

A Study in the Book of Numbers



By Cecilia Perh



Entrusting the Word
to the Faithful

Book	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Key Idea	Beginnings	Redemption	Worship	Wandering	Renewed Covenant
The Nation	Chosen	Delivered	Set Apart	Directed	Made Ready
The People	Prepared	Redeemed	Taught	Tested	Re-taught
God's Character	Powerful, Sovereign	Merciful	Holy	Just	Loving Lord
God's Role	Creator	Deliverer	Sanctifier	Sustainer	Rewarder
God's Command	"Let there be!"	"Let My people go!"	"Be holy"	"Go in!"	"Obey!"

Numbers in the Pentateuch

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
ORIGINS of the nation	DELIVERANCE of the nation	LIFE of the nation	TEST of the nation	REMINDERS to the nation
THEOCRACY BORN	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED	THEOCRACY TESTED AND PREPARED FOR THE NEW HOME	

COVENANT
IS AMPLIFIED
 “Keep my covenant to be a peculiar treasure:
 “Kingdom of priests”
 “holy nation”
 (Exo. 19:5-6)

LAWS
ARE PRESCRIBED
 “which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”
 (Lev. 18:5)

Irvin L. Jensen, p 102
 (Jensen’s Survey of the OT)

Numbers is the story of God leading His people, Israel, through wildernesses on their way to Canaan, the rest land He promised.

The journey moves from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho.

- It was a brief journey in the dark unknown, demanding the utmost in trust and patience (Numbers 1:1-10:10).**
- It is a long, aimless wandering in judgment for unbelief, consuming all but two of first census, 20 years and above (Numbers 10:11-20:29).**
- It is a new and swift journey by the next generation with a few of the old leaders, to enter into the land of rest and blessing (Numbers 21:1-36:13)**

Numbers: Journey to God's Rest



The Generation of Those Who Had Come Out of Egypt

Preparation

- organization
- consecration
- instruction

The Test

- of faith
- of obedience

The Judgment

- wandering
- death

Wilderness



SINAI

KADESH

A New Generation

Reorganisation

- repair

Plains of Moab

MOAB

The theme of Numbers is the consequence of disbelief and disobedience to the holy God. The Lord disciplined His people but remained faithful to His covenant promises in spite of their fickleness.

Numbers displays the patience, holiness, justice, mercy, and sovereignty of God toward His people.

It teaches that there are no shortcuts to His blessings – He uses trials and tests for specific purposes.

Numbers was written to trace the history of Israel’s wanderings from Sinai to Moab. But the fact that there was almost no record of the 38 years of wandering shows that Numbers is a very thematic history. It selects those events that are important to the development of God’s redemptive program. The sins of the first generation were written as a reminder and a warning to the second generation. They must implicitly trust God before they can possess the land of blessing.

Theme and Purpose

The Old Generation			The Tragic Transition				The New Generation																									
1	4	5	10:10	10:11	14	15	16	17	20	21	25	26	30	31	33	34	36															
Counting and Ordering of the People			Cleansing of the People			Complaints and Disbelief of the People			Instructions for Life in Canaan			The Rebellion of Korah			Aaron, the Levites and Moses			Serpent of Brass and Story of Balaam			Second Census and Laws of Israel			Settling east of Jordan			Preparations for Settling in Canaan					
Preparation			Preparation			Postponement			Postponement			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise								
Waiting			Waiting			Wandering			Wandering			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting					
Census, Instruction, Travel			Census, Instruction, Travel			-			-			-			-			-			-			-			-			-		
At Sinai			At Sinai			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab					
Sinai to Kadesh			Sinai to Kadesh			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness					
Preparation for the Journey			Preparation for the Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey					
About 2 months (39%)			About 2 months (39%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)					
Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19					
Getting Ready to Possess the land			Getting Ready to Possess the land			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD					
Structuring			Structuring			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing					
Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring					

Leviticus covered only one month, but Numbers stretches over almost 39 years (about 1444 BC to 1405 BC – traditional dating).

It records Israel's movement from the last 19 days at Mt Sinai (1:1; 10:11) to the arrival in the plains of Moab in the 40th year (22:1; 26:3; 33:5; Deut 1:3).

Most of this time was spent wandering in and around Kadesh-barnea. Their tents occupied several square miles whenever they camped since there were over 2.5 million people. God miraculously fed and sustained them in the desert – He preserved their clothing and gave them manna, meat, water, leaders, and a promise.

