

BOOK OF NUMBERS

Lesson 11: Battling the Enemy
(Chapters 20-25)

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The Challenge: Keep Moving Forward

Chapter 20:1-13 – Moses error at Kadesh.

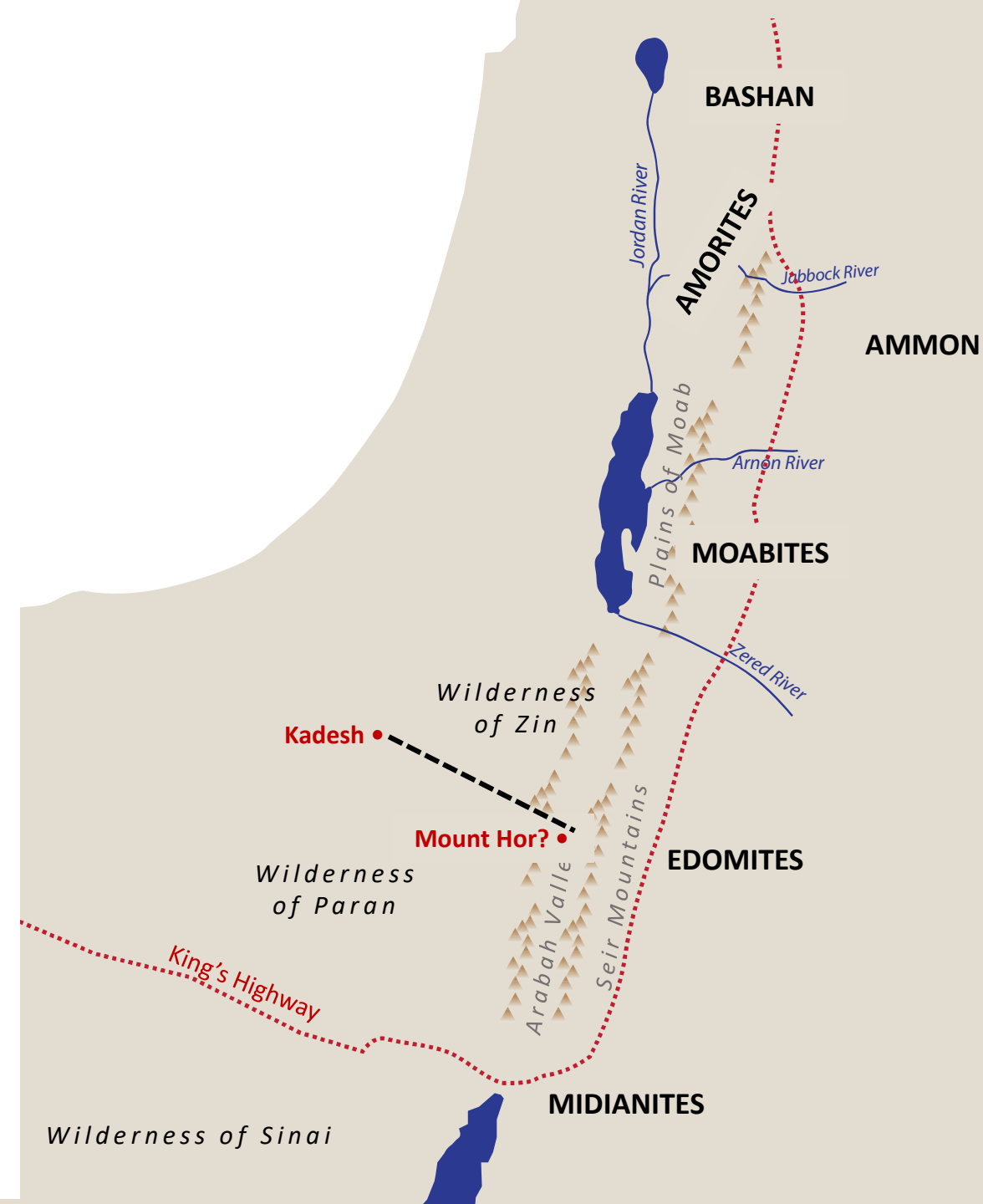
The journey doesn't end just because we have failed at some point. **We must keep moving forward.**

Chapter 20:14-21 – Moses sends a request to the King of Edom to pass through his land. We are refused passage through Edom – even use of the Kings Highway.

