

Part 9 Numbers 30.2-32.42 MATTOH "BRANCHES"

GOD'S FAMILY GROWS BY INITIATIVE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SECTION

Israel's "tribes" or "branches" are accounted of in this section. They have been previously numbered at just proud of 600,000 and their male sector had diminished over just forty years though not by much. The LORD wants to see His people grow and increase in every way. This section shows his love through his promotion of "marriage" and its rights among His people even in the face of vows to Himself that would limit a woman's capacity to produce a family. Again by the provision of 60,000 Midianite virgin women the LORD seeks increase among His people without the risk of taking aboard the counter culture of Baalism and idolatry. The LORD provides substantial means for the sustaining of His people in the booty they divide to advantage and He so protects their army that not one of 12,000 troops is slain in war. The key to this is the "loin-guard" as the key to our warfare is "truth-the truth of God. This section demonstrates growth by entrepreneurial initiative such as that of "women", of

SPIRITUAL INITIATIVE-A MAN'S VOWS ARE TO BE HONOURED 1-2

And Moses spoke to the princes of the tribes [Literally "branches"] of the children of Israel, saying, 'This is the thing which the LORD commanded!' A man who vows a vow or swears an oath to bind an obligation [Hebrew 'a fetter'] on his soul must not keep delaying his promise or hope it can wait; he must do in accordance with all he said.

THREE TYPES OF FEMALE INITIATIVE

(a)A VIRGIN'S VOWS MAY BE WAIVED 3-8

And a woman in her youth within the house of her father when she vows a vow to the LORD and binds her soul and her father hears her vow and what she has bound herself to and remains silent the vow by which she is bound shall stand. But if her father forbids or dissuades her in the day he hears the entire vow by which she has bound her soul it shall not stand. The LORD will pardon her because her father has forbidden her. *The LORD acknowledges the power of a father to save a daughter from any impetuous promise. The fact that the daughter is first referred to as ISHAH suggests the vow may be in respect of giving up her right to marry under a vow.*

And if it happens that she marries and has a vow upon her or her lips speak rashly to bind her soul and her husband hears and in the day he hears remains silent the vow by which she is bound shall stand. If when he hears her husband dissuades her and causes her to break her vow and the rash words by which she bound her soul the LORD will forgive her. *Again the LORD gives preference to the husband's rights even though the vow was between her betrothal and her marriage-because she made a vow to her husband prior to the undertaking with God.*

(b)A WIFE'S VOWS 10-13

If a wife living with her husband vows a vow to bind her soul by an oath and her husband hears and is silent and does not prevent or discourage her any vow and any binding statement by which she is bound shall stand. But if her husband breaks it in the day he hears of it all that went from her lips to vow and bind her soul shall not stand and the LORD shall pardon her

(c)A WIDOW'S VOW 14

Any vow or oath which binds a widow's life or that of a woman who has caused her broken (marriage) will be caused to stand.

DELAYED BREACH 15-17

And if her husband continues silent **from day to day** concerning any vow upon her by which she binds her life because he is silent to her in the day he hears these shall stand. And if he breaks them some time

after he hears of them he takes the guilt upon himself. These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses between a man and his wife and a father and young daughter living in her father's house.

