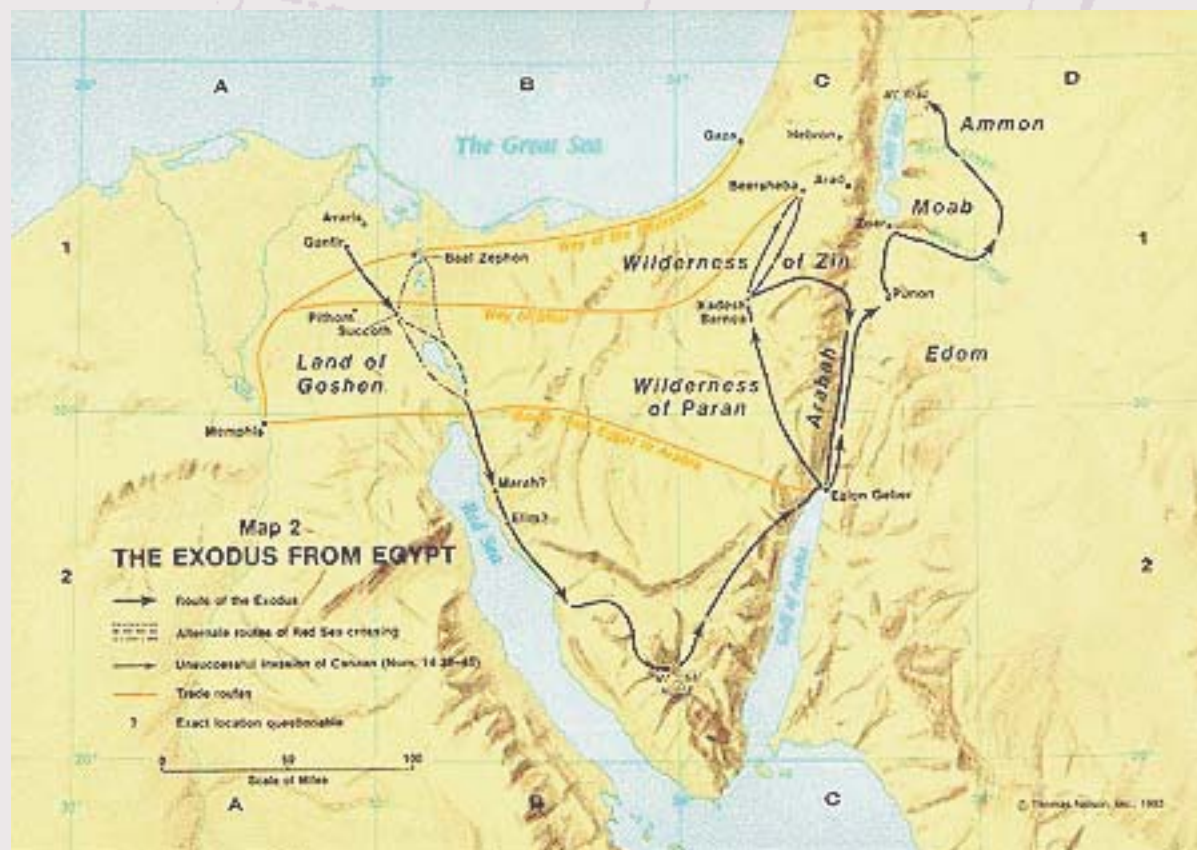


A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under Bible Studies in the Bible Study Aids section

A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file on the internet. Just use your web browser's back arrow to return to the lesson material.

This final lesson in the four lesson series on Numbers plugs us into the story of the wilderness journey of the Israelites at the conclusion of the trip before Moses' death. The concluding chapters contain some of the instructions given by Moses to the people, although the entire book of Deuteronomy is devoted to a depiction of the farewell speeches of Moses to the people. The end of Numbers helps to set the stage for the following OT document, called in English 'Deuteronomy'.



