

2. *The invitation of Moses to Jethro or Hobab, his father-in-law, to join the Israelites.* The man appears to have been known by the two names. See Ex. 3:1 and Judges 4:11. Moses urged him to join the people for several forcible reasons. (a) They were on their way to Canaan, "a good land and large land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). The prospect of settling in such a country was not to be lightly set aside. (b) During the journey he would receive personal spiritual benefits—they would do him good (v. 29). This is the specific mission of God's people—to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, Matt. 5:13, 14. (c) Besides all this, he would share with them the enjoyment of all the good the Lord had spoken of Israel. (See Gen. 17:7, 8; 22:16-18.) Jethro's answer to such persuasions seems surprising, "I will not go," v. 30. Patriotic and family considerations weighed with him, and certainly these are most solemn and sacred. But Moses adduces an additional argument, (d) The field of usefulness opened to him, v. 31. This was a wise method of appeal, and appears to have proved successful, as we may gather from what is recorded in Judges 1:16; 4:11 and 1 Sam. 15:6. Is there not too much made of the good we may receive in comparison with the good we should do? Notwithstanding the knowledge, faith and courage of Moses, and the fact of the cloudy, fiery pillar and the ark of God to lead them, Jethro could be to the people in the wilderness "instead of eyes," v. 31. He knew the habits and resources of the tribes of that region, and could render services of the utmost value in dealing with them, and in securing the enormous provisions requisite for such a vast moving army.

3. *The Lord's leadership.* (a) This was by means of the ark which went before them, v. 33. Usually it was in the midst of the camp, but here it is in the van, as it was when the people crossed the Jordan on their entrance into Canaan, Josh. 3:6. (b) The ark and the cloudy pillar acted together. Both were symbols of God's presence, who is represented as searching out "a resting place for them," Num. 10:33. Thrice happy are they who are thus led.

4. *The benediction of Moses, a brief prayer.* (a) "Rise up, Lord," for help, comfort and victory, v. 35. (b) "Return, Lord," etc., v. 36. The fundamental ideas are spiritual warfare and spiritual rest.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

The scholars have become sadly familiar with desert marches and fights on the veldt in South Africa. This "wilderness of Paran" (v. 12), the first march from Sinai, is a veritable "bad lands," "a bare limestone or sandstone plateau, crossed by low ranges of hills seamed with innumerable dry water courses, and interspersed with large patches of sand or gravel. Perhaps so bad a country has never been attempted by any army in modern days." But they were on their way to Canaan, and God was leading them. Make this latter point—*God leading them*—the main point in the lesson.

The chronology and the geography may be found under the heading Time and Place. But mark:

1. *God's direction of their march.* (a) He had given them time to rest and rally and organize—thirteen months from Egypt (Compare v. 11 with Ex. 12:1). God never requires of us what he has not made us ready for. (b) He tells them to go, v. 13. The command was as distinct as that of Mark 16:15; Acts 9:11. (c) He directs by the promised sign, the uplifting and the resting of the cloud, vs. 11, 12. So God's providences still lead, if we have but eyes to see. The perfect order of the march (vs. 14-28) is interesting. But go on to:—

2. *Human guidance.* Moses trusted God, but God never does for His people what they can do for themselves. Moses believed God would bring them to Canaan, but not if they did not seek themselves to get there. The whole scene between Moses and Hobab is interesting and should be gone over in detail. We should imitate Moses in rallying to our aid every resource and every person who can help on in the Lord's work. We should imitate him, too, in seeking to take others with us on our journey to the Promised Land.

3. Again, *God's guidance* (vs. 34, 35); the writer loves to dwell upon it. This time