Date and Setting of the Book of Numbers



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Detailed Outline of the Book of Numbers

I. Preparations for Travel (Numbers 1:1-10:10)

- A. The First Census (chapter 1)
- B. The Order of the Tribes (chapter 2)
- C. The Census and Duties of the Levites (chapters 3-4)
- D. Cleansing and Consecration (chapters 5-6)
- E. The Tabernacle Service (chapters 7-8)
- E. The Supplementary Passover (chapter 9:1-14)
- F. The Fiery Cloud and the Silver Trumpets (chapters 9:15-10:10)

II. The Journey to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 10:11-14:45)

- A. The Departure from Sinai (chapters 10:11-36)
- B. The Rebellion of the People (chapter 11)
- C. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (chapter 12)
- D. Spying out the Promised Land (chapter 13)
- E. God's Judgment on Unbelief (chapter 14)

III. The Journey to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 15:1-22:1)

- A. Covenant Statutes Reviewed (chapter 15)
- B. The Rebellion of Korah (chapter 16)

- C. The Budding of Aaron's Rod (chapter 17)
- D. The Responsibility of Priests and Levites (chapter 18)
- E. The Red Heifer Sacrifice (chapter 19)
- F. The Waters of Meribah, Edom, Aaron's death (chapter 20)
- G. Journey to Moab (chapters 21:1-22:1)
- F. Balak and Balaam (chapters 22:2-24:25)
- G. The Idolatry of Israel (chapter 25)

IV. Final Preparations for Entering Canaan (Numbers 26:1-36:13)

- A. The Second Census (chapter 26)
- B. Daughters of Zelophehad (chapter 27:1-11)
- C. Joshua appointed as Moses' Successor (chapter 27:12-23)
- D. Laws concerning Offerings and Vows (chapters 28-30)
- E. The War against Midian (chapter 31)
- F. Inheritance of Eastern Tribes (chapter 32)
- G. Resume of the journey from Egypt (chapter 33:1-49)
- H. Final Instructions about Conquest and Inheritance (chapters 33:50-36:13)



[Numbers 13 – Exploring the Promised Land](#)

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- v4-16 The 12 Leaders Sent Out
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[Numbers 17 – Aaron's Authority Confirmed](#)

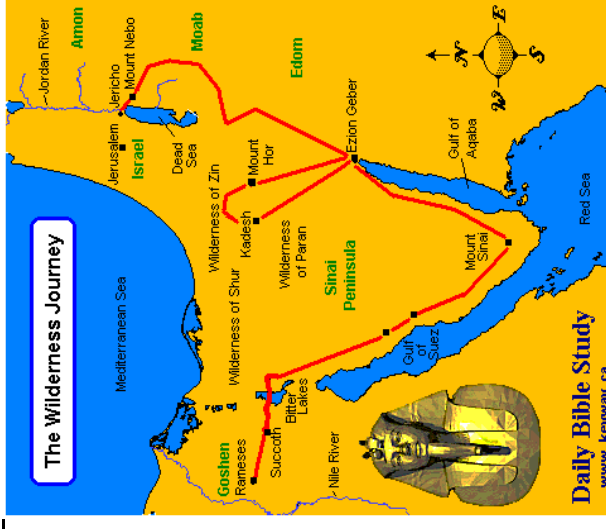
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[Numbers 19 – The Red Heifer Sacrifice](#)

- v1-10 The Preparation
- v11-22 The Application



The Modern
Wilderness of Paran



<http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/highlights-of-moshiach/18.htm>

The Rambam rules:

“Nine red heifers were performed (through burning etc.) from the time the Jews were given this mitzvah, until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple. The first heifer was performed by Moses. The second one was performed by Ezra (who was a kohanim). And there were another seven red heifers performed from Ezra until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple. The 10th red heifer will be performed by the King Moshiach - may he speedily be revealed, Amen, so may be the will of Hashem.”

The sages described the heifer as a rare breed. Only nine were recorded in religious texts to have existed and the strain has long been assumed extinct, thus making it impossible to contemplate a return to Temple ritual.