I. Context

The historical and literary contexts for the entire book of Numbers remain the same as treated in the preceding lessons. See the lesson on Numbers 10 for this information; it is found on the internet at http://cranfordville.com/Cranfordville/Num10_11-28SSLess.pdf.

a Historical

The historical setting for our passage is established by some passages describing the movement of the Israelites after the poisonous snake episode in 21:4-9:

Num. 21:10-20 (NLT). 10 The Israelites traveled next to Obboth and camped there. 11 Then they went on to Iyeabaram, in the wilderness on the eastern border of Moab. 12 From there they traveled to the valley of Zered Brook and set up camp. 13 Then they moved to the far side of the Arnon River, in the wilderness adjacent to the territory of the Amorites. The Arnon is the boundary line between the Moabites and the Amorites. 14 For this reason The Book of the Wars of the LORD speaks of "the town of Waheb in the area of Suphah, and the ravines; and the Arnon River 15 and its ravines, which extend as far as the settlement of Ar on the border of Moab." 16 From there the Israelites traveled to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Assemble the people, and I will give them water." 17 There the Israelites sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Yes, sing about it! 18 Sing of this well, which princes dug, which great leaders hollowed out with their scepters and staffs." Then the Israelites left the wilderness and proceeded on through Mattanah, 19 Nahaliel, and Bamoth. 20 Then they went to the valley in Moab where Pisgah Peak overlooks the wasteland.

Num. 22:1 (NLT). 1 Then the people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

Num. 26:3 (NLT). 3 At that time the entire nation of Israel was camped on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho. So Moses and Eleazar the priest issued these census instructions to the leaders of Israel:

Num. 33:50 (NLT). 50 While they were camped near the Jordan River on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho, the LORD said to Moses, [Chapter 33](#) contains a summation of the travel locations of the Israelites from the time of the departure to the camping across from Jericho before the invasion of the land of Canaan.

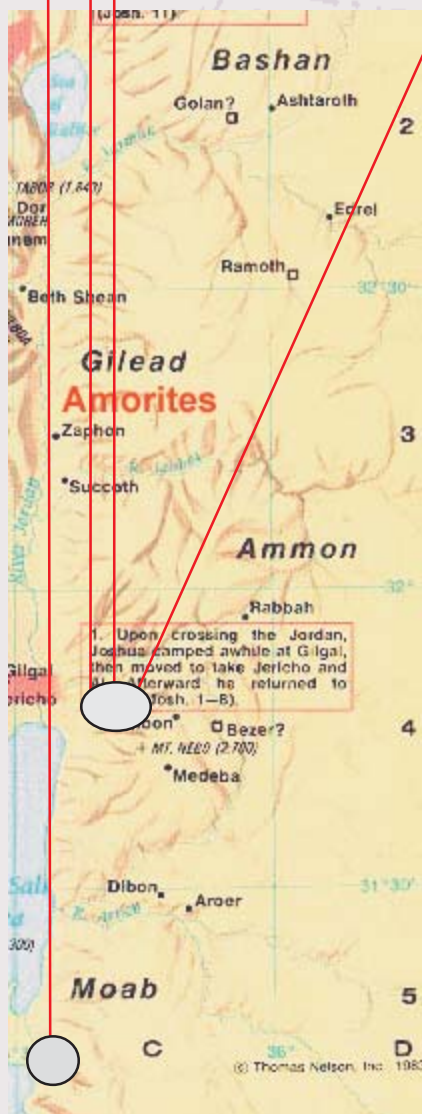
These references position chapter thirty four as having taken place in this final camp on the east side of the Jordan river just across the river from the ancient city of Jericho to the west. See [the map](#) on page one for summary details.

The events that took place after leaving Mt. Hor are laid out in Numbers 21 - 36 and are summarized below using the second map on your left:

1. [Num. 21:21-32](#). Verses 10-20 summarize the trip from Mt. Hor to the final camp on the east side of the Jordan. Near Mt. Pisgah (also called Mt. Nebo) a message was sent to King Sihon of the Amorites requesting permission to pass through their territory. This request triggered a war between the Amorites and the Israelites, which the Israelites won. The result was that they settled in the land of the Amorites, which is located just to the east of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee (called the Sea of Chinnereth in OT) and the Dead Sea. Two of the twelve tribes would eventually claim this territory as their homeland.

2. [Num. 21:33-35](#). Next they did battle with King Og of the region of Bashan, at the town of Edrel. This is located to the north of the Amorite territory and to the east of the Sea of Chinnereth (=Sea of Galilee). The Israelites completely conquered this territory.