This is a set-back. The journey doesn't end just because we suffer set-backs. **We must keep moving forward.**

Chapter 20:22-29 Moses takes us through the Wilderness of Zin and into the Aravah Valley, to Mount Hor on the border of Edom. There our High Priest dies. We camp there at Mount Hor 30 days while we mourn the death of our High Priest.

This is a set-back. **We must keep moving forward.**



Moving Forward: Getting Around Edom

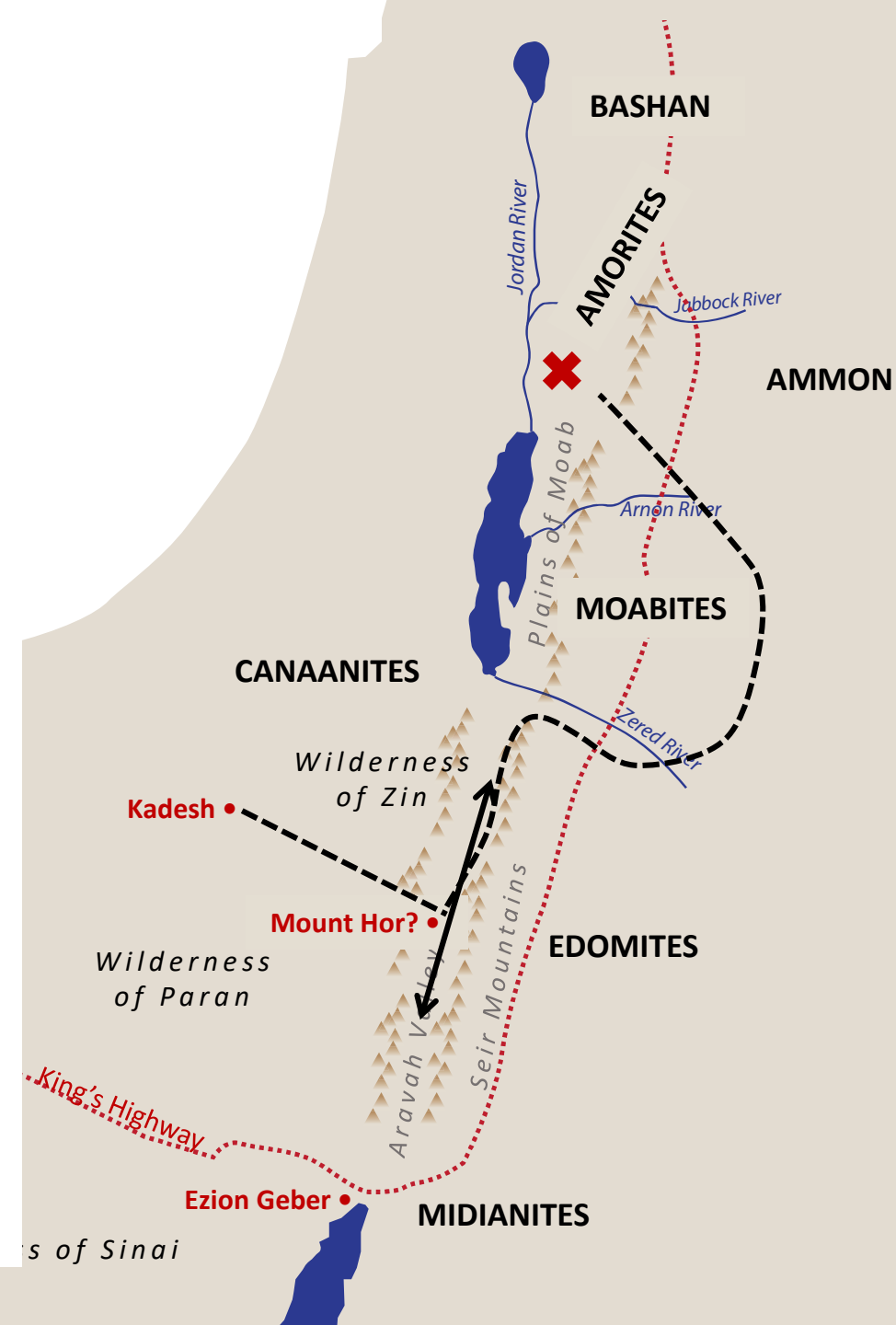
From Mount Hor, we have to go one direction or another to get around Edom.