READING No.2 31.1-12

MANY OF MIDIAN'S WOMEN ARE GRAFTED

INTO THE FAMILY TREE OF ISRAEL-WITH MOSES' WIFE

AVENGING MIDIAN FALTERS-SOLDIERS UNWITTINGLY STORE UP PROBLEMS

(SPEECH No.159)The LORD spoke to Moses saying, "Take the vengeance of the sons of Israel against Midian -afterwards you will be gathered to you people. And Moses spoke to the people saying, "Cause some of your "powerful men" or "**men of flesh**" to **put on loin armour** [*Hebrew HALAZ-this was the area of vulnerability of Israel physically and morally too in respect of Midian*] for battle and they shall be those who bring the vengeance of the LORD against Midian. *One view of this choice is that God was choosing the "weak things" to put to flight the things that were mighty so this last act of spiritual warfare of Moses shows that each of us in weakness needs to be clothed upon with the armour of God.* He send a thousand per tribe from all the tribes of Israel into battle. And from all the thousands of Israel a thousand from each tribe were "stirred up"[*Hebrew MASAR "taught" and "given"*] armed for battle. And Moses sent them-a thousand from each tribe to battle-and Phineas the son of Eleazar the priest with the host and items from the sanctuary-and trumpets for battle signalling in his hand. They caused themselves to battle against Midian as the LORD commanded Moses and they slew every man. And the kings of Midian were among their victims; Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reb five kings of Midian...**and Balaam son of Beor they also slew with the sword.** *Balaam had gone to his own place-he had settled down with Midian and was doubtless fomenting trouble for Israel such as would prejudice the blood line of the people. This compromised man was despatched. His story which became known to Moses could not have been easily told even as a plea in the heat of battle. It would appear that others who accompanied him defected earlier to Israel and gave us the Balak Balaam narratives.* The children of Israel came to possess the wives of Midian and the children in swaddling and **all** their animals (*possibly camels and donkeys-including Balaam's famous speaking donkey*) and all their wealth in cattle and all their riches as war trophy. And they burned with fire all the cities they had settled and all their palaces (*including the five palaces of the kings*). They carried off all the booty and all they had taken in the form of man and beast. And they brought to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel the captives and the takings and the spoils to the camp on the Arabah of Moab which is across the Jordan from Jericho.

READING No.3 31.13-24

THE SLAYING OF PERSONS TAINTED BY BAAL PEOR

INITIATIVE OF WELCOME TURNS TO ANGRY ADMONITION

And Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the people went out to meet them outside the camp. And Moses was wroth with the appointed leaders of the forces-the captains of thousands hundreds who were coming with [*Hebrew MIZEBAh "apart from" or "after"*] the host of war. And Moses said to them, "Have you allowed all the married females to live? Behold these were they who belonged to the sons of Israel by the legal arrangement or act of Balaam to deliver perversity against the LORD over the incident of Peor when there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD. Now slay every male child and every woman who has known man to sleep with a male-slay her but every girl among the women who has not known man to sleep with shall live and belong to you. All who have slain anyone or touched any wounded or defiled shall remain outside the camp and purify yourselves on the third and seventh days and every garment and everything made of leather or goat hair and every article of wood shall be purified.

RITUAL TORAH OF WASHING

INITIATIVE TO HALLOW TROPHIES TO A SACRED USE

And Eleazar the priest said to the men of flesh of those who came back, these are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, "Definitely gold and silver and bronze and iron and tin and lead -everything which can come through fire shall pass through fire and be clean. It shall also definitely pass through the **water of agitation** [*cf*19.13 *Resort was to be to waters upon which the ashes of the Red Heifer were sprinkled*] and be clean. For all that has not come through fire shall pass through water. And on the seventh day you shall wash your clothes and be clean. After that you may come into the camp. **This prophetic TORAH** takes us to the ultimate cleansing-the type of Christ. It is notable that direction is given to wash clothes on the "seventh day"-so the work of cleansing from sin and uncleanness stands outside the law of Sabbath as of greater consequence. It is more important to be clean from sin than to be doing nothing on the Sabbath. This Torah exalts the work of Christ above the Law of Moses.

