the divine angel met him in the way, when he was in a narrow passage, and hedged in with a wall on both sides, the ass on which Balaam rode understood that it was a divine spirit that met him, and thrust Balaam to one of the walls, without regard to the stripes which Balaam, when he was hurt by the wall, gave her; but when the ass, upon the angel's continuing to distress her, and upon the stripes which were given her, fell down, by the will of God, she made use of the voice of a man, and complained of Balaam as acting unjustly to her; that whereas he had no fault find with her in her former service to him, he now inflicted stripes upon her, as not understanding that she was hindered from serving him in what he was now going about, by the

providence of God. And when he was disturbed by reason of the voice of the ass, which was that of a man, the angel plainly appeared to him, and blamed him for the stripes he had given his ass; and informed him that the brute creature was not in fault, but that he was himself come to obstruct his journey, as being contrary to the will of God. Upon which Balaam was afraid, and was preparing to return back again: yet did God excite him to go on his intended journey, but added this injunction, that he should declare nothing but what he himself should suggest to his mind.

4. When God had given him this charge, he came to Balak; and when the king had entertained him in a magnificent manner, he desired him to go to one of the mountains to take a view of the state of the camp of the Hebrews. Balak himself also came to the mountain, and brought the prophet along with him, with a royal attendance. This mountain lay over their heads, and was distant sixty furlongs from the camp. Now when he saw them, he desired the king to build him seven altars, and to bring him as many bulls and rams; to which desire the king did presently conform. He then slew the sacrifices, and offered them as burnt-offerings, that he might observe some signal of the flight of the Hebrews. Then said he, "Happy is this people, on whom God bestows the possession of innumerable good things, and grants them his own providence to be their assistant and their guide; so that there is not any nation among mankind but you will be esteemed superior to them in virtue, and in the earnest prosecution of the best rules of life, and of such as are pure from wickedness, and will leave those rules to your excellent children; and this out of the regard that God bears to you, and the provision of such things for you as may render you happier than any other people under the sun. You shall retain that land to which he hath sent you, and it shall ever be under the command of your children; and both all the earth, as well as the seas, shall be filled with your glory: and you shall be sufficiently numerous to supply the world in general, and every region of it in particular, with inhabitants out of your stock. However, O blessed army! wonder that you are become so many from one father: and truly, the land of Canaan can now hold you, as being yet comparatively few; but know ye that the whole world is proposed to be your place of habitation for ever. The multitude of your posterity also shall live as well in the islands as on the continent, and that more in number than are the stars of heaven. And when you are become so many, God will not relinquish the care of you, but will afford you an abundance of all good things in times of peace, with victory and dominion in times of war. May the children of your enemies have an inclination to fight against you; and may they be so hardy as to come to arms, and to assault you in battle, for they will not return with victory, nor will their return be agreeable to their children and wives. To so great a degree of valor will you be raised by the providence of God, who is able to diminish the affluence of some, and to supply the wants of others."

5. Thus did Balaam speak by inspiration, as not being in his own power, but moved to say what he did by the Divine Spirit. But then Balak was displeased, and said he had broken the contract he had made, whereby he was to come, as he and his confederates had invited him, by the promise of great presents: for whereas he came to curse their enemies, he had made an encomium upon them, and had declared that they were the happiest of men. To which Balaam replied, "O Balak, if thou rightly considerest this whole matter, canst thou suppose that it is in our power to be silent, or to say any thing, when the Spirit of God seizes upon us? - for he puts such words as he pleases in our mouths, and such discourses as we are not ourselves conscious of. I well remember by what entreaties both you and the Midianites so joyfully brought me hither, and on that account I took this journey. It was my prayer, that I might not put any affront upon you, as to what you desired of me; but God is more powerful than the purposes I had made to serve you; for those that take upon them to foretell the affairs of mankind, as from their own abilities, are entirely unable to do it, or to forbear to utter what God suggests to them, or to offer violence to his will; for when he prevents us and enters into us, nothing that we say is our own. I then did not intend to praise this army,

nor to go over the several good things which God intended to do to their race; but since he was so favorable to them, and so ready to bestow upon them a happy life and eternal glory, he suggested the declaration of those things to me: but now, because it is my desire to oblige thee thyself, as well as the Midianites, whose entreaties it is not decent for me to reject, go to, let us again rear other altars, and offer the like sacrifices that we did before, that I may see whether I can persuade God to permit me to bind these men with curses." Which, when Balak had agreed to, God would not, even upon second sacrifices, consent to his cursing the Israelites. (9) Then fell Balaam upon his face, and foretold what calamities would befall the several kings of the nations, and the most eminent cities, some of which of old were not so much as inhabited; which events have come to pass among the several people concerned, both in the foregoing ages, and in this, till my own memory, both by sea and by land. From which completion of all these predictions that he made, one may easily guess that the rest will have their completion in time to come.

