

# “A Difficult Year for Moses”

## Numbers Chapter 20

From Chapter 14 to Chapter 20 the children of Israel were on the Wilderness Wandering. These seven chapters cover the 38 years of wandering. There hasn't been a lot of details. Just some highlights. Israel was in paying the price for disobedience.

This chapter is the last year. They have been in the wilderness for 40 years (2 from Egypt to Kadesh; Then 38 from Kadesh to wander then back to Kadesh.)

The fact is that from Numbers 20 to Deuteronomy 34 is only one year.

This chapter begins with Miriam's death and ends with Aaron's death. (This year begins is Miriam's death and ends in Deuteronomy 34 with Moses' death.)

**Numbers 33:38-39** "Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first [day] of the fifth month. And Aaron [was] an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in mount Hor."

### Num 20:1 1) Miriam Dies vs 1

Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there.

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> month Miriam will die. Aaron will die in the 5<sup>th</sup> month.
- The sons of Israel have returned to Kadesh. This is the same place they were in chapter 13 when the sent spies into the Promised Land. They have come full circle to the place where God wanted them to trust Him.
- Miriam was the eldest of Moses, Aaron and Herself.
  - Tradition says that Miriam was 8-12 years old when she attended the 3 month old baby Moses in the river.
  - To understand the family structure
    - o Miriam was 128-132 years old when she dies
    - o Aaron was 123 when he dies
    - o Moses in this chapter was 120 (3 years younger than Aaron Exodus 7:7)
  - Miriam Exodus 2 attended Moses in the river to have Pharaoh's daughter find him.
  - Miriam Exodus 15 Leads all Israel in praise unto the Lord for His mighty deliverance
  - Miriam Numbers 12 rebels against Moses and turns leprous for a time.
- The death of Miriam and Aaron show that the Lord keeps his promise and that there is no favoritism due to family relationship.
  - Numbers 14:30 speaking to the sons of Israel "Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."
  - Miriam, Aaron and even Moses will not enter. There are no exceptions and family relationship does not grant special consideration.

### Num 20:2 2) Moses' Mistake vs 2-13

There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron.

Num 20:3 The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD!

Num 20:4 "Why then have you brought the LORD'S assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here?"

Num 20:5 "Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink."

- This next generation sounds just like the previous generation. "Why brought here? To Die?" Exodus 14:11+12; Numbers 14:1-4
- In reality Kadesh was a tough place. There was no water there. This area could not sustain the people of Israel. It wasn't supposed to. They were supposed to move forward into the Promised Land.
- The congregation asked 2 Questions.
  - Were they brought here to die? The answer is NO!
  - Why brought to this wretched (KJV = evil) place? They were not brought to this place. They are still being brought to the place the Lord wants them. It is wretched if they choose to stay in a place that the Lord is telling them to pass through. (Is the evil place in their heart)

- How many times is it the Darkest before the Dawn? How many times is there a Battle just before the Blessing? The victories in our life are always preceded with some warfare.
- This surely must be frustrating for Moses as they come to the place just prior to entering the Promised Land and this new generation shows that they have learned the ways of their fathers rather than learned to Trust God in the wilderness. After 38 years, they are in the exact same place.
  - The biggest influence in our children's lives is not their friends. It is their parents.
- Deuteronomy 8:2-7 "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, **that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart**, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, **that He might make you understand** that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. **Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.**"
- The Lord brought the Israelites through the wilderness to test them not so He (God) would learn but that Israel would know what their own heart was made of.

Num 20:6 Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces.

- We have seen Moses and Aaron respond to criticism. He doesn't defend or argue but he falls before the Lord first (Numbers 14:5; Numbers 16:4; Numbers 16:22; Numbers 16:43-45)
- Moses and Aaron need to come before the Lord. Surely they couldn't handle another 40 years in the wilderness with grumblers and complainers. It does seem they have been in this exact situation before.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them;

Num 20:7 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 20:8 "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink."

- What the Lord Instructed -
  - Assemble the Rod, Aaron and the Congregation
  - Speak to the Rock (In their eyes) That is the goal Israel seeing Moses trust God. Not the speaking, nor the getting of water.
  - And water will come forth

Num 20:9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him;

Num 20:10 and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"

Num 20:11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank.

- What Moses Did -
  - Moses spoke not to the rock but to the grumblers and complainers.
  - Moses struck the rock 2 times. But water came forth.
- Psalm 106:32-33 "They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah, So that it went hard with Moses on their account; Because they were rebellious against His Spirit, He spoke rashly with his lips."
- Moses obviously reacted out of frustration. Frustration can cloud the clear instructions of the Lord.
- The water came forth abundantly. The Lord took care of the congregation even though the shepherd was out of control.
- The Rock - (a type pointing to Jesus)
  - Exodus 17:6 the first time Moses brought water he was instructed to strike the rock
    - "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."
  - The Hebrew word for rock in Exodus 17 is "tsuwr" - a boulder, or a specific rock face.
  - The Hebrew word for rock Numbers 20 is "cela" - a cliff, crag the root is Lofty or lifted up

- A picture of Jesus is found in that He was crucified (struck) once for all time. That He does not need to be crucified over and over. Jesus is now high and lifted up and we are now instructed to boldly approach the throne of grace to find help in the time of need. We need only to speak to Jesus.

- Hebrews 7:26-27 "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who **does not need daily**, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because **this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.**"
- Hebrews 4:16 "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so **that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**"

Num 20:12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Num 20:13 Those *were* the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them.

