

## Numbers Lesson 20

### Numbers Chapter 20

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Memory verses for this week: *Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

**Introduction:** Last week we studied about the Red Heifer sacrifice. It was used to cleanse those who had been defiled by touching or being near the dead. Exact instructions had to be followed to allow the person to be cleansed.

### I. The Sin of Moses

*Num 20:1 Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.*

*Num 20:2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.*

The desert or wilderness of Zin is not the same as the wilderness of Sin, even though they sound so similar. Zin is in the northern half of the Negev or Negeb desert far north of sin which is actually in the southern part of the Sinai peninsula. It speaks of Miriam's death in verse 1. Apparently, this was the older sister of Aaron and Moses. She was a prophetess and a singer who worked specifically with the women.

#### **Exodus 15:20-21**

*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. <sup>21</sup>And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

We believe that the verses in Exodus 2:4-7 speak of Miriam.

#### **Exodus 2:4-7**

*And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.*

*<sup>5</sup>And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. <sup>6</sup>And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. <sup>7</sup>Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?*

*Num 20:3 And the people chided with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!*

*Num 20:4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?*

*Num 20:5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.*

Moses seemed to be constantly under attack by the people for one thing or another. Here the people chode with Moses over why he had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness to die. Chode is an old English word which means to grapple with or contend against. They blamed Moses for their own lack of faith. They say 'why have ye' brought us out.

Then they get a more serious blame when they said 'ye made us to come'. This 'ye' is second person plural meaning they are really blaming both Moses and Aaron. They only remembered the good things of Egypt and forgot the bondage they were in for 400 years. Now they saw only the bad things in the current situation. Many Christians today are that way, and can not see things clearly and trust God by faith for the trials they are facing.

## **II. Action of Moses and Aaron**

*Num 20:6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.*

*Num 20:7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

*Num 20:8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.*

Sometimes when things are bad and we are confronted by others, just walking away may be our best method of action. That is what Moses and Aaron did. They left and fell down and asked God for help. It is ALWAYS best to consult God to help in any situation. We should live such a good life that the Lord's glory shows in our faces. God gives them directions. He tells them to take the rod and gather the assembly.

At that time, Moses was to speak unto the rock and it would bring forth water to them. It would give the congregation water for the people and their animals. These were simple instructions, but perhaps not exactly what Moeses wanted to hear. Perhaps, he had forgot the most important rule which is "Always obey the Word of the Lord."

*Num 20:9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.*

*Num 20:10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?*

*Num 20:11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.*

Rather than just speaking to the rock, Moses takes the rod and smote the rock twice, and it brought forth water abundantly. Instead of just doing what God said, Moses let his anger get the best of him and he strikes the rock and says “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Moses never considered that striking the rock twice marred the type of Christ dying on the cross. He was smitten once and only once. His failure to believe God and obey was sin.

#### ***Romans 14:23***

*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

### **III. Ramifications of Not Following God’s Instructions**

*Num 20:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*

*Num 20:13 This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.*

In speaking to the assembly, we see Moses claiming some of the power which was all of God when he said “must we fetch you water”. Aaron and Moses had no power at all to bring water from the rock. But God was good and still gave the people water, but because of this sin, Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter into the promised land. We need to be careful when we get upset to look to God for help, and deal spiritually with matters rather than dealing carnally. The Holy Spirit certainly was not leading Moses to do this. Even though God would punish the rebels, he also punished Moses and Aaron.

When we have a responsible position, we need to follow God very closely. God tells them ‘because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel’, they would be judged. Their unbelief caused them to be unable to sanctify the Lord before His people. Sanctify in this sense means to display the Lord’s providing ability and concern for an unworthy people. Because of their failure, neither Moses or Aaron would go into the promised land with the

Israelites who were 20 years and younger at the start of the journey. The water they received was the water of Meribah. Meribah means to strive. God will be sanctified in His own time.