3. [Num. 22:1-24:25](#). The Israelites moved back to the plains of Moab across from Jericho where they remained until the invasion of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. The Moabites and the Midianites who lived in this region became very nervous about the Israelites' presence and plotted to destroy them. They sought the aid of Balaam, a non-Israelite reli-



gious figure, to place a religious curse on the Israelites so that the Israelites would be doomed in battle. Eventually, Balaam blessed the Israelites instead of placing them under divine curse.

4. [Num. 25:1-18](#). While camped out at Shittim, the Israelites reflected a pattern that would haunt them for centuries to come. First, they began interacting with the Moabites both with their women and subsequently with the Moabite god Baal. Those who participated in this were punished with execution. Then, an Israelite showed up with a Midianite woman as his wife. Aaron's grandson, Phinehas, reacted with vengeance by killing both the man and woman, thus preventing the imposition of a massive, divinely initiated plague on the people. Moses then gave the command for the Israelites to do battle with the Midianites in order to stem this polluting pagan influence upon the people.

5. [Num. 26 - 34](#). The remaining chapters in Numbers focus in the second census of this second generation of Israelites along with number elaborations on the Law first given to Moses at Sinai.

Our passage falls as a part of this instruction given by Moses during the closing days of his leadership of the Israelites.

b. Literary

As a part of the second division of the book of Numbers (chaps 1-25; 26-34), our passage is a part of Moses' instruction to the second generation of Israelites that was identified by the second census of the people as described in chapter 26.

Chapters 27-34 contains a mixture of narratives describing various events that took place and instructions by Moses to the people. The *narratives* include the following:

1. [Num. 27:1-11](#). Some five daughters of an Israelite named Zelophehad approached Moses with a question regarding inheritance of their father's property. They were concerned that, if they married outside their tribe, their father's property would be lost to their tribe of Manasseh. Under God's instruction, Moses allowed them to retain their father's inheritance. A later episode, [Num. 36:1-12](#), describes these daughters marrying within their own tribe of Manasseh.

2. [Num. 27:12-23](#). Moses was instructed to anoint Joshua before the assembled Israelites as his successor, since God had forbidden him to enter the promised land because of his disobedience earlier.

3. [Num. 31:1-54](#). War was made against the Midianites by some twelve thousand Israelites. The Midianites were totally destroyed, but the war booty, including women and children, was preserved in violation of divine instruction. The male children and married women among the Midianites were then executed, but the property was distributed half and half between the soldiers and the people.

4. [Num. 32:1-42](#). Two of the twelve tribes, Reuben and Gad, made a request to be allowed to settle in the transjordan area where the Israelites were camped. Upon promising to participate in the invasion of Canaan itself on the west side of the Jordan, they were granted permission to begin building fortified cities to settle into as a permanent home.

The *instructional material*, i.e., speech narratives, is found in the following passages:

1. [Num. 28:1-30:16](#). Chapters 28 and 29 contain instructions regarding the various offerings that were to be made in worship during the different celebrations over the annual religious calendar. Chapter 30 has to do with the status of vows made by women who are under the control of either their father or their husband.

2. [Num. 33:1-49](#). This material provides an interesting summation of the various places that the Israelites camped in during the time of the exodus. These places are grouped into 'stages.'

3. [Num. 33:50-35:34](#). This material begins with instructions for the conquest of Canaan (33:50-56), continues with instructions about marking out the boundaries of the land of promise (34:1-15), then a listing of tribal leaders who were to receive land (34:16-29), followed by instructions regarding the Levites (35:1-8) and closes with instructions regarding cities of refuge and how they were to operate (35:9-34).

Our passage, [34:1-29](#), falls in this last section of instructions by Moses to the people. It divides itself out in the two subsections described above: (1) Marking the boundaries ([vv. 1-15](#)); (2) Tribal Leaders ([vv. 16-29](#)).