READING No.4

(SPEECH No.160)THE DIVISION OF TROPHIES OF WAR

And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, "You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the families of the people are to count the captives-men and animals." Divide that which was taken in half between those who captured (it) in war who went out with the host and between the whole congregation. And raise a portion for the LORD from the "soldiers" of battle who went out with the host; one soul from 500 of men, of the herd, of donkeys and of flocks. *The size of the spoil must have been very great when even the Levites would obtain wives from the women and cattle and donkeys and sheep.* Take it from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest a heave offering for the LORD. From the half designated to the Children of Israel take one "selected" [*Hebrew "held"*] from each fifty-of man, of cattle, of donkeys, of the flock(sheep & goats)and every animal and give them to the Levites who watch the dwelling place of the LORD. Then Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

THE ALLOCATION OF THE CONGREGATION

The rest of the booty remaining from the plunder which the people of the host took as booty was 675,000 sheep; 72,000 cattle and 61,000 donkeys. Also the number of living creatures of mankind was 30,000 women who had not known or slept with a man. *Of these 60 became wives for the Levites.*

THE SOLDIERS' ALLOCATION

The half share for those who fought in the battle added up to 337,500 sheep of which the portion for the LORD was 675; of cattle 36,00 and the LORD'S portion 72; of donkeys 30,500 and the LORD'S portion was 32; of persons 16,000 and the LORD'S portion 32. Moses gave the tribute of heave offering to Eleazar the priest as the LORD commanded Moses.

READING No.5 31.42-54

ARMY LEADERS' INITIATIVE-150 KILOGRAMS OF GOLD

The portion of the Sons of Israel which Moses separated as half of what the soldiers of the host had Moses gave the half of the congregation: 337,500 sheep, 36,000cattle, 30,500 donkeys and 16,000 souls. From the portion of the Sons of Israel Moses held one from every fifty and gave them to the Levites who watched the tabernacle of the LORD as the LORD commanded Moses. And the selected leaders of the host came near -captains over thousands and over hundreds and said to Moses-Your servants have counted every man who was under our hand **and not one man is missing**. So we have brought as an offering to the LORD articles of gold from what each found; armbands, bracelets, signet rings ear rings and necklaces to make atonement for our souls before the LORD'S face. Moses and Eleazar the priest took from them all the fine worked articles. And all the gold of heave offering from the captains of thousands and of hundreds which they lifted up to the LORD was **16,750 shekels**. Each man of the host had taken booty for himself. And Moses and Eleazar received the gift of gold from the captains of thousands and hundreds and brought it to the tabernacle of meeting-a memorial belonging to the sons of Israel before the LORD.

READING No.6 32.1-19

THE INITIATIVE OF GAD AND REUBEN

But the herds that the sons of Reuben and Gad had were great strong herds and they were looking ahead to the (possibilities)of the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead-the rising location was a place for livestock And the sons of Gad and Reuben went and spoke to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the chiefs of the congregation saying, "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealah, Sebam, Nebo and Beon -the land which the LORD smote before the face of the congregation of Israel is a land for cattle - a wealthy place for your servants. And they said, **"If we have found grace in your eyes** give this land to your servants to hold so that we do not have to cross the Jordan. *The obvious reason why they hesitated to cross Jordan was the abundance of livestock-together with the immediate scarcity of feedstuff on the narrow salt plains and wilderness beyond. They had done their homework and while fighting against the kings on the East had concluded that this was superb cattle country.* And Moses said to the Sons of Gad and Reuben, "Will you sit here while your brethren go to war? And Moses said to the sons of Gad and Reuben, "Why do you discourage [*Hebrew NOAh "dissuade"*] the hearts of the Sons of Israel from crossing to the land which the LORD gave to them? *The vision of these tribes was "cattle bound"-they did not see "Jerusalem the Golden with milk and honey blest" at this moment-not did they look to the greater spiritual provision proclaimed in Genesis 22.14.* Your fathers did thus when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land. Then they went up the Eshcol river valley and saw the land and so discouraged the heart of the Sons of Israel that they did not go to the land which the LORD gave them. The anger of the LORD was aroused that day and He swore by oath saying, "The men of 20 years old and upwards who came out of Egypt will not fill their years up afterwards to see the land which I swore to Abraham Isaac and Jacob..." *This warning of the LORD effectively meant that a whole generation died in the wilderness and there was no man of 60 or under who left Egypt still alive at the entry to Canaan. Caleb and Joshua were spared by the LORD in testimony to their "discipleship" "...except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun who filled their hands after leaving Egypt of the LORD."* **What the English translates as "wholly following" is "filling the hands" or offering liberally to God of their lives and giving everything to Him in utter dedication. Their lives were "on the altar for God".** "...The anger of the LORD burned against Israel in the desert for forty years until the compete generation which did evil in the eyes of the LORD had gone to rest-and behold your have risen in the place of your fathers-bands of sinful fleshly men to cause the heat of the anger of the LORD to rise in a flame again against Israel. When you turn away from following Him He will add to cause the people to rest (as corpses) in the desert and you will corrupt this whole people". And they approached him urgently [*Hebrew NAGASH-"offering (themselves) sacrificially"*] and said, "We will build ourselves pens for flocks for our wealth of cattle here and cities for our young families. But we have been fast to attire ourselves for war in the (battle) front of the Children of Israel till the time when we brought them to their place and our young families (wives and young women) will live in fortified cities away from the sight of the inhabitants of the land. *The tribes were showing that they would allow no truck with idolatry from the Moabite and Gileadite citizens and they would leave their families and fight with Israel.* We will not return to our homes till every man of the Sons of Israel has received his inheritance. We will not have any inheritance over Jordan for our inheritance comes to us across Jordan on the East

