

Numbers 10:29-32

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-10/numbers-1029-32/>

Verses 29 – 32 contain the description of something that happened sometime before the Israelites departed Mount Sinai. It involved Moses trying to convince his brother-in-law Hobab to join the Israelites in their journey to Canaan. At first, Hobab declines the offer, but then he agrees to go with the Israelites after being persuaded by Moses.

Before leaving Sinai, *Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law* (v. 29). There is a debate about Hobab's identity. Here, Hobab was called *the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law*. This would make Hobab Moses' brother-in-law. But in Judges 4:11, a person named Hobab is called "the father-in-law" of Moses. Because the Hebrew word for "father-in-law" ("hoten") can refer to any type of in-law relationship, it would be best to consider Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses.

Moses told Hobab that the Israelites were *setting out to the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'* meaning Canaan, the Promised Land. He then urged Hobab by telling him to *come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord has promised good concerning Israel*. Moses desires his brother-in-law to share the benefit God has promised to Israel. Moses seemed to be looking out for his brother-in-law in light of what his father Jethro (also called Reuel, Exodus 2:18, 3:1) did for him by advising him to get help judging Israel (Exodus 18:14 – 24).

But Hobab hesitated about leaving with the Israelites, saying that he would *not come, but rather will go to my own land and relatives* (v. 30). It was understandable that Hobab would rather be with his fellow Midianites, especially since he had been living amongst the Israelites with his father for quite a while.

But Moses responded to Hobab by saying *please do not leave us* (v.31). There were two reasons for Moses to have Hobab with him. First, because Hobab would be familiar with the wilderness that they were about to travel through, he would *know where we should camp in the wilderness*. He would know the best places to set up camp and, maybe more important, the places to avoid. In other words, he would *be as eyes* for the Israelites. Thus, Hobab would be a great help for Israel in their wilderness wanderings.

This would likely refer to specific routes and forays the Israelites would make once camped, since God directed them where to camp, when He moved the cloud (Numbers 10:11).

Second, Moses told him that *it will be, if you go with us, that whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you* (v. 32). Moses was telling Hobab that if he came with Israel to the Promised Land, he would receive the same blessings that Israel would receive. So, not only would Hobab be helping Israel, he would be helping himself because he would participate in Israel's blessings.

Apparently, Hobab was swayed by Moses and became a guide to Moses (Judges 1:16). Though the cloud was the LORD's primary way to guide His people, He could still use Hobab to help counsel Moses as to how to go through the wilderness.

Biblical Text

²⁹ Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out to the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord has promised good concerning Israel." ³⁰ But he said to him, "I will not come, but rather will go to my *own* land and relatives." ³¹ Then he said, "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will be as eyes for us. ³² So it will be, if you go with us, that whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you."