II. Message

NASB

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Command the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance, {even the} land of Canaan according to its borders. **3** ‘Your southern sector^{F464} shall extend from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom, and your southern border shall extend^{F465} from the end of the Salt Sea eastward. **4** ‘Then your border shall turn *direction* from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim and continue^{F466} to Zin, and its termination^{F467} shall be to the south of Kadesh-barnea; and it shall reach^{F468} Hazaraddar and continue^{F466} to Azmon. **5** ‘The border shall turn *direction* from Azmon to the brook of Egypt, and its termination shall be at the sea. **6** ‘As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea, that is, *its* coastline;^{F469} this shall be your west border. **7** ‘And this shall be your north border: you shall draw your *border* line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor. **8** ‘You shall draw a line from Mount Hor to the Lebo-hamath,^{F470} and the termination of the border shall be at Zedad; **9** and the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and its termination shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your north border. **10** ‘For your eastern border you shall also draw a line from Hazar-enan to Shepham, **11** and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down and reach to the slope^{F471} on the east side of the Sea of Chinnereth. **12** ‘And the border shall go down to the Jordan and its termination shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land according to its borders all around.’” **13** So Moses

NRSV

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **2** Command the Israelites, and say to them: When you enter the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan, defined by its boundaries), **3** your south sector shall extend from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom. Your southern boundary shall begin from the end of the Dead Sea^{F101} on the east; **4** your boundary shall turn south of the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its outer limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and cross to Azmon; **5** the boundary shall turn from Azmon to the Wadi of Egypt, and its termination shall be at the Sea. **6** For the western boundary, you shall have the Great Sea and its^{F102} coast; this shall be your western boundary. **7** This shall be your northern boundary: from the Great Sea you shall mark out your line to Mount Hor; **8** from Mount Hor you shall mark it out to Lebo-hamath, and the outer limit of the boundary shall be at Zedad; **9** then the boundary shall extend to Ziphron, and its end shall be at Hazar-enan; this shall be your northern boundary. **10** You shall mark out your eastern boundary from Hazar-enan to Shepham; **11** and the boundary shall continue down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the boundary shall go down, and reach the eastern slope of the sea of Chinnereth; **12** and the boundary shall go down to the Jordan, and its end shall be at the Dead Sea.^{F103} This shall be your land with its boundaries all around. **13** Moses commanded the Israelites, saying: This is the land that you shall inherit by lot, which

NLT

Then the LORD said to Moses, **2** “Give these instructions to the Israelites: When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your special possession, these will be the boundaries. **3** The southern portion of your country will extend from the wilderness of Zin, along the edge of Edom. The southern boundary will begin on the east at the Dead Sea.^{F120} **4** It will then run south past Scorpion Pass^{F121} in the direction of Zin. Its southernmost point will be Kadesh-barnea, from which it will go to Hazar-addar, and on to Azmon. **5** From Azmon the boundary will turn toward the brook of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea.^{F122} **6** “Your western boundary will be the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. **7** “Your northern boundary will begin at the Mediterranean Sea and run eastward to Mount Hor, **8** then to Lebo-hamath, and on through Zedad **9** and Ziphron to Hazar-enan. This will be your northern boundary. **10** “The eastern boundary will start at Hazar-enan and run south to Shepham, **11** then down to Riblah on the east side of Ain. From there the boundary will run down along the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee,^{F123} **12** and then along the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. These are the boundaries of your land.” **13** Then Moses told the Israelites, “This is the territory you are to divide among yourselves by sacred lot. The LORD

commanded the sons of Israel, saying, "This is the land that you are to apportion by lot among you as a possession, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine and a half tribes. **14** "For the tribe of the sons of Reuben have received *theirs* according to their fathers' households, and the tribe of the sons of Gad according to their fathers' households, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their possession. **15** "The two and a half tribes have received their possession across the Jordan opposite Jericho, eastward toward the sunrise."

Footnotes

F464: *Lit {hand}*
 F465: *Lit {mouth}*
 F466: *Lit {morrow}*
 F467: *Lit {with a high hand}*
 F468: *Many mss read {from Pi-hahiroth}*
 F469: *Lit {Sea of Reeds}*
 F470: *Lit {Sea of Reeds}*
 F471: *Lit {mouth}*

the Lord has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe; **14** for the tribe of the Reubenites by their ancestral houses and the tribe of the Gadites by their ancestral houses have taken their inheritance, and also the half-tribe of Manasseh; **15** the two tribes and the half-tribe have taken their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise.

Footnotes

F101: *Heb [Salt Sea]*
 F102: *Syr: Heb lacks [its]*

commands that the land be divided up among the nine and a half remaining tribes. **14** The families of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance of land **15** on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho."