6. But Balak being very angry that the Israelites were not cursed, sent away Balaam without thinking him worthy of any honor. Whereupon, when he was just upon his journey, in order to pass the Euphrates, he sent for Balak, and for the princes of the Midianites, and spake thus to them: - "O Balak, and you Midianites that are here present, (for I am obliged even without the will of God to gratify you,) it is true no entire destruction can seize upon the nation of the Hebrews, neither by war, nor by plague, nor by scarcity of the fruits of the earth, nor can any other unexpected accident be their entire ruin; for the providence of God is concerned to preserve them from such a misfortune; nor will it permit any such calamity to come upon them whereby they may all perish; but some small misfortunes, and those for a short time, whereby they may appear to be brought low, may still befall them; but after that they will flourish again, to the terror of those that brought those mischiefs upon them. So that if you have a mind to gain a victory over them for a short space of time, you will obtain it by following my directions: - Do you therefore set out the handsomest of such of your daughters as are most eminent for beauty, (10) and proper to force and conquer the modesty of those that behold them, and these decked and trimmed to the highest degree able. Then do you send them to be near camp, and give them in charge, that the young men of the Hebrews desire their allow it them; and when they see they are enamored of them, let them take leaves; and if they entreat them to stay, let give their consent till they have persuaded leave off their obedience to their own laws, the worship of that God who established them to worship the gods of the Midianites and for by this means God will be angry at them (11). Accordingly, when Balaam had suggested counsel to them, he went his way.

7. So when the Midianites had sent their daughters, as Balaam had exhorted them, the Hebrew men were allured by their beauty, and came with them, and besought them not to grudge them the enjoyment of their beauty, nor to deny them their conversation. These daughters of Midianites received their words gladly, and consented to it, and staid with them; but when they brought them to be enamored of them, and their inclinations to them were grown to ripeness, they began to think of departing from them: then it was that these men became greatly disconsolate at the women's departure, and they were urgent with them not to leave them, but begged they would continue there, and become their wives; and they promised them they should be owned as mistresses all they had. This they said with an oath, and called God for the arbitrator of what they promised; and this with tears in their eyes, and all such marks of concern, as might shew how miserable they thought themselves without them, and so might move their compassion for them. So the women, as soon as they perceived they had made their slaves, and had caught them with their conversation began to speak thus to them: -

8. "O you illustrious young men! we have of our own at home, and great plenty of good things there, together with the natural, affectionate parents and friends; nor is it out of our want of any such things that we came to discourse with you; nor did we admit of your invitation with design to prostitute the beauty of our bodies for gain; but taking you for brave and worthy men, we agreed to your request, that we might treat you with such honors as hospitality required: and now seeing you say that you have a great affection for us, and are troubled when you think we are departing, we are not averse to your entreaties; and if we may receive such assurance of your good-will as we think can be alone sufficient, we will be glad to lead our lives with you as your wives; but we are afraid that you will in time be weary of our company, and will then abuse us, and send us back to our parents, after an ignominious manner." And they desired that they would excuse them in their guarding against that danger. But the young men professed they would give them any assurance they should desire; nor did they at all contradict what they requested, so great was the passion they had for them. "If then," said they, "this be your resolution, since you make use of such customs and conduct of life as are entirely different from all other men, (12) insomuch that your kinds of food are peculiar to yourselves, and your kinds of drink not common to others, it will be absolutely necessary, if you would have us for your wives, that you do withal worship our gods. Nor can there be any other demonstration of the kindness which you say you already have, and promise to have hereafter to us, than this, that you worship the same gods that we do. For has any one reason to complain, that now you are come into this country, you should worship the proper gods of the same country? especially while our gods are common to all men, and yours such as belong to nobody else but yourselves." So they said they must either come into such methods of divine worship as all others came into, or else they must look out for another world, wherein they may live by themselves, according to their own laws.