In the Mishnah, Tractate Parah, we learn that there have been a total of nine perfectly red cows burned. The first was under the supervision of Moses; the second was prepared by Ezra; two by Shimon Ha Tzaddik; Yochanan, the High Priest also sacrificed two; Eliehoenai, the son of Ha-Kof was the seventh. Hanamel, the Egyptian burned the eighth. The ninth Red Cow was sacrificed by Ishmael, son of Piabi. The tenth Red Heifer will be burned in the time of Mashiach

A. The red heifer (Num 19:2):

Must be without blemish

Must be without defect

Must never have worn a yoke

B. The sacrifice (Num 19:3-7):

Must be performed outside the camp

The blood must be sprinkled seven times in front of the tabernacle

The ENTIRE heifer must be burned before the priest

Cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet are added to the fire

The priest washes his clothes and bathes

C. The Water of Purification (Num 19:9):

Prepared by a man who is clean

He gathers the ashes

(Implied) He adds water to the ashes (19:17)

He stores it outside the camp in a clean place

The water is for the congregation of Israel

He washes his clothes and bathes

- **It is this water, The Water of Purification, which is required by the Israelites today. It is needed to “purify” today’s Levitical priesthood and to “purify” the temple mount in preparation for the Third Temple.**

Red Heifer: The Details According to the Bible:



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The Red Heifer is a type of Yeshua. This is why it remains to this day a mystery to the Jews, because they are blinded for a time to the things concerning Messiah. The Red Heifer symbolizes a rare find. In order for a cow to qualify, it must be perfect, without blemish, and must be totally red. There can be no white hairs at the time it is to be slaughtered **Yeshua is that kind of rare find, that bit of the miraculous that only comes around in life once. He is God's Grace, and forgiveness made manifest as man.** It is to be a cow that has never been yoked. This can be seen as having never been put to other service such as the priesthood, or can symbolize having never been married, and both would apply to Yeshua.

The Heifer was not a sacrifice in the sense of a blood covering for sin, but was a means or a process that was to bring a cleansing from defilement, or sin. It wasn't a substitutional sacrifice like the male goat of Yom Kippur, but a **day by day cleansing as needed.** It was a cow and not a bull. I believe this speaks of the **continuous access of this cleansing**, like a mother who is always close at hand to her children, as opposed to the father who is often times away from the children as required by his labors.

The Purification by the Red Heifer By Charles Ryalls

<http://www.yeshuatheking.org>



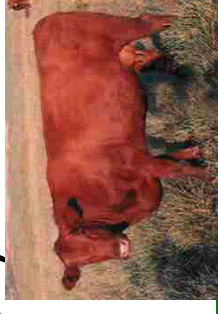
The cow was taken outside the camp to be slaughtered. Yeshua also was taken outside the city, to Golgotha to be slaughtered. The actual killing of the heifer was carried out by Priests of the second order. Eleazar was the son of Aaron, who was then the high priest. It is much like the time of Yeshua, when the chief priest and Pharisees sought His death and it was approved of by Caiaphas, the high priest. Yet it was the Romans who served as the workers to do the actual slaughter. This slaughter is to take place outside the camp. Yet there is still a unbreakable connection to the throne of God as Eleazar was to take a small amount of the blood and with his fingers and sprinkle it toward the tent of meeting, the holy place. Seven times because this is Gods seal. Anything that is done seven times is a permanently fixed thing, that can not be broken. It speaks of finality. Think of Joshua and the seven days of marching around Jericho, and the seven blasts on the trumpet, in Revelation the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls. So here the priest makes the binding connection to the place of God's presence, the tent of meeting. Yet some of the blood will be lost, spilled on the ground.

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The heifer itself will be burned in its entirety. It will not be separated out or the hide removed or the fat separated or anything like this. It's bones are not broken, it is burned all at once. Yeshua went as he was, having been inspected for days by the priests and the teachers of the law, and they could find no flaw in Him, yet they killed Him. It was like those priest that inspected the red cow for any sign of defect or any white hairs. And like the Heifer he became a cleansing for us all. **The slaughter of the cow and its burning are a picture of the death and burial of Yeshua.** They were to take Cedar, probably red cedar, Hyssop, and red stuff, probably red wool and throw it onto the heifer when it was burning. These items refer to the cleaning aspect of the ashes that were to be produced from this cow. The sort of paint brush that was made to sprinkle the people or item to be cleaned, was made from hyssop tied with red wool to a cedar handle. Hyssop was used to spread the lamb's blood on the door posts in the exodus. So these items added to the fire are ritual, (not magic) that speak of the sprinkling of purification.



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Let's look at how these ashes of the heifer might be used. Contact with the dead would defile a person. If your relative died, whether by sword or by natural causes you needed to prepare their bodies and bury them. Yet by doing so you became unclean. If you were in a room that had a container with the remains of the dead in it and the container was opened, then everyone in the room was defiled and would also need purification. These ashes, which were ceremonially mixed with water, would be that which would cleanse. If you failed to follow this ritual and get cleansed, not only did you remain unclean and tainted by sin, but the holy sanctuary was also considered unclean and there was a risk of driving the Lord's presence from among the people. So this is a picture of God's daily grace to us, that cleanses us from our unrighteousness each time we become defiled. Unlike Yom Kippur which is once a year and is a picture of our repentance and God's salvation. The Red Heifer is a picture of Sanctification and purification.