Footnotes

F120: *Hebrew Salt Sea; also in 34:12.*
 F121: *Hebrew the ascent of Akkrabbim.*
 F122: *Hebrew the sea; also in 34:6, 7.*
 F123: *Hebrew sea of Kinnereth.*

a. Marking the Boundaries (vv. 1-15)

Comments:

What is defined here is the idealized boundary for the to be established Israelite nation. In reality, the Israelites have never fully occupied the territory defined in this passage. Somewhat similar boundaries are described in [Joshua 15:1-19](#) and [Ezekiel 47:15-20](#). All three descriptions set forth what was intended, but in actuality never realized.

Interestingly the land to the east of the Jordan River is not included in this description. Perhaps this is because Num. 34 concentrates on Canaan itself, and this territory was not considered a part of Canaan.

The description of the boundaries proceeds from southern boundary (vv. 1-5) to the western boundary (v. 6) to the northern boundary (vv. 7-9) to the eastern boundary (vv. 10-12). This is similar to the depiction in Joshua 15 but Ezekiel 47 begins with the northern boundary. The following items are designated as boundary markers:

1. Southern:	2. Western	3. Northern	4. Eastern
Zin	Great Sea	Great Sea	Hazar-enan
Akrabbim		Mt. Hor	Shepham
Kadesh-barnea		Lebo-hamath	Riblah
Hazar-addar		Zedad	Chinnereth
Amon Wadi		Ziphron	Jordan
Great Sea		Hazar-enan	Dead Sea

Many of these sites are difficult to locate with certainty. Together



they describe the ancient land of Canaan.

What can we learn from this? Some things comes to mind. Today this territory is under dispute in the struggle of modern Israel with the Palestinians. Both the Jews and the Palestinians lay claim to this land as their own by decree of God or Allah. Some Christian groups have gotten involved in this struggle by taking the side of the Jews, and against fellow Christians who are Palestinians. To me this is not only dumb, but is contrary to the principles of Christ who stood for the breaking down of artificial ethnic etc. barriers between groups of people.

In the teachings of Christ, the spiritual reign of God is what matters. Not a piece of real estate. To become obsessed with a piece of real estate is to grossly miss the point. Yet, to most conservative Jews in our world today this real estate is everything. Even worth dying for. This is home. After two thousand years of being without a home after the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD, most religious Jews feel their roots lie here in the land of promise.

But to followers of Jesus something else is of enormously greater significance: the spiritual reign of God through Jesus Christ. Here are our roots, and we live in this world as “aliens and exiles” ([1 Pet. 2:11](#)).

b. Tribal Leaders (vv. 16-29)

NASB

16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **17** “These are the names of the men who shall apportion the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. **18** “You shall take one leader of every tribe to apportion the land for inheritance. **19** “These are the names of the men: of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. **20** “Of the tribe of the sons of Simeon, Samuel the son of Ammihud. **21** “Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. **22** “Of the tribe of the sons of Dan a leader, Bukki the son of Jogli. **23** “Of the sons of Joseph: of the tribe of the sons of Manasseh a leader, Hanniel the son of Ephod. **24** “Of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim a leader, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. **25** “Of the tribe of the sons of Zebulun a leader, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. **26** “Of the tribe of the sons of Issachar a leader, Paltiel the son of Azzan. **27** “Of the tribe of the sons of Asher a leader, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. **28** “Of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali a leader, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.” **29** These are those whom the LORD commanded to apportion the inheritance to the sons of Israel in the land of Canaan.

NRSV

16 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **17** These are the names of the men who shall apportion the land to you for inheritance: the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun. **18** You shall take one leader of every tribe to apportion the land for inheritance. **19** These are the names of the men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh. **20** Of the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel son of Ammihud. **21** Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Chislon. **22** Of the tribe of the Danites a leader, Bukki son of Jogli. **23** Of the Josephites: of the tribe of the Manassites a leader, Hanniel son of Ephod, **24** and of the tribe of the Ephraimites a leader, Kemuel son of Shiphtan. **25** Of the tribe of the Zebulunites a leader, Eli-zaphan son of Parnach. **26** Of the tribe of the Issacharites a leader, Paltiel son of Azzan. **27** And of the tribe of the Asherites a leader, Ahihud son of Shelomi. **28** Of the tribe of the Naphtalites a leader, Pedahel son of Ammihud. **29** These were the ones whom the Lord commanded to apportion the inheritance for the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