9. Now the young men were induced by the fondness they had for these women to think they spake very well; so they gave themselves up to what they persuaded them, and transgressed their own laws, and supposing there were many gods, and resolving that they would sacrifice to them according to the laws of that country which ordained them, they both were delighted with their strange food, and went on to do every thing that the women would have them do, though in contradiction to their own laws; so far indeed that this transgression was already gone through the whole army of the young men, and they fell into a sedition that was much worse than the former, and into danger of the entire abolition of their own institutions; for when once the youth had tasted of these strange customs, they went with insatiable inclinations into them; and even where some of the principal men were illustrious on account of the virtues of their fathers, they also were corrupted together with the rest.

10. Even Zimri, the head of the tribe of Simeon accompanied with Cozbi, a Midianitish women, who was the daughter of Sur, a man of authority in that country; and being desired by his wife to disregard the laws of Moses, and to follow those she was used to, he complied with her, and this both by sacrificing after a manner different from his own, and by taking a stranger to wife. When things were thus, Moses was afraid that matters should grow worse, and called the people to a congregation, but then accused nobody by name, as unwilling to drive those into despair who, by lying concealed, might come to repentance; but he said that they did not do what was either worthy of themselves, or of their fathers, by preferring pleasure to God, and to the living according to his will; that it was fit they should change their courses while their affairs were still in a good state, and think that to be true fortitude which offers not violence to their laws, but that which resists their lusts. And besides that, he said it was not a reasonable thing, when they had lived soberly in the wilderness, to act madly now when they were in prosperity; and that they ought not to lose, now they have abundance, what they had gained when they had little: - and so did he endeavor, by saying this, to correct the young inert, and to bring them to repentance for what they had done.

11. But Zimri arose up after him, and said, "Yes, indeed, Moses, thou art at liberty to make use of such laws as thou art so fond of, and hast, by accustoming thyself to them, made them firm; otherwise, if things had not been thus, thou hadst often been punished before now, and hadst known that the Hebrews are not easily put upon; but thou shalt not have me one of thy followers in thy tyrannical commands, for thou dost nothing else hitherto, but, under pretense of laws, and of God, wickedly impose on us slavery, and gain dominion to thyself, while thou deprivest us of the sweetness of life, which consists in acting according to our own wills, and is the right of free-men, and of those that have no lord over them. Nay, indeed, this man is harder upon the Hebrews than were the Egyptians themselves, as pretending to punish, according to his laws, every one's acting what is most agreeable to himself; but thou thyself better deservest to suffer punishment, who presumest to abolish what every one acknowledges to be what is good for him, and aimest to make thy single opinion to have more force than that of all the rest; and what I now do, and think to be right, I shall not hereafter deny to be according to my own sentiments. I have married, as thou sayest rightly, a strange woman, and thou hearest what I do from myself as from one that is free, for truly I did not intend to conceal myself. I also own that I sacrificed to those gods to whom you do not think it fit to sacrifice; and I think it right to come at truth by inquiring of many people, and not like one that lives under tyranny, to suffer the whole hope of my life to depend upon one man; nor shall any one find cause to rejoice who declares himself to have more authority over my actions than myself."

12. Now when Zimri had said these things, about what he and some others had wickedly done, the people held their peace, both out of fear of what might come upon them, and because they saw that their legislator was not willing to bring his insolence before the public any further, or openly to contend with him; for he avoided that, lest many should imitate the impudence of his language, and thereby disturb the multitude. Upon this the assembly was dissolved. However, the mischievous attempt had proceeded further, if Zimri had not been first slain, which came to pass on the following occasion: - Phineas, a man in other respects better than the rest of the young men, and also one that surpassed his contemporaries in the dignity of his father, (for he was the son of Eleazar the high priest, and the grandson of [Aaron] Moses's brother,) who was greatly troubled at what was done by Zimri, he resolved in earnest to inflict punishment on him, before his unworthy behavior should grow stronger by impunity, and in order to prevent this transgression from proceeding further, which would happen if the ringleaders were not punished. He was of so great magnanimity, both in strength of mind and body, that when he undertook any very dangerous attempt, he did not leave it off till he overcame it, and got an entire victory. So he came into Zimri's tent, and slew him with his javelin, and with it he slew Cozbi also, Upon which all those young men that had a regard to virtue, and aimed to do a glorious action, imitated Phineas's boldness, and slew those that were found to be guilty of the same crime with Zimri. Accordingly many of those that had transgressed perished by the magnanimous valor of these young men; and the rest all perished by a plague, which distemper God himself inflicted upon them; so that all those their kindred, who, instead of hindering them from such wicked actions, as they ought to have done, had persuaded them to go on, were esteemed by God as partners in their wickedness, and died. Accordingly there perished out of the army no fewer than fourteen (13) [twenty-four] thousand at this time.