***Exodus 17:7***

*And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*

**IV. Moses Makes a Request to the King of Edom**

*Num 20:14 And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: Num 20:15 How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: Num 20:16 And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: Num 20:17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.*

As descendents of Esau, Moses petitions the king of Edom based upon the Edomites being brothers to the Israelites. He tells them of all the troubles that they had faced since going into the land of Egypt. He explains that their sojourn there in Egypt was bad and they were mistreated while in the land.

Because God had brought them out and brought them to the city of Kadesh, he appeals to them for help. Kadesh was on the border of Edom. He promises that if they will let them pass on by the king's high way, that they would not drink any of their water or go through their fields or vineyards.. The king's highway was similar to our expressways that we use today. It was a public caravan route from Arabia to Damascus.

**V. King Refuses Moses Request**

*Num 20:18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. Num 20:19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet. Num 20:20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Num 20:21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.*

The king refuses to let them come by the way of the highway and gives no explanation for his decision. Israel pleads again for permission and promises that they will do no harm. They promise to even pay them if any of the cattle were to drink water. But the king again refuses and threatens to bring out an army to take them on with a sword if they come that way. Not only does he threaten to do it, he brings a show of force and comes out with a strong hand to make it clear that his answer was a definite 'no.'

Matthew Henry explained why they denied them passage.

The ambassadors returned with a denial, v. 18. Edom, that is, the king of Edom, as protector of his country, said, *Thou shalt not pass by me*; and, when the ambassadors urged it further, he repeated the denial (v. 20) and threatened, if they offered to enter his country, it should be at their peril; he raised his trained bands to oppose them. *Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage*. This was owing, 1. To their jealousy of the Israelites; they feared they should receive promises. And truly, had this numerous army been under any other discipline and command than that of the righteous God himself, who would no more suffer them to do wrong than to take wrong, there might have been cause for this jealousy; but what could they fear from a nation that had *statutes and judgments so righteous*? 2. It was owing to the old enmity which Esau bore to Israel.

If they had no reason to fear damage by them, yet they were not willing to show so much kindness to them. Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited. God would hereby discover the ill-nature of the Edomites to their shame, and try the good-nature of the Israelites to their honour: they *turned away from him*, and did not take this occasion to quarrel with him. Note, We must not think it strange if the most reasonable requests be denied by unreasonable men, and if those be affronted by men whom God favours. *I as a deaf man heard not*. After this indignity which the Edomites offered to Israel God gave them a particular caution *not to abhor an Edomite* (Deu. 23:7), though the Edomites had shown such an abhorrence of them, to teach us in such cases not to meditate revenge. 1

## VI. Israel Goes a Different Way

*Num 20:22 And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.*

Israel has to turn away from Edom and they go to the mountain Hor. The exact location of Mt. Hor was not known, but we know it was on Edom's border near Kadesh.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

***Numbers 33:37***

*And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom.*

There was a lot of conflict with Edom and Israel, and this was just the beginning. They opposed Israel when they had their first king, which was Saul.

***1 Samuel 14:47***

*So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.*

They fought against Israel when God raised up their second king which was David.

***1 Kings 11:14-17***

*And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. <sup>15</sup>For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom; <sup>16</sup>(For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:) <sup>17</sup>That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad being yet a little child.*

After David, the Edomites opposed his son Solomon.

***1 Kings 11:25***

*And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.*

Later they rebelled against King Jehoram.

***2 Chr 21:8 In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.***

***2 Chr 21:9 Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.***

***2 Chr 21:10 So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time also did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers.***

And perhaps the greatest to try and destroy the nation of Israel was Herod the Great. He was king when Jesus was born, and set out to destroy every baby from two years or younger to keep Christ from coming to rule as king. He was partly Jewish, but he was an Edomite.