- Either follow the plain of the Aravah Valley to Ezion Geber and then take the King's Highway. Take the broad and easy highway that all the rest of the world travels.
- Or turn and take the narrow, difficult way through enemy territory.
- We take the narrow way (*Matthew 7:13-14*)

We are heading for the plains of Moab in Amorite territory. It is going to take us about six months to get to there. On the way, we will begin to engage the enemy.

Note: The Lord never intended us to fight some of these battles.

Once we get off the path the Lord originally planned for us, we end up having to face obstacles and difficulties we would not have had to deal with.



Moving Forward

Chapter 21:10-20 – Journey from Mount Hor to the plain of Moab

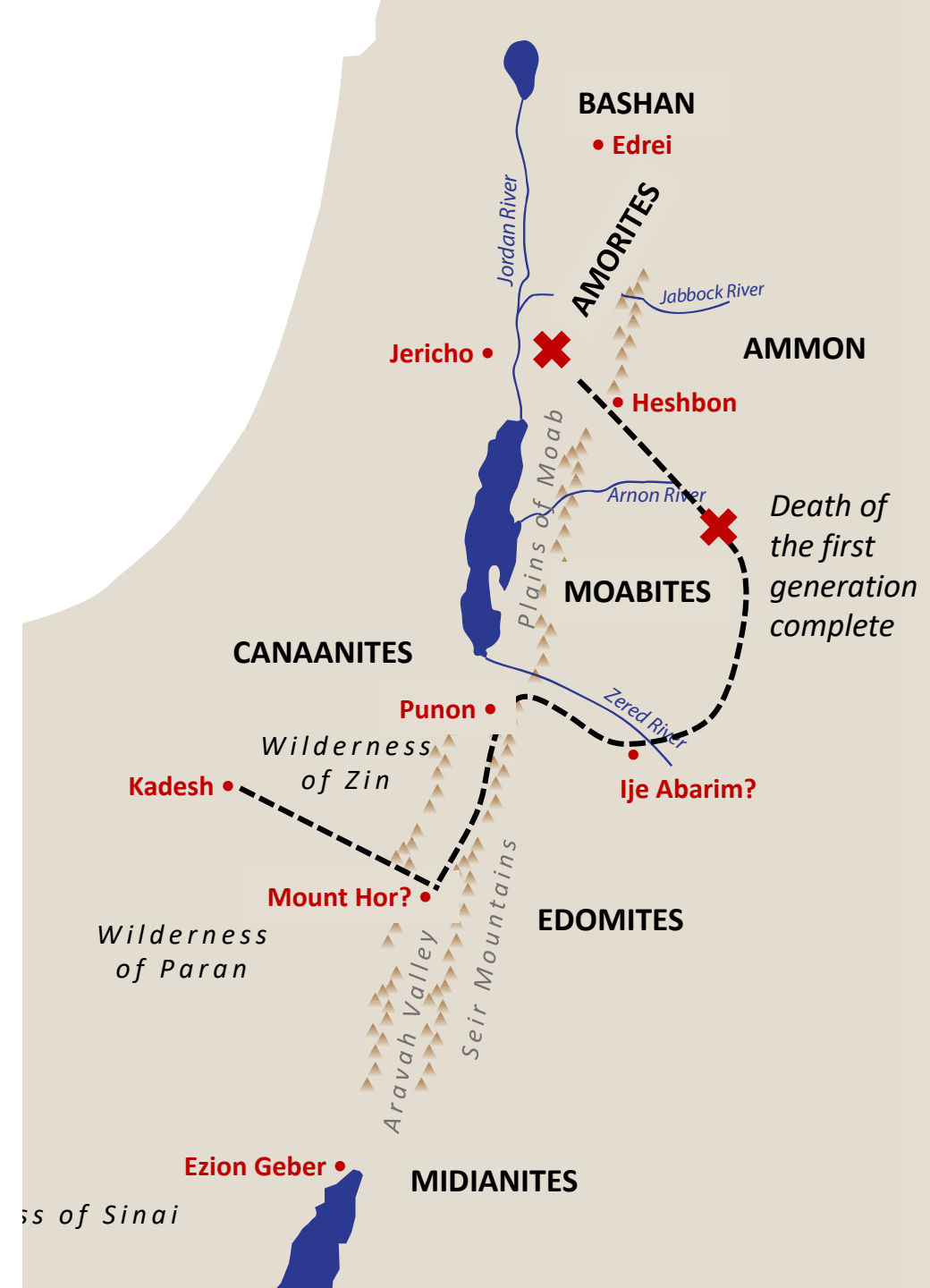
- Mount Hor to Zalmonah to Punon to Oboth to Ije Abarim (Numbers 33)
- **Chapter 21:1-3** – Battle with the Canaanite King at Hormah
- **Chapter 21:4-9** – Failure in the Bronze Serpent incident
- (v12-13) The last of the men of war from the first census die (Deuteronomy 2:16-18)
- Once we cross the Arnon River, we come into the land that Reuben, Manasseh and Gad will inherit.

