Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 21: 31-35

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 21. Today, we are reading verses 31 through 35.

Yesterday we read how God delivered Sihon, the valiant and battle-skilled king of the Amorites, and his army into the hands of the Israelites; the Israelites killed King Sihon with the sword and also took his land. This land was what King Sihon had seized from the hands of the Moabites and the Ammonites.

The Israelites' first defeat of the Amorites is precisely God beginning to fulfill the promise given 400 years earlier to Abraham, the forefather of the Israelites. We must recognize that God is the eternal God, and He sees a thousand years as one day. 400 years in man's eyes is many generations; generation after generation waits and falls asleep, supposing that God has forgotten His promise. However, when the time comes, at a time and in a setting that man cannot imagine, God will come and fulfill His promise. Human history and the rise and fall of empires are all held in God's hand. May God grant us an eternal perspective, that we may truly see clearly God's eternal will, and be assured that God's will shall certainly be accomplished.

The Israelites defeating Sihon king of the Amorites and occupying his land is only the beginning. God's will is to give all the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham.

Verse 31: "Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites."

Sihon king of the Amorites established his kingdom on the east side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The Israelites defeated King Sihon, drove out the Amorites,

and began to dwell in the land of the Amorites. God first gave the land east of the Jordan River to the Israelites, as preparation for going on to the land of Canaan.

Verse 32: "Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there."

Jazer is to the northeast of the Dead Sea, about 40 kilometers away. This city is about 30 kilometers east of the Jordan River, and still on the south side of the Jabbok River, and is therefore within King Sihon's territory. Moses, according to God's will, recovered the cities of the Amorites and drove out the Amorites. To the east of Jazer is the border of the Ammonites, not far from the Ammonite capital Rabbah. Rabbah is today's Amman, the capital of the Kingdom of Jordan. The Israelites expanded eastward, and when they reached Jazer they advanced no further, because that was the territory of the Ammonites. God's will was that the Israelites not harass the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Verse 33: "And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei."

The Israelites did not continue to expand eastward, but turned and began to expand northward, that is, in the direction of Bashan. Bashan is the region north of the Jabbok River and east of the Sea of Chinnereth, extending all the way to Mount Hermon. The Sea of Chinnereth is the Sea of Galilee or Lake Gennesaret of the New Testament, the place Jesus walked back and forth while fulfilling His ministry on earth.

The whole region of Bashan is vast; in the north it begins from Mount Hermon, and runs along the Jordan River all the way to the Sea of Chinnereth. This region is today's Golan Heights, and at that time was a rich and fertile place, famed for its pasture, and highly suitable for raising livestock. Bashan was a kingdom established by the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan was a good friend of King Sihon. The

Amorites were famed for their ferocity, and the kingdom of Bashan was predominantly Amorite. However, in Abraham's day the region of Bashan was the place where the Rephaim dwelt. The Rephaim were giants, and must have been descendants of the Nephilim of Genesis 6:4. The Nephilim were the giants produced when the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and took them as wives.

At that time, the LORD God saw that man was completely corrupt, and judged that generation with a flood; only Noah's household of eight built the ark and were saved from the flood. By rights, the Nephilim should have been wiped out; how then did the Rephaim, the Anakim, and so forth later appear again? My personal conjecture is that the three daughters-in-law of Noah must have carried recessive genes of the Nephilim. After the flood, God charged Noah's three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Shem became the ancestor of the peoples of Asia, Ham became the ancestor of the peoples of Africa, and Japheth became the ancestor of the peoples of Europe.

From Shem to Abraham there are ten generations; in the days of Abraham the Rephaim appeared, and Og king of Bashan was one of the Rephaim. He was tall of stature, and this is the same as the Anakim giants the ten spies saw in Numbers 13:33 — both are descendants of the Nephilim. Og king of Bashan was one of the Rephaim, and Deuteronomy 3:11 records it thus, "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants. Indeed his bedstead was an iron bedstead. Is it not in Rabbah of the people of Ammon? Nine cubits is its length and four cubits its width, according to the standard cubit." His bed was made of iron, 13 and a half feet long and 6 feet wide, from which one can see that his stature was enormous, far taller and more powerfully built than today's basketball stars, such as Yao Ming or O'Neal.