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Much has been made about the heifer now in Israel being the tenth heifer. This number sequence is thought by Judaism to have a specific application to Messiah and to the establishment of the Temple.

The concept is that the great periods involving the Temple had one of the Great High Priests preparing it. The tenth red heifer is to be done to herald the reconstruction of the Temple and the last and greatest High Priest, namely Messiah. The argument rests on the process of the restoration and the views of the rabbinical authorities during the Temple Period and the commentators on the law.

Messiah was the last red heifer, the Passover and High Priest designate all in one. The Jews are essentially correct in their understanding of the significance but refuse to accept that it has already happened.

The tenth heifer (www.logon.org)



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The high priest in the year of the sacrifice and dedication was Joseph surnamed Caiaphas (Jn. 18:24, cf. Schurer, ibid.). He was high priest from 18-36 CE. He prophesied the year of the crucifixion that Jesus was going to die for the nation (Jn. 11:51).

The ninth and tenth heifers were already sacrificed long ago. If the ninth heifer was sacrificed by Ishmael ben Phiabi as the Mishnah claims, then that was in 15/16 CE and was coincidental with the Messiah achieving adulthood under the law at 20 years of age.

The tenth heifer was sacrificed in 30 CE by and under the high priesthood of Joseph Caiaphas and Annas as seen above. This tenth heifer symbolised the sacrifice of Messiah and the dedication of the new Temple in 30/31 CE built not of human hands but with the Holy Spirit and which was composed of blocks of living stones.

The tenth heifer (www.logon.org)



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[Numbers 20:1-13 – Chastening the Leaders](#)

- v1 Miriam's Death
- v2-5 An Old Problem – No Water
- v6-9 A Divine Solution
- v10-11 An Impulsive Sin
- v12-13 A Painful Discipline

[Numbers 20:14-22 – Guiding](#)

[His People](#)

- v14-17 Moses' Message to Edom
- v18-22 Edom's Refusal

[Numbers 20:23-29 –](#)

[Perpetuating the Priesthood](#)

- v23-27 Aaron's Death Announced
- v28-29 Eleazar Becomes the New High Priest



Numbers 20 - At this chapter begins the history of the fortieth year (which was the last year) of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness. And since the beginning of their second year, when they were sentenced to perform their quarantine in the desert, there to wear away the tedious revolution of forty years, there is little recorded concerning them till this last year, which brought them to the borders of Canaan, and the history of this year is almost as large as the history of the first year. This chapter gives an account of,

I. The death of Miriam (Num_20:1).

II. The fetching of water out of the rock, in which observe,

1. The distress Israel was in, for want of water (Num_20:2).
2. Their discontent and murmuring in that distress (Num_20:3-5).
3. God's pity and power engaged for their supply with water out of the rock (Num_20:6-9).
4. The infirmity of Moses and Aaron upon this occasion (Num_20:10, Num_20:11).
5. God's displeasure against them (Num_20:12, 13).

III. The negotiation with the Edomites. Israel's request (Num_20:14-17), and the repulse the Edomites gave them (Num_20:18-21).

IV. The death of Aaron the high priest upon Mount Hor, the instalment of Eleazar in his room, and the people's mourning for him (Num_20:22, etc.).