NLT

16 And the LORD said to Moses, **17** “These are the men who are to divide the land among the people: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. **18** Also enlist one leader from each tribe to help them with the task. **19** These are the tribes and the names of the leaders: Tribe - Leader Judah - Caleb son of Jephunneh **20** Simeon - Shemuel son of Ammihud **21** Benjamin - Elidad son of Kislion **22** Dan - Bukki son of Jogli **23** Manasseh son of Joseph - Hanniel son of Ephod **24** Ephraim son of Joseph - Kemuel son of Shiphtan **25** Zebulun - Elizaphan son of Parnach **26** Issachar - Paltiel son of Azzan **27** Asher - Ahihud son of Shelomi **28** Naphtali - Pedahel son of Ammihud **29** These are the men the LORD has appointed to oversee the dividing of the land of Canaan among the Israelites.”

Comments:

The following comments come from first the *Interpreter's Bible* volume on Numbers (online iPreach):

Yahweh instructs Moses to appoint a number of tribal leaders to execute the division of the land. Eleazar and Joshua appear in place of Moses and Aaron as hitherto, for neither of these is to enter Canaan. Ten tribal leaders are to assist them, one being Caleb (cf. 14:30), and they are named in order of their geographical settlement in Canaan, starting from the south and going north. Once more, as at the beginning of the wandering, the names are largely reported to make plain that from the beginning of the new life in Canaan God would be with them. **Shemuel** means "name of God"; **Elidad**, "God has loved"; **Bukki**, "proved" (of God); **Hanniel**, "favor of God"; **Kemuel**, "raised by God"; **Elizaphan**, "my God protects"; **Paltiel**, "God is my deliverance"; **Ahihud**, "brother of majesty"; **Pedahel**, "God hath delivered."

And next from the *New Interpreter's Bible* volume on Numbers (online iPreach):

Ten tribal leaders are named to assist Eleazar and Joshua in distributing the land. The number is ten, rather than twelve, because the tribes of Reuben and Gad chose to inherit in the Transjordan. The names of the tribal leaders are new with the exception of Caleb, who, along with Joshua (see Numbers 13:1–14), is allowed to inherit land.

The order of the tribes follows the direction of the boundaries from vv. 1-15, moving from south to north. The tribes who will settle in the south include Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, and Dan. The Joseph tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, will settle in the central portion of Canaan. The northern tribes include Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali. The result of listing the tribes from south to north is that Judah heads the list. This, too, may be by design, since the tribe of Judah has headed the list of tribes in situations that point toward the inheritance of the land, including the order of the camp (chap. 2), the presentation of offerings (chap. 7), the order of marching (chap. 10), and now inheritance (chap. 34). These lists contrast other situations in which Reuben heads the lists: the first census (chap. 1), the spy story (chap. 13), and the second census (chap. 26).

Lastly from the *Interpretation Commentary* volume on Numbers (online iPreach):

Numbers 34 concludes with a list of ten tribal leaders who are commissioned to supervise the future division of the land among the nine-and-a-half remaining tribes (34:16-29). Three such lists of the leaders of Israel's tribes appear in Numbers: the list of twelve census supervisors in Numbers 1, the list of twelve spies in Numbers 13, and the list of those who will divide the promised land in Numbers 34. Each of these lists marks significant turning points in the book: the organization and inauguration of the march toward the promised land (Numbers 1), the decisive rebellion of the wilderness generation (those who were numbered in the first census) that led to their death in the desert (Numbers 13–14), and the future allocation of the promised land to the members of the new generation who were counted in the second census (Numbers 34). These lists help to bind the beginning, middle, and end of the book together, signaling key turning points in the narrative.

This material provides us with some insight into the concern for organization and orderly flow of responsibility that characterized Moses' leadership of the people. As the people prepared to begin the huge task of invading the land of promise, they needed to have things in order. The meaning of the leaders' name as explained above suggests a greater reliance on God than characterized the previous generation. This would give them a better shot at success. New people and a new opportunity provided encouragement to this aged leader as he prepared to step aside for a new leader of the people.

Perhaps this is our lesson from these verses. In order to get the job done better we need to be organized and have clearly defined leaders. Yet a balance must be struck here. Too much dependence on organization diminishes our need to trust in God's leadership. Too little organization result in chaos and failure.