13. This was the cause why Moses was provoked to send an army to destroy the Midianites, concerning which expedition we shall speak presently, when we have first related what we have omitted; for it is but just not to pass over our legislator's due encomium, on account of his conduct here, because, although this Balaam, who was sent for by the Midianites to curse the Hebrews, and when he was hindered from doing it by Divine Providence, did still suggest that advice to them, by making use of which our enemies had well nigh corrupted the whole multitude of the Hebrews with their wiles, till some of them were deeply

infected with their opinions; yet did he do him great honor, by setting down his prophecies in writing. And while it was in his power to claim this glory to himself, and make men believe they were his own predictions, there being no one that could be a witness against him, and accuse him for so doing, he still gave his attestation to him, and did him the honor to make mention of him on this account. But let every one think of these matters as he pleases.

CHAPTER 7.

HOW THE HEBREWS FOUGHT WITH THE MIDIANITES, AND OVERCAME THEM.

1. Now Moses sent an army against the land of Midian, for the causes forementioned, in all twelve thousand, taking an equal number out of every

tribe, and appointed Phineas for their commander; of which Phineas we made mention a little before, as he that had guarded the laws of the Hebrews, and had inflicted punishment on Zimri when he had transgressed them. Now the Midianites perceived beforehand how the Hebrews were coming, and would suddenly be upon them: so they assembled their army together, and fortified the entrances into their country, and there awaited the enemy's coming. When they were come, and they had joined battle with them, an immense multitude of the Midianites fell; nor could they be numbered, they were so very many: and among them fell all their kings, five in number, viz. Evi, Zur, Reba, Hur, and Rekem, who was of the same name with a city, the chief and capital of all Arabia, which is still now so called by the whole Arabian nation, Arcem, from the name of the king that built it; but is by the Greeks called Petra. Now when the enemies were discomfited, the Hebrews spoiled their country, and took a great prey, and destroyed the men that were its inhabitants, together with the women; only they let the virgins alone, as Moses had commanded Phineas to do, who indeed came back, bringing with him an army that had received no harm, and a great deal of prey; fifty-two thousand beeves, seventy-five thousand six hundred sheep, sixty thousand asses, with an immense quantity of gold and silver furniture, which the Midianites made use of in their houses; for they were so wealthy, that they were very luxurious. There were also led captive about thirty-two thousand virgins. (14) So Moses parted the prey into parts, and gave one fiftieth part to Eleazar and the two priests, and another fiftieth part to the Levites; and distributed the rest of the prey among the people. After which they lived happily, as having obtained an abundance of good things by their valor, and there being no misfortune that attended them, or hindered their enjoyment of that happiness.

2. But Moses was now grown old, and appointed Joshua for his successor, both to receive directions from God as a prophet, and for a commander of the army, if they should at any time stand in need of such a one; and this was done by the command of God, that to him the care of the public should be committed. Now Joshua had been instructed in all those kinds of learning which concerned the laws and God himself, and Moses had been his instructor.

3. At this time it was that the two tribes of Gad and Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, abounded in a multitude of cattle, as well as in all other kinds of prosperity; whence they had a meeting, and in a body came and besought Moses to give them, as their peculiar portion, that land of the Amorites which they had taken by right of war, because it was fruitful, and good for feeding of cattle; but Moses, supposing that they were afraid of fighting with the Canaanites, and invented this provision for their cattle as a handsome excuse for avoiding that war, he called them arrant cowards, and said they had only contrived a decent excuse for that cowardice; and that they had a mind to live in luxury and ease, while all the rest were laboring with great pains to obtain the land they were desirous to have; and that they were not willing to

march along, and undergo the remaining hard service, whereby they were, under the Divine promise, to pass over Jordan, and overcome those our enemies which God had shown them, and so obtain their land. But these tribes, when they saw that Moses was angry with them, and when they could not deny but he had a just cause to be displeased at their petition, made an apology for themselves; and said, that it was not on account of their fear of dangers, nor on account of their laziness, that they made this request to him, but that they might leave the prey they had gotten in places of safety, and thereby might be more expedite, and ready to undergo difficulties, and to fight battles. They added this also, that when they had built cities, wherein they might preserve their children, and wives, and possessions, if he would bestow them upon them, they would go along with the rest of the army. Hereupon Moses was pleased with what they said; so he called for

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