

The Book of Numbers

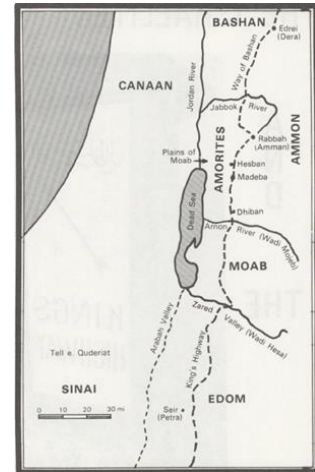
Struggles of the Journey

Text: Numbers 20:14 – 21:35

I. The Refusal of Edom

(Numbers 20:14-21)

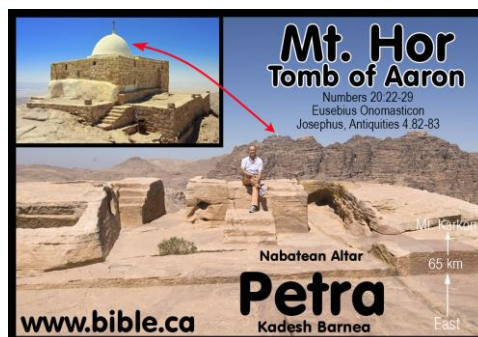
- A. When the time came for Israel to move toward the Promised Land, they asked permission of the Edomites to travel through their land.
1. They sought to travel east into Edom.
 2. Then, they would take the King's Highway north.
 3. Finally, they would turn west and cross the Jordan River into Canaan.
- B. When making their plea to the Edomites, the Israelites reminded them that they were brethren.
1. Edom was another name for Esau (Gen. 25:30; 32:3; 36:1, 8, 19; Obad. 1:8).
 2. Esau, the father of the Edomites, was the brother of Jacob, the father of the Israelites.
- C. The Israelites detailed the hardships that they were facing and promised not to take anything from the land of Edom.
- D. However, the Edomites refused to allow Israel to pass through their land – promising to attack them if they tried.
- E. This was the first of several hostile acts that would eventually bring upon Edom the judgment of Jehovah (cf. Obadiah).



II. The Death of Aaron

(Numbers 20:22-29)

- A. Thus, the nation of Israel had to travel a path around the southern border of Edom.
- B. At Mount Hor, God announced to Moses and Aaron that the time of Aaron's death had arrived.
- C. On the mount, before the congregation, the office of High Priest was passed from Aaron to his son, Eleazar.
1. This was signified by the removal of the priestly garments from Aaron and the clothing of Eleazar with the same.
 2. Moses presided over this succession of position and power.
- D. Upon completion of this act, Aaron died and was buried upon the mountain (cf. 33:38-39; Deut. 10:6).



The Book of Numbers

- III. The Defeat of the Canaanites (Numbers 21:1-3)
- A. The events of this passage seem to have occurred before Israel traveled south around Edom.
 - B. It is introduced here to begin a theme of Israel's victories under the leadership of Moses.
 - C. King Arad of the Canaanites led an attack against Israel that resulted in some of them being taken captive.
 - D. The Israelites vowed to Jehovah that they would utterly destroy the cities of these Canaanites if He would deliver them into their hands.
 - 1. This indicates a significant change in the faith of the nation of Israel.
 - 2. Instead of complaining and blaming God, they turn to Him in prayer for help.
 - E. Thus, God gave Israel victory over the Canaanites.
 - F. True to their word, the Israelites utterly destroyed the people and their cities.
 - G. The name of the place was called Hormah – meaning, “Devoted” or “Devotion.”
- IV. The Plague of Fiery Serpents (Numbers 21:4-9)
- A. The journey taken by the children of Israel caused them to become discouraged.
 - 1. It was more difficult than expected.
 - 2. It was longer than expected.
 - 3. It was through a wilderness.
 - 4. It was hindered by enemies.
 - 5. It was burdened with hardships.
 - B. Their focus upon the physical caused them to lose sight of the spiritual blessings God provided – and, even to disparage the physical blessings He gave.
 - C. Thus, the children of Israel tempted the Lord by trying His patience with them (cf. 1 Cor. 10:9; Exo. 17:2, 7; Psa. 95:6-11; 78:12-41).
 - D. As a result, God sent fiery serpents among the people.
 - 1. They were called fiery because of the burning and pain caused by their venomous bites.
 - 2. The consequence of being bitten was death.
 - E. Yet, this new generation of Israelites displayed a different attitude than their parents had.
 - 1. They acknowledged and confessed specifically their sin.
 - 2. They asked Moses to pray for them – which he did.
 - F. In answer to their prayer, God provided a way of healing and salvation.
 - 1. Moses was to make a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole.
 - 2. Anyone who was bitten could be healed if they would behold this brazen serpent.
 - 3. The Hebrew word for ‘beheld’ means, “To look upon, to scan, to regard; to look at intently; to pay attention to; or, to consider.”
 - 4. The ASV translates it as “looked unto;” the ESV as “look at;” the LITV as “looked to;” and the YLT as “looked expectingly (sic) unto.”
 - G. It was not until God told them what to do (grace) and they obeyed His command (faith) that healing was found.
 - H. Eventually, the Israelites turned this brazen serpent into an idol that had to be destroyed (cf. 2 Kings 18:4).
 - I. In truth, it pointed to the true Savior – Jesus the Christ – and the means of salvation – by grace through faith (John 3:1-21).

The Book of Numbers

- V. The Defeat of the Amorites (Numbers 21:10-32)
- A. Verses 10-20 record the journey of the Israelites from Mount Hor to the hill country of Moab.
 - B. They journeyed around the land of the Moabites and did not cross into the land of the Ammonites – these were descendants of Lot and Israel was forbidden from fighting with them (cf. Deut. 2:9, 19; Gen. 19:36ff; 2 Chron. 20:10).
 - C. However, between Moab and Ammon dwelt the Amorites.
 - 1. God did not give the land of Canaan to Abraham immediately because “the iniquity of the Amorites” was “not yet full” (Gen. 15:12-21).
 - 2. Now, the time has come for judgment upon the Amorites and the other nations in the land of Canaan.
 - 3. Thus, God would not restrain Israel from fighting with the Amorites.
 - D. As they had done with the Edomites, Israel asked the Amorites for permission to pass through their land.
 - E. Sihon, king of the Amorites, refused and gathered his forces to fight against Israel.
 - F. God promised Israel that he would deliver the Amorites into their hand.
 - G. Thus, the Amorites in that land were defeated and Israel possessed all their cities.
 - 1. The people were utterly destroyed (cf. Deut. 2:24-37).
 - 2. Only the spoils were kept by Israel.
 - H. This defeat of the Amorites became a proverb among the people of Israel.
- VI. The Defeat of Bashan (Numbers 21:33-35)
- A. Following the defeat of the Amorites, God told Israel that they would also defeat Og, the king of Bashan, and they were to do to his people as they had done to the Amorites.
 - B. Og was a giant who slept on an iron bed that was 13 ½ feet long and 6 feet wide (cf. Deut. 3:11).
 - C. His cities were guarded by high walls, gates, and bars.
 - D. However, with the help of God, Israel soundly defeat every city in the region of Bashan.
 - E. These victories helped to prepare the Israelites for the battles that would come in conquering the Promised Land of Canaan.
 - F. However, Israel would soon learn defeat of a different kind – in the spiritual battle between right and wrong...