***Matthew 2:1***

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*

## **VII. The Death of Aaron**

*Num 20:23 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying,*

*Num 20:24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.*

*Num 20:25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor:*

*Num 20:26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there.*

The Lord gives instructions regarding Aaron. They are told that Aaron must die and that he will not enter into Canaan. As we studied last week, Aaron was with Moses and took part in the rebellion against God there at Meribah. He tells them to take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them to Mount Hor. There he would be stripped of his garments of the high priest and they would be put upon his son. This was a ceremony transferring the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of the priesthood to Eleazar.

After this was done, Aaron would die there on the mountain. You know, it is sad to see someone serve the Lord like Aaron did, and yet never have the opportunity to go into the promised land. But I know he went on to a greater place than Canaan could ever be. Saved people today sometimes fail to let the Lord guide their lives, and that means they don't experience all the things God has prepared for them.

With obedience, Moses and Aaron could have experienced the blessings God had for them, but they rebelled and did not let the Lord guide them. Let's not fail to get all the blessings the Lord has for us by not trusting God by faith. Jesus said he came to give us life, and that more abundantly.

*John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

*Num 20:27 And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.*

*Num 20:28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.*



*Num 20:29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.*

This time Moses did exactly as God told him. Sometimes when we make mistakes, there is a big price to pay. I think Moses realized that he had best follow the instructions of the Lord exactly from this point on. In the sight of the congregation, Moses did as the Lord commanded.

They went up and Moses removed the garments and transferred them to his son Eleazar. Aaron died there on the mountain, and Moses and Eleazar come back down. After he died, the people mourned for thirty days. Aaron's death came in the 40<sup>th</sup> year after coming out of Egypt.

### ***Numbers 33:38***

*And 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.*

Aaron was 123 years old when he died. His priesthood compares to Christ's priesthood. However, Christ was much greater. Christ was prophet, priest and king. Aaron had a limited priesthood that lasted a few years. Even though it passed down through his descendants, it was temporal and in a short time became corrupted. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is eternal and after the order of Melchisedec.

### ***Hebrews 5:1-10***

*For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: <sup>2</sup>Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. <sup>3</sup>And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. <sup>4</sup>And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. <sup>5</sup>So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. <sup>6</sup>As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. <sup>7</sup>Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; <sup>8</sup>Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; <sup>9</sup>And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; <sup>10</sup>Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

### ***Hebrews 7:19-28***

*For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. <sup>20</sup>And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: <sup>21</sup>(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) <sup>22</sup>By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.*



*<sup>23</sup>And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: <sup>24</sup>But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. <sup>25</sup>Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. <sup>26</sup>For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; <sup>27</sup>Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

J. Vernon McGee said this about the high priest Aaron.

There is a precious lesson here for us. This was a very sad thing in Israel, but it has in it for us today something that should cause us to thank God.

The children of Israel mourned for thirty days. I think there were many in that company who had been to Aaron, the high priest. They knew Aaron, and Aaron knew them. They would bring their sacrifice and they would ask Aaron, "Oh, do you think God will forgive me?" And I think that Aaron would comfort them and tell them that our God is a gracious, merciful God. Then he would offer their sacrifice for them. Now they saw Eleazar come down clothed in the garments of Aaron. Aaron is dead and gone. And they would say, "I don't know Eleazar and he doesn't know me. It's a different priest now."

May I say to you today that we have a High Priest who *ever* lives to make intercession for us. Our Lord is not a Priest after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek. He has neither beginning of days, nor end of life; He abides a Priest continually! Our High Priest will not die. He died once for us down here; He lives forever for us up there. He will always be there for us. We can always depend on Him. He knows each of us individually and we can know Him. To know Him is life everlasting. Knowing Him will occupy us for all eternity and it will never be changed. That is something to be thankful for today.

Israel has finished the wilderness wandering now and will be getting ready to enter into the Promised Land. Also God has a "promised land" into which He wants to bring us today. Christ is the One who can bring us there right now. 2

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2J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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