Chapter 21:21-32 – Battle with King Sihon of the Amorites

Chapter 21:33-35 – Battle with King Og of Bashan

Chapters 22-24 – King Balak of Moab, our unseen enemy

Chapter 25 – Israel's Harlotry with Moab



Hormah

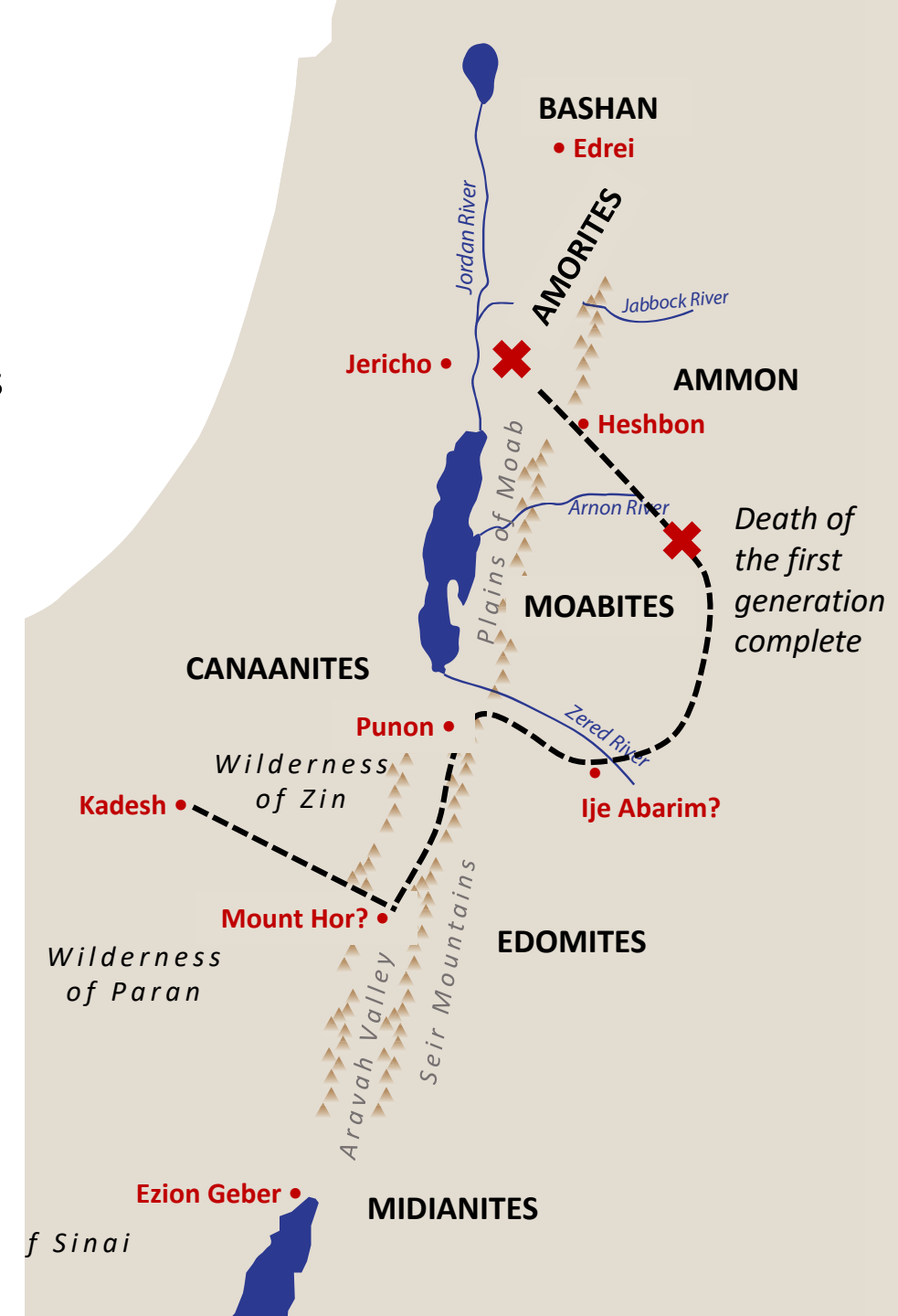
Read Numbers 21:1-3.