The kingdom of Bashan, under Og's leadership, was likewise invincible in attack and undefeated in battle. His cities were high and fortified, and had the Israelites wanted to storm them, it would in fact not have been so easy. When the Israelites went in the direction of Bashan, Og king of Bashan, probably in his eagerness to avenge King Sihon, and also thinking very highly of himself and utterly despising the

Israelites, sent his troops directly southward to come and attack the Israelites. And at the place called Edrei he met the army of Israel. Edrei is at the border of today's Syria and Jordan, where there is a city called Dera, which must be the Edrei of that day.

Verse 34: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.'"

The old generation of Israelites, because the Anakim were tall of stature, saw themselves as grasshoppers, so that they did not dare to enter the land of Canaan that God promised. The new generation of Israelites was to fight with the Rephaim; they likewise encountered giants, but they had God's promise. God told them: Do not fear him, because God has already delivered him and his army and his land into your hands; you are to do to him as you did to King Sihon. As you defeated King Sihon, so you shall also defeat King Og; as you obtained King Sihon's land, so you shall also obtain King Og's land, because I have already delivered it into your hands. Having God's promise, the Israelites went forth to fight with the king of Bashan.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too often encounter giants in our circumstances — whether in health, work, finances, interpersonal relationships, or even in the matter of serving in the church; sometimes the difficulty we meet really is as huge as a giant, making us feel powerless, and our situation is just like that of the Israelites facing Og king of Bashan. But as long as we have God's promise, we can refrain from looking at the circumstances and fix our eyes only on God's promise. It is just as Caleb said in Numbers 14:9, "nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread." Isaiah 30:20 tells us: God will give us the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. These are all nutrients that our spiritual life must have in order to grow, because God makes all things work together for good to those who love God.

When our faith has been tested, it will prove more precious than gold refined by fire. Faith is not some empty, intangible feeling or conviction; faith is tempered and

forged in many circumstances. Each time we pass through a circumstance, our faith grows along with it. Therefore, every child whom God loves will certainly face difficult circumstances. But God does not forsake His children; God will Himself add strength to His children in their circumstances, enabling them to overcome the giants in those circumstances, and in the end also to grow and become giants of faith.

Verse 35: "So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land."

Having God's promise, the Israelites pressed forward bravely and fought at Edrei with the army of the king of Bashan. They defeated the king of Bashan, killed the king of Bashan and his sons, killed also all his people, and obtained his land. The new generation of Israelites had God's presence, and going forward in faith, they very quickly came to the east of the Jordan River. They defeated two Amorite kingdoms and obtained their land. From the Arnon in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, and eastward to the border of the Ammonites, they occupied the whole stretch of land east of the Jordan River. So following God's leading in faith is this light and this blessed. Although the enemies they met were all fierce and powerful, like giants, yet if God fights for us, what is there for us to fear?

Numbers chapter 21 records that the Israelites set out from Mount Hor and passed through three battles in succession. First, the king of Arad led the Canaanites to take the initiative and attack, and the result was that the Israelites utterly destroyed the Canaanites at Hormah. This first battle established their faith for victory. When they crossed the Brook Zered, the old generation of Israelites who had been numbered were all completely wiped out. Moses led the new generation of Israelites along the east side of the land of Moab, and they came to the place where the Amorites dwelt. The new generation of Israelites directly faced the powerful Amorites; they destroyed King Sihon and his army, and destroyed also King Og and his army, and they occupied the whole stretch of land east of the Jordan River.

Dear brothers and sisters, today we too will face a King Arad, a King Sihon, and a King Og. Some will make a surprise attack, some are overbearing and unreasonable, some are proud and arrogant; their common characteristic is that they make light of us and look down on us. Perhaps in outward circumstances we are inferior to others; in man's view we are insignificant; and even in material reckoning we are simply beyond comparison. But as long as we have God's promise, with God fighting for us, we will certainly conquer and conquer again.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, it is just as the Scripture says: some trust in chariots and some in horses, but what we depend on is the LORD of hosts. If God helps us, who then can stand against us? We know that through the Lord who loves us, we are more than conquerors in all things. Lord, help me, right now, to turn my eyes away from the circumstances, to be able to gaze on You alone and look to Your leading; through each overcoming of circumstances add to my faith, and help me to live out an overcoming life. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.