- Moses is disciplined by the Lord because he "*did not believe*" the Lord and did not treat Him HOLY in their sight.
- Not obeying is really unbelief.
- The punishment is that Aaron and Moses will not enter the Promised Land. It seems incredibly harsh.
- But Moses' actions marred the perception that Israel has of the Father God.
  - It is God's plan and salvation. Moses is not bringing the water. God alone and it is by believing obedience.
- But Moses' action marred the image of the Messiah.
  - crucified only once for all
- As great as Moses was, he was still subject to God's law. His great faith and work does not exempt him from God's law and judgment.

Num 20:14 **3) Edom's Refusal** vs 14-21

From Kadesh Moses then sent messengers to the king of Edom: "Thus your brother Israel has said, 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us;

Num 20:15 that our fathers went down to Egypt, and we stayed in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians treated us and our fathers badly.

Num 20:16 'But when we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt; now behold, we are at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory.

Num 20:17 'Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or through vineyard; we will not even drink water from a well. We will go along the king's highway, not turning to the right or left, until we pass through your territory.'"

- Moses, after hearing the discipline of the Lord, does not quit. He doesn't say "Fine, I can't go into the Promised Land then I'm done." Moses still leads even though he knows he will not be permitted to enter the land while those he is leading will.
- Who is Edom?
  - Genesis 25:19-34 "Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was **forty years old** when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But **the children struggled together within her**; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "**Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.**" When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the **first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.** Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty

years old when she gave birth to them. When the boys grew up, **Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field**, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because **he had a taste for game**, but Rebekah loved Jacob. When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, **"Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished."** **Therefore his name was called Edom.** But Jacob said, **"First sell me your birthright."** **Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?"** And Jacob said, **"First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.** Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus **Esau despised his birthright.**"

- Hebrews 12:16 **"...immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal."**

- Edom is Israel's Brother;

- o Was contrary to Israel even the womb;
- o A hunter;
- o Red haired (thus the word Edom = Red);
- o He despised his birthright; (*food of the earth was more important than a birthright= things of God*);
- o Immoral and Godless.

- Moses asks permission to pass through Edom's Territory.

- To pass through on the Kings Highway and not turn to the left or the right.

- The believer is to travel through this godless world on the "Kings Highway". Not desiring the things of godless Edom on the left or the right.

- Opposition can be expected for the believer who so chooses.

Num 20:18 **Edom, however, said to him, "You shall not pass through us, or I will come out with the sword against you."**

- Edom refused Israel with a threat of sword.

Num 20:19 **Again, the sons of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if I and my livestock do drink any of your water, then I will pay its price. Let me only pass through on my feet, nothing else."**

- A second time Israel requested passage with the offer to pay for water.

Num 20:20 **But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against him with a heavy force and with a strong hand.**

Num 20:21 **Thus Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.**

- A second time Edom refuses.

- This refusal discouraged the sons of Israel and caused them to grumble again.

- Numbers 21:4-5 **"Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses"**

- Later Moses instructs the sons of Israel to continue to consider Edom as a brother in Deuteronomy

- Deuteronomy 23:7 **"You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land."**

- Also later God knows the timing. God will tell Israel to end their detour and head north, to the Promised Land and in fact through Edom.

- Deuteronomy 2:2-6 **"And the LORD spoke to me, saying, "You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn north, and command the people, saying, "You will pass through the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful; do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even as little as a footstep because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall buy food from them with money so that you may eat, and you shall also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink."**

- The sons of Israel are not allowed to pass judgment. God will take care of that issue. God does not forget. Centuries later God speaks through the prophets:

- Amos 1:11 **"Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not**

revoke its punishment, Because **he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion**; His anger also tore continually, And he maintained his fury forever."

- Obadiah 1:8-10 "Will I not on that day," declares the LORD, "Destroy wise men from Edom And understanding from the mountain of Esau? Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman, So that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter. **Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever.**"

- 1 Timothy 5:8 while speaking about caring for widows it can be pointed out the special relationship within family demands extra consideration in care with a family structure.  
- "if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

#### Num 20:22 **4) Aaron Dies** vs 22-29

Now when they set out from Kadesh, the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor.

Num 20:23 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying,

Num 20:24 "Aaron will be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah.

- Israel is going around Edom. They come to Mount Hor
- The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron. Due to his part in the demonstration of unbelief before the sons of Israel at Meribah, the Lord says it is time for Aaron to depart and to pass the high Priest torch to Eleazar.

Num 20:25 "Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up to Mount Hor;

Num 20:26 and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar. So Aaron will be *to his people*, and will die there."

Num 20:27 So Moses did just as the LORD had commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

- This was done before the people so they would know of the passing of the guard.

Num 20:28 After Moses had stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar, Aaron died there on the mountain top. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

Num 20:29 When all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.

- Miriam - representing the prophets DIED - Prophecy doesn't lead one into the Promised Land
- Aaron - representing priesthood DIED - Priesthood doesn't lead one into the Promised Land
- Moses - representing the Law WILL DIE - The Law doesn't lead one into the Promised Land
- Only Joshua - translated "*God is Salvation*" Greek = Jesus
  
- A High Priest went up the mountain; and a high priest came down. The kingdom's relationship is dependent on the High Priest. Not the man.
  
- There were possibly those who through time and ministry grew to deeply love Aaron. They may have seen the transfer to Eleazar. They may be saddened because they didn't know Eleazar. But our relationship with our High Priest is different. Our High Priest will never die. He is a high Priest Forever.

- Hebrews 7:23-25 "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, **but Jesus**, on the other hand, because **He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently**. Therefore **He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them**."

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