

## In The Wilderness

### Numbers 21:1-35

- At the end of the previous chapter Moses had to say goodbye to his dear brother, and Eleazer to his beloved father Aaron, as he died at the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty three yrs old. Now although he will be sorely missed God has provided for the Priesthood to continue on as Eleazer is now going to take the place of his father as Israel's high priest.
- This is a wonderful example for us all, for no ministry should die with one person, as there should always be a succession plan in place, because good leaders should be raising up better leaders to take their place when the time comes, and if you haven't then you should be attempting to move on, and Eleazer taking the place of his father is a great example of this.

### V1-35

- **V1** after burying Aaron and with the promise land in sight, the children of Israel are threatened by Edom the descendants of Esau the brother of Jacob, who refuse to let them pass through their land, so Israel instead of fighting with their cousins they take the long way around through a place called Arad, and when he heard that Israel was coming their way he gathered an army in order to keep them from traveling further into the path that God has set before them.
- If you notice the timing of this battle is typical of how the enemy attacks us, as it comes after Israel has buried their beloved Aaron, and when a people who should have been sympathetic to their cause (**Edom**) that's related to them no less, decide that instead of helping them, they will come out and fight them, causing them to travel the longer and harder path to the promise land. This is what the enemy does, he shows up when we're tired and feeling down, and he attacks us hoping to discourage us, into either giving up or making decisions that we'll later regret.
- **V2-3** Initially they don't fare too well in the battle as some of them are taken hostage by the enemy, but Israel seemingly have learned their lesson, because instead of complaining and bemoaning their plight, they take it to God and make a vow that if He would give them favor and deliver these people into their hands that they would thoroughly destroy their cities. This is very important to take note of, because in **Gen 15:18** God said that He would give the Amorites of Canaanites four hundred years to repent and if not that He would send Israel to destroy them.
- Israel now is acting in faith knowing what God has promised to them, this is unlike what they did in Chapters 13-14 when they refused to enter into the promise land despite what God had promised because of their fear of the giants. God hears their prayer and accepts their vow and grants them favor, and Israel follows through on their promise and destroy their cities, and afterward they call this place "Hormah" which means utter destruction.
- **V4-5** so again because they couldn't go through Edom and they had to go around it, that made it a far more difficult and longer journey, and with that, back came some of the bad attitudes. As the new generation emulated what the old generation did when faced with difficult and hard times they complained and murmured against Moses and God.

- **Is 40:31** > in the first victory this new generation followed this verse to a tee, they went to the Lord and waited for Him to answer, and when He did they acted, but its one thing to **“mount up with wings like eagles”** and quite the other to **“walk and not faint”**. Courage in the battle must always be followed by endurance in the race, initially after waiting on the Lord, they mounted up and swooped in and wiped out the enemy, but here they don’t seek the Lord, and just start to act and speak based upon how they felt, being tired and angry that they have to take the long way around, instead of the shortcut through the Edomite territory.
- When we start to murmur and complain we inevitably begin to exaggerate how bad our situation is and minimize how good God has been to us. Notice in being upset with having to take the long way around the anger and impatience in their hearts boil over into very harsh words against The Lord and Moses, saying **“they have no food or water, and their soul loathes or hate this worthless bread or manna”**. Wow! **Deut 8:2-4** says the Lord let them get hungry but never starve, thirst but never go without any water lest they die, and provide clothing.
- Israel had their needs met because the God Who provides was the One taking care of them, but when we get into our moods, and allow our bad attitudes to take over this is what spues out. **Ps 78:25** says Manna was Angels food come down from above, interesting that Angels food cake mimics the description of what the bible says Manna was like > how its light and airy.
- V6 just as the Lord heard their cries for help when they were in trouble, He also hears their complaints and exaggerations against Him, and He answers those as well, but not in the way they’d want. Since their words were poisonous and venomous, so will their punishment, as God sends them fiery serpents, ones that don’t just kill but cause a burning sensation from its deadly poison > **1Cor 10:9-11** says their attitudes and words tempted the Lord, so instead of favor and victory they received pain and death, but graciously God doesn’t leave them in this state.
- **V7-9** after witnessing the power of God that’s able to give both victory over the enemy and provide punishment and chastening to His people, Israel now experiences the grace of God that is available to all who are willing to repent and then be forgiven. In **Jn 3:14-15** Jesus referred to this event as an example of what He’ll do for us by hanging on the cross, for just like here, all who look to Jesus as they did the bronze serpent will be saved, and all who refuse and turn away will die. You might ask why a serpent, isn’t that used for evil, and why a bronze one at that?
- You’re right it is a symbol of evil, but because bronze is a type of judgment, when you put them together it says God has now judged evil, and so the bronze serpent is a picture of evil being judged and dealt with, just as Jesus did for us on the cross > **Is 45:22**. Its interesting how man and Satan will take something that is in God’s Word and use it for their own purposes, there’s a logo that some of you may be familiar with in medicine where a snake is coiled around a staff, symbolizing medicine and healing, but instead of this story it mimics the Greek god Asclepius.

- **V10-16** Israel now leaves the field of battle and begin to march north toward their destination of the promise land, and they cross the Zared river, and camp there, then they cross the Arnon river approaching the country of the Amorites. Its here they are told to go toward a place called “Beer” this is when they are going to need water, notice the Lord anticipates their needs, and He is going to provide for them, if only we can remember this, God knows our needs before we have them, therefore we need to trust that He is going to provide for us.
- **V17-18** this is how we should respond to difficulty, they begin to sing to the Lord and He provides for them sufficient water, remember this in your dry times, that as we begin to praise the Lord for Who He is and what He’s done then we can expect His spiritual nourishment to refresh us Amen! **V19-23** as was the case with the Edomites the Amorites didn’t want to let Israel pass through their land, even though Israel promised that it would be of no expense.
- **V24-32** this time the Lord allowed Israel to fight, and He gave them the victory, God told Israel that they would prevail and take the land from the Amorites over four hundred years ago in **Gen 15:18**, also the Amorites are the descendants of Noah’s son Ham, who received a curse in **Gen 9:25** that his descendants would be servants and so God gave Israel their land and cities.
- **V33-35** after a mop up around Jazar Israel turns its attention on Bashan, a very fertile region East of the sea of Galilee and South of Mt. Hermon. Og confronts Israel, he is a man who ruled over six different communities and people were afraid of him because of his stature, history tells us he was over 9ft tall and a giant which is why scripture tells Israel not to fear him. Because they listen to God and not their emotions He gives them the victory and they take the land.