READING No.7 32.20-38

THE INITIATIVE OF MOSES

Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this things and will arm for battle before the LORD'S face and if you will cross Jordan armed till He has driven his enemies before Him and the land is subdued before the LORD'S face; thereafter you may return and you will be free from guilt [*Hebrew NAQAH-"without obligation"*] to the LORD or Israel and this land shall belong to you as a tenancy before the LORD. And if you fail to do this, **behold you will find your sins that you have sinned will know you** Sin is here described in terms of the conscience. Build cities for your families and folds for your flocks but do what you have already arrived at in the speech of your lips. *Moses was warning against "glib" words and admonished them to effect what they promised.* And the children of Gad and Reuben said to Moses, "We your servants will do as my Lord commands. Our families and wives and herds and all our animals will

remain here in the cities of Gilead. Your servants will cross -every man an armed soldier of the host before the LORD to battle as my Lord says.

And Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers of **the tribes** of the sons of Israel. And Moses said, "If the sons of Gad and Reuben pass over Jordan armed for battle before the LORD and the land is brought under your control give them the land of Gilead for their tenancy. But if they do not cross armed along with you they shall hold land among you in Canaan as their possession. And the sons of Gad and Reuben answered saying, "What the LORD says to your servants we will do. We will ensure that we along with you cross armed to the land of Canaan before the LORD but our tenancy will be on the other side of Jordan. And Moses gave to them-to the sons of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and of OG king of Bashan, the cities belonging to Gilead land to the surrounding territory.

THE INITIATIVE OF GAD AND REUBEN REBUILDING CITIES

And the sons of Gad and Reuben built Ataroth and Aroer, Atroth Shopan, Jazer, Jogbehah, Beth-Nimrah and Beth Haran-fortified cities and pens for their flocks. And the sons of Reuben built Heshbon Elealeh and Kiriahaim besides Nebo and Baal Meon with revolutionary change [*Hebrew SABAB-* "overturning" or "turning it over"(to the LORD)]of name.-also Sibmah. And they called the cities which they (re-)built by new names.

SUMMARY 32 39-42

THE INITIATIVE OF THE SONS OF MANASSEH

And Makir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it dispossessing the Amorites who were in it. And Moses gave Gilead to Makir son of Manasseh and he dwelt in it. And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took their villages and called them "villages of Jair". And Nobah went and took Kenath and its daughter towns and called it Nobah [*Hebrew "Barking"*] after himself.

The End of Part 9 "Initiative in God's family"