

The Transjordan Tribes

Numbers 26, 32 – 35

by Don Falkos

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The people of Israel were camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan River across from Jericho and were preparing to enter the Promised Land.

Moses said to the people, "When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you must drive out all the people living there. Take possession of the land. God has given it to you. The land will be distributed by lot to each tribe in accordance with its size. A larger portion of land will be allotted to each of the larger tribes, and a smaller portion to each of the smaller tribes. But if you do not drive out the people who live in the land, they will become a thorn in your side. They will be nothing but trouble for you."

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to be given land on the east side of the Jordan. They swore an oath to take up arms, enter the Promised Land, and lead the battle until all the other tribes had been settled into the lands they had been given. Their request was granted.

The Levites would not be receiving an allotment of land. Instead, each tribe was to give the Levites towns and pastureland from their own allotments. So the tribe of Levi would not be clustered together in one area, but would be spread throughout the land.

The Israelites were also instructed to set up Cities of Refuge, where a person who had killed someone accidentally could flee. There he would be safe from any avenging family member until he could stand trial for his crime. If convicted of murder, he must be put to death. If convicted of manslaughter, he must remain in the City of Refuge until the death of the High Priest. Only then could he return home.