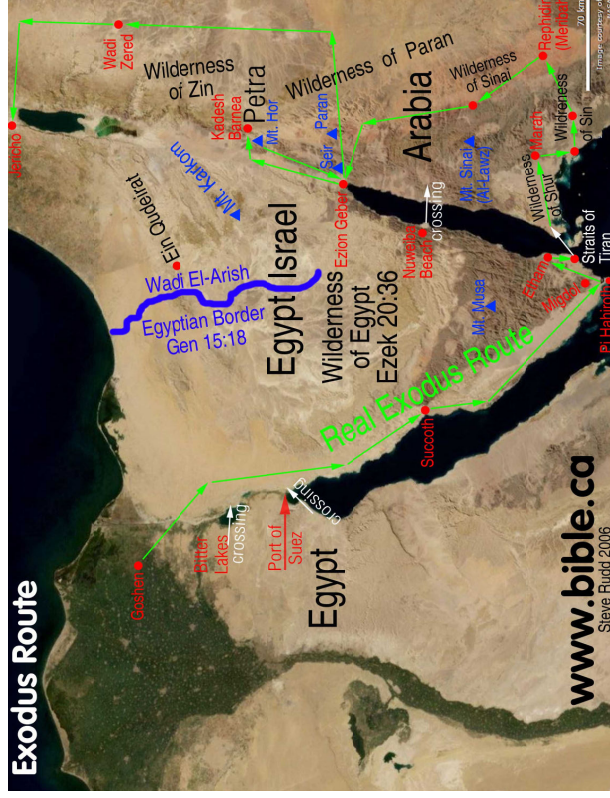
Matthew Henry on Numbers 20



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v1 The Death of Miriam

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.



Numbers 20:1-13 Chastening His Leaders

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- The death of Miriam must have affected Moses and Aaron deeply. It was Miriam whom the Lord used to save Moses' life when he was a baby, and she even arranged for their own mother to raise him up and be paid for it (**Exodus 2**).
- She had led the praises of the women at the Red Sea (**Exodus 15**) and had endured the wilderness trials with her brothers.
- The only blemish on the record was her criticism of Moses (**Numbers 12**).

The Death of Miriam (v1)

Num 20:1 - Num. 20 and Num. 21 narrate the journey of the people from Kadesh round Mount Seir to the heights of Pisgah, near the Jordan, and the various incidents connected with that journey (compare Num_33:37-41). This formed the third and last stage of the progress of Israel from Sinai to Canaan, and took place in the fortieth year of the Exodus.

The incidents are apparently not narrated in a strictly chronological order (see Num 21:1). The leading purpose of Num. 20 seems to be to narrate the loss by the people of their original leaders before their entrance into the land of promise.

Even the whole congregation - This emphatic expression (compare Num_13:26; 14:1) points to a re-assembling of the people for the purpose of at last resuming the advance to the promised land. During the past 38 years the “congregation” had been bracken up. No doubt round the tabernacle there had continued an organised camp consisting of the Levites and others, which had been moved from time to time up and down the country (compare Num. 33:18-36). But the mass of the people had been scattered over the face of the wilderness of Paran, and led a nomadic life as best suited the pasturage of the cattle; trafficking in provisions with surrounding tribes (compare Deu_2:26-29; Psa_74:14); and availing themselves of the resources of a district which were in ancient times vastly greater than they now are.

These natural resources were supplemented, where needful, by miraculous aid. The whole guidance of Israel through the wilderness is constantly referred to God’s special and immediately superintending care (Deu_8:4 following; Deu_29:5; Neh_9:21; Isa_63:11-14; Amo_2:10, etc.).

Yet though God’s extraordinary bounty was vouchsafed to them, it is probable that this period was, among the perishing generation at all events, one of great religious declension, or even apostasy. To it must no doubt be referred such passages as Eze_20:15 ff; Amo_5:25 following; Hos_9:10.

Albert Barnes on Numbers 20:1



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v2-5 An Old Problem – No Water

2 And there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. 3 The people **thus** contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "**If only** we had perished **when** our brothers perished before the LORD! 4 Why **then** have you brought the LORD's assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? 5 And 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."

Numbers 20:1-13 Chastening His Leaders



- Difficulties either bring out the best in people or the worst; they either mature us or make us more childish (cf. **James 1:2-8**)
- Israel's words and attitudes revealed clearly that their hearts were still in Egypt.
- What a picture of the professed Christian who still loves the world (**1 John 2:15-17**) and turns to the world for help whenever there is a problem!

Grumbling Again (v2-5)



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v6-9 A Divine Solution

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. **Then** the glory of the LORD appeared to them; 7 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 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." 9 **So** Moses took the rod from before the LORD, **just as** He had commanded him;

Numbers 20:1-13 Chastening His Leaders



- It was the people who should have been confessing their sins and seeking God's help, but again it was Moses and Aaron who fell before the Lord and sought His wisdom and help (14:5; 16:4,22,45; 22:31).
- Spiritual leaders pay a price as they seek to serve God's people, but the people usually don't appreciate it. The same people repeat the same sins and refuse to trust God and obey Him.
- The rod was the same one Moses had used to do wonders in Egypt, especially to open the Red Sea.
- The Hebrew word for "rock" means a high cliff, a place for a fortress, and not a boulder.
- God is able to solve our problems no matter what the circumstances are, provided we trust Him and do His will.

The Lord's Provision (v6-9)

v10-11 An Impulsive Sin

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?"