The Canaanite King of Arad remembers the spies from 39 years ago. Now the whole nation is on the way. He attacks us and takes some prisoners.

What happened to us last time at Hormah? (Numbers 14:39-45)

What do we do differently this time?

- We have a different **attitude** this time.
- We go directly to the Lord (not through Moses)
- We ask the Lord for **deliverance** instead of charging up the hill to deliver the prisoners ourselves.
- We vow to **align** ourselves with the Lord's agenda: to destroy the Canaanites in the land
- We vow to give the enemy totally over to the Lord.
This is a **free will** offering on our part – not to take the spoils of victory for ourselves but give it over for destruction.
- We **wait** on the Lord.



Hormah

What is the Lord's response?

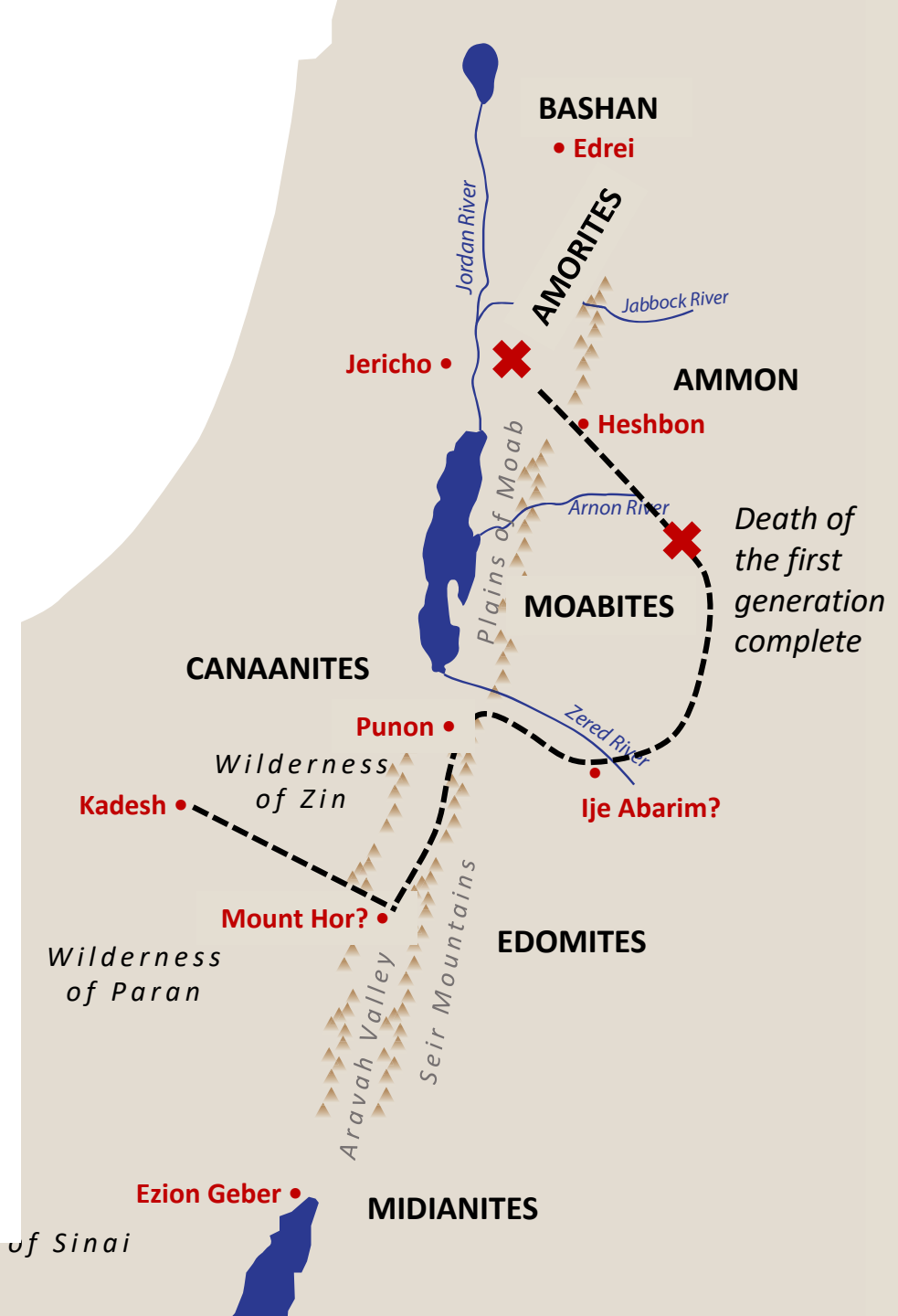
He listens, and rewards our request by delivering the Canaanites into our hands

Our follow through: We make good our vow. We utterly destroy the Canaanites and their cities.

Last time we came to Hormah we went storming up that hill without God, to take the land by our own power, and came back down that hill on the run being chased by Canaanites. We were the ones utterly defeated then.

This time we gave Him the glory and asked for His help, and in return He lifted us up and gave us victory.
Lesson learned.

We are making progress at last, physically and spiritually.



A Bittersweet Victory

This is the only battle the army of the first generation will fight. All the men of war who were numbered in the first census will die before the rest of the battles take place.

It is almost like the Lord allows them this second chance to prove their faithfulness.

The Timeline: Between the first confrontation at Hormah and the second we have the death of the High Priest.

- The first confrontation at Hormah happens before the death of the High Priest, and is a failure in terms of unfaithfulness to God.
- The second confrontation happens after the death of the High Priest, and is a victory. There is a moment of affirmation of the relationship between God and His children.

Peter and Christ:

- As Christ stands on trial before the Chief Priest and Pharisees, Peter denies Him. It is a moment of unfaithfulness on Peter's part – a failure – and he flees in the face of the opposition.
- When Christ appears after His resurrection Peter gets a second chance to reaffirm his faithfulness. He makes that vow to Christ to fight the good fight.
- Peter had his Hormah challenge.
- We can have challenges like Hormah in our lives, too.