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.

Numbers 20:1-13 Chastening His Leaders



- Provoked in his spirit, Moses hit the rock twice. He also spoke angrily to the people, calling them “rebels” and gave the impression that he and Aaron had supplied the water.
- It was a sad demonstration of hostility by the “meekest” man on the earth (12:3), showing that we can fall in our strengths as well as our weakness.
- Moses was human, just as we are, and was no doubt weary as he drew near the end of the wilderness march, during which he’d seen nothing but unbelief and heard nothing but complaining. Psalm 106:32-33 states that it was the people who provoked Moses to anger.
- Perhaps he was emotionally drained because of the death of his sister.

Moses’ Impulsive Sin

- **Regardless of the mitigating causes, Moses didn't honor the Lord or obey His orders.**
- **By striking the rock, he ruined a type of the Messiah who gives living water to His people (Exo 17:1-7; John 7:37-39).**
- **Our Lord gave Himself for us on the cross only once and doesn't have to be crucified (smitten) again (Hebrews 9:26-28).**
- **The remarkable thing is that God gave the water, even though Moses' attitudes and actions were all wrong.**
 - **Psalm 103:10** He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
 - **Psalm 130:3** If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
- **God in His grace met the needs of His people because He is a God of compassion and infinite goodness, but He did not overlook Moses' sins.**

Moses' Impulsive Sin

The Sin of Moses (20:1-13)

20:10-13 Once before, at a place called Massah (and Meribah), the people had murmured for water. At that time, the Lord told Moses to *strike* the rock (Exo_17:1-7). But now Moses' patience was exhausted. **First**, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips, calling the people **rebels** (v. 10). **Secondly**, he **struck the rock twice** instead of speaking to it. The rock smitten in Exodus 17 was a type of Christ, stricken at Calvary. But Christ was only to be struck once. After His death, the Holy Spirit would be given, of which the water in verse 11 is a type. Because of the sin of **Moses and Aaron** in this matter, God decreed that they would not enter the Promised Land. He called the place **Meribah**, but it is not the same Meribah as in Exodus 17. This is sometimes known as Meribah-Kadesh. G. Campbell Morgan comments:

- By this manifestation of anger, which as we have said was so very natural, the servant of God misrepresented God to the people. **His failure was due to the fact that for the moment his faith failed to reach the highest level of activity. He still believed in God, and in His power: but he did not believe in Him to sanctify Him in the eyes of His people.** The lesson is indeed a very searching one. Right things may be done in so wrong a way as to produce evil results. There is a hymn in which we may miss the deep meaning, if we are not thoughtful—

Lord, speak to me that I may speak

In living echoes of Thy tone.

That is far more than a prayer that we may be able to deliver the Lord's message. It is rather that we may do so in His tone, with His temper. That is where Moses failed, and for this failure he was excluded from the Land.

Believers Bible Commentary



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v12-13 A Painful Discipline

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

Numbers 20:1-13 Chastening His Leaders



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

- Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land (**Luke 12:48**). He had glorified himself instead of glorifying God.
- Moses, as a type of the Law, could not give us our inheritance (**Gal 3:18**). Joshua is a type of Jesus Christ and only he could lead the people into their promised inheritance (**Heb 4:1-11**). Had Moses entered the Promised Land, he would have ruined the message of the book of Hebrews!
- The first time God provided water for Israel, Moses called the place “Massah and Meribah” (“testing and quarreling”). On this second occasion, Moses called the place “Meribah” (“quarreling”), but it was he who had been tested, and he failed the test.
- At one point, Moses begged God to let him over the Jordan, but the Lord refused his request (**Deut 3:23-29**). Moses revealed his meekness by submitting to God’s discipline and continuing to lead the people.

A Painful Discipline (v12-13)

v14-17 Moses' Message to Edom

14 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; 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. 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. 17 Please let us pass through your land. We shall not pass through field or through vineyard; we shall not even drink water from a well. We shall go along the king's highway, not turning to the right or left, **until** we pass through your territory.'"

Numbers 20:14-22 Guiding His People



- The easiest route to Israel would be through the king's highway, the main trade route at that time. The Edomites were Esau's descendants (**Gen 36**) and therefore related to Israel.
- Knowing the history of conflict between Esau and Jacob, Moses used sound diplomatic tactics as he requested permission to pass through the land. He made it clear that it was a peaceful march.
- He first emphasized the fact that they were brothers (v14), used the phrase "our fathers" (v15) twice. This common heritage should have caused them to have some sympathy for their brothers. Then Moses reminded them of Israel's suffering and bondage in Egypt and God's miraculous deliverance. They should surely want to cooperate with God and help Israel if they wanted His blessings! Moses then assured them that they would pay for their food and water and would not enter the fields and vineyards of Edom.

Moses' Message to Edom (v14-17)



v18-22 Edom's Refusal

18 Edom, **however**, said to him, "You shall not pass through us, **lest** I come out with the sword against you."
19 **Again**, the sons of Israel said to him, "We shall 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." 20 **But** he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against him with a heavy force, and with a strong hand. 21 **Thus** Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory; **so** Israel turned away from him. 22 **Now when** they set out from Kadesh, the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor.

Numbers 20:14-22 Guiding His People



- **Jacob and Esau had met and settled their differences years before (Gen 32-33), but Esau's descendants were perpetuating the old family feud.**
- **Years later, when Jerusalem was attacked, the Edomites assisted the enemy and even stopped the Jewish fugitives from escaping (Obadiah; Ps 137:7)**
- **It's tragic when a family feud is kept alive from generation to generation, poisoning hearts and minds and keeping brothers from helping one another.**
- **When the Edomite army arrived, the wisest course for Israel was to choose a new route.**

Edom's Message to Israel (v18-22)



v23-27 The Death of Aaron Announced

23 **Then** the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying,
24 "Aaron shall 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. 25 **Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up to Mount Hor; 26 and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar. So** Aaron will be gathered to *his people*, and will die there." 27 **So** Moses did **just as** the LORD had commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

Numbers 20:23-29 Perpetuating the Priesthood



- **Aaron was 123 years old at this time. Moses said goodbye to a beloved brother and Eleazar to a revered father, but the work carries on.**
- **“God buries His workman, but His work goes on” (John Wesley)**
- **The mourning for Aaron was for 30 days – the 6th month**

The Death of Aaron (v23-28)



v28-29 Eleazar Becomes High Priest

28 And **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. 29 And **when** all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron **thirty days**.

Numbers 20:23-29 Perpetuating the Priesthood



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

- Eleazar was Aaron's 3rd son (Num 3:2).
- Before becoming High Priest, he was the chief leader of the Levites who cared for the tabernacle (Num 3:32; 4:16).
- He would assist Moses in taking the census of the new generation (26:1-3) as well as commissioning Joshua to succeed Moses (27:18-23).
- When Israel conquered the land, Eleazar helped Joshua assign each tribe its inheritance (34:17; Josh 14:1; 19:15).

The New High Priest (v28-29)

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

- **Moses had experienced two family funerals, two confrontations with critics in the camp and a personal failure at Kadesh; yet he picks up his rod and goes right back to work.**
- **Victorious Christian service, like the victorious Christian life, is a series of new beginnings. No matter what mistakes we've made it's always too soon to quit.**

Application

 **Entrusting the Word to the Faithful**

[Numbers 13 – Exploring the Promised Land](#)

- v1-3 The Command to Send
- v4-16 The 12 Leaders Sent Out
- v17-20 Moses' Commands to the Spies
- v21-24 The Foray into the Promised Land
- v25-29 The Report of the 10 Spies
- v30 Caleb's Counter to the Bad Report
- v31-33 The Bad Report of the 10 Spies

[Numbers 14 – Crisis Time at Kadesh-barnea](#)

- v1-4 The Congregation Grumble
- v5-10 Caleb and Joshua's Attempts to Quiet the People
- v11-12 The Lord's Offer to Moses
- v13-19 Moses' Intercession
- v20-35 The Lord's Judgments
- v36-37 The 10 Spies Die
- v38-45 The Disobedience of the People

[Numbers 15 – Laws for the Promised Land](#)

- v1-31 Various Offerings
- v32-36 Sabbath Breaking Punished
- v37-41 Tassels as Reminder to Obey God

[Numbers 16 – Korah's Rebellion](#)

- v1-3 Korah's Accusation
- v4-7 Moses' Answer
- v8-11 Moses Defends Aaron
- v12-14 Dathan and Abiram Defy Moses
- v15-19 Moses' Proposal to Korah and 250 Men
- v20-21 The Lord's Judgment
- v22 Moses and Aaron Intercede for the People
- v23-24 The Lord's Mercy
- v25-27 Moses' Word to the Congregation
- v28-30 Moses' Word to the Rebels
- v31-35 The Judgment Falls on the Rebels
- v36-38 The Lord's Word to Eleazar
- v39-40 Eleazar's Obedience
- v41-50 The Aftermath of Korah's Rebellion