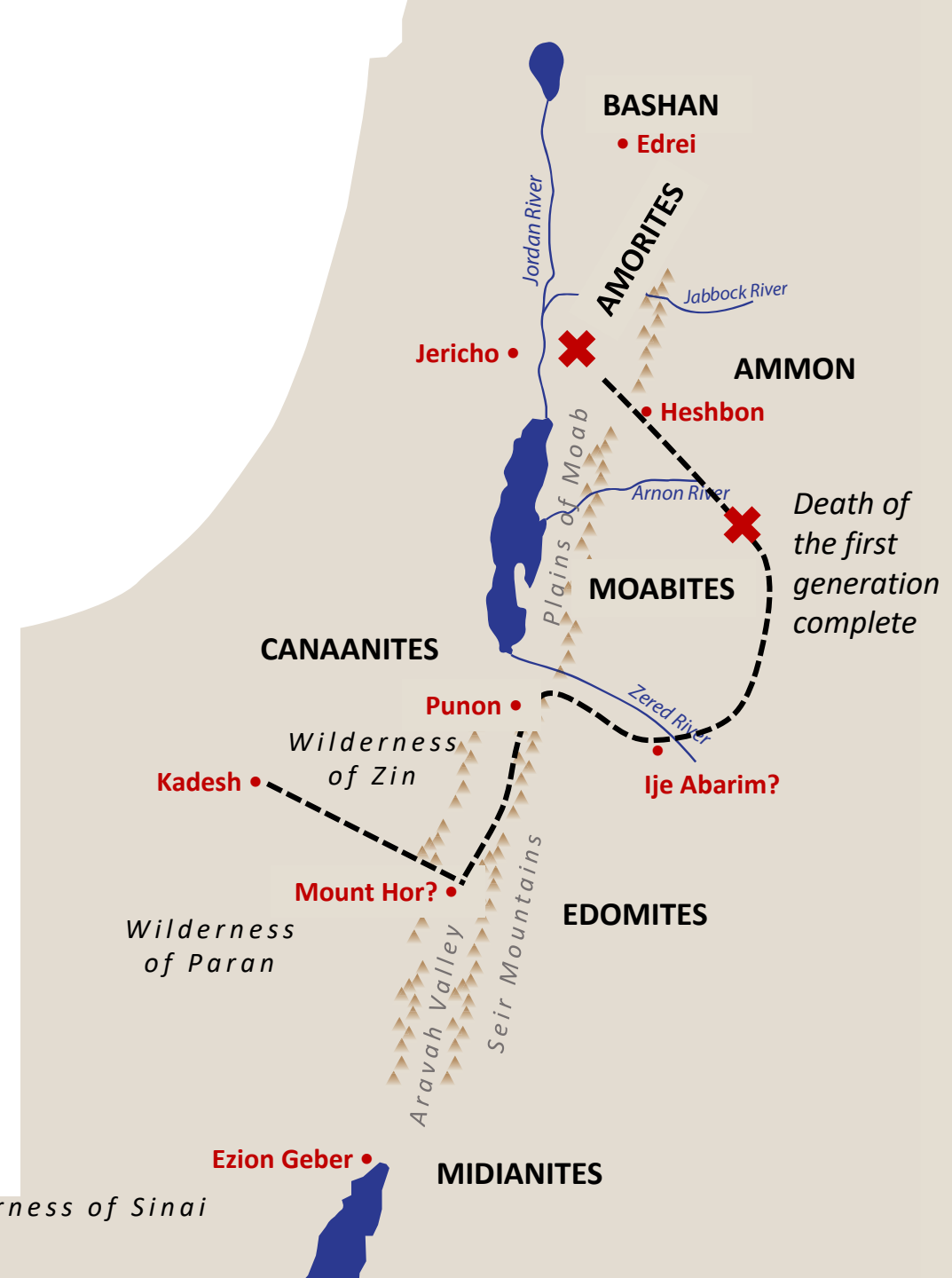
Moving On

Battle with King Sihon of the Amorites

Read Numbers 21:21-26.

- First battle that the **second** generation fights on their own.
- We sent **messengers** and were refused passage
- Lord delivered the enemy into our hands
- We take the cities and utterly destroy them
 - Main city of Heshbon and unfortified **villages**.
 - Destroy all men, women and children.
 - We took all **livestock** and material **goods** as spoil (Deuteronomy 2:34-35)

This land will become Reuben's inheritance