[Numbers 17 – Aaron's Authority Confirmed](#)

- v1-7 The Lord Proposes a Test
- v8-11 Aaron's Rod Buds
- v12-13 The People's Foolish Response

[Numbers 18 – Duties of the Levites](#)

- v1-7 Guarding the Sanctuary
- v8-20 Caring for the Priests
- v21-32 Caring for the Levites and Aaron

[Numbers 19 – The Red Heifer Sacrifice](#)

- v1-10 The Preparation
- v11-22 The Application

[Numbers 20:1-13 – Chastening the Leaders](#)

- v1 Miriam's Death
- v2-5 An Old Problem – No Water
- v6-9 A Divine Solution
- v10-11 An Impulsive Sin
- v12-13 A Painful Discipline

[Numbers 20:14-22 – Guiding](#)

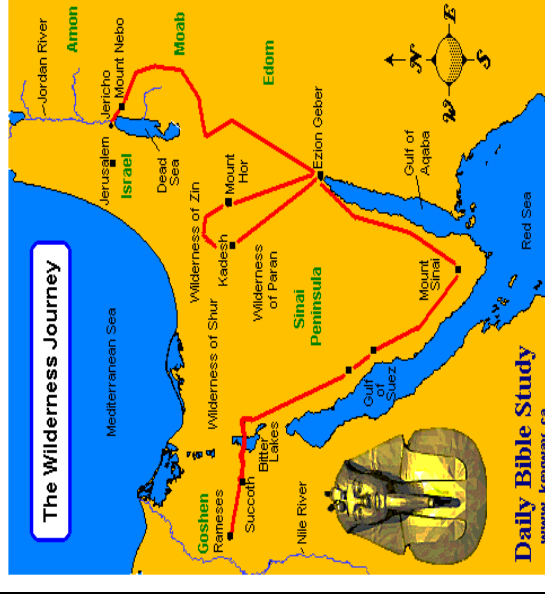
[His People](#)

- v14-17 Moses' Message to Edom
- v18-22 Edom's Refusal

[Numbers 20:23-29 –](#)

[Perpetuating the Priesthood](#)

- v23-27 Aaron's Death Announced
- v28-29 Eleazar Becomes the New High Priest



Numbers: Man's Failure and God's Faithfulness (Num 14:8-9) (Wiersbe)

I. At Sinai: Obeying the Lord (1:1-9:14)

- 1. Numbering the Soldiers (1:1-54)**
- 2. Organizing the Tribes (2:134)**
- 3. Assigning the Duties (ch 3-4)**
- 4. Purifying the People (ch 5-6)**
- 5. Dedicating the Tabernacle (ch 7-8)**
- 6. Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14)**

II. To Kadesh: Tempting the Lord

(9:15-12:16)

- 1. The Camp Marches (9:15-10:36)**
- 2. The People Complain (ch 11)**
- 3. Aaron and Miriam Criticize Moses (ch 12)**

III. At Kadesh: Rebellious Against the Lord **(ch 13-14)**

- 1. Exploring the Promised Land (ch 13)**
- 2. Refusing the Claim the Land (14:1-9)**
- 3. Turning away from the Land (14:10-45)**

IV. In the Wilderness: Learning from the Lord (15:1-20:13)

- 1. About Sacrifices (15:1-31)**
- 2. About Authority (15:32-17:13)**
- 3. About Responsibility (ch 18)**
- 4. About Purity (ch 19)**
- 5. About Humility (20:1-13)**

V. In Moab: A New Beginning from the Lord **(20:14-36:13)**

- 1. New Victories (20:14-21; 21:1-35)**
- 2. A New Priest (20:22-29)**
- 3. New Dangers (ch 22-25)**
- 4. A New Generation (ch 26)**
- 5. New Regulations (27:1-11)**
- 6. A New Leader (27:12-23)**
- 7. New Commitment to the Law (ch 28-30)**
- 8. New Commitment to Battle (ch 31-32)**
- 9. New Laws for the New Land (ch 33-36)**

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BENJAMIN

40,500

EPHRAIM

32,200

MANASSEH

ASHER

41,500

DAN

62,700

NAPHTALI

53,400

54,400

ISSACHAR

74,600

JUDAH

57,400

ZEBULUN

45,650

GAD

46,500

REUBEN

59,300

SIMEON

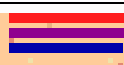
GERSHONITES

7,500

West



TABERNACLE



LEVITES

East

MERARITES

6,200

North

8,600

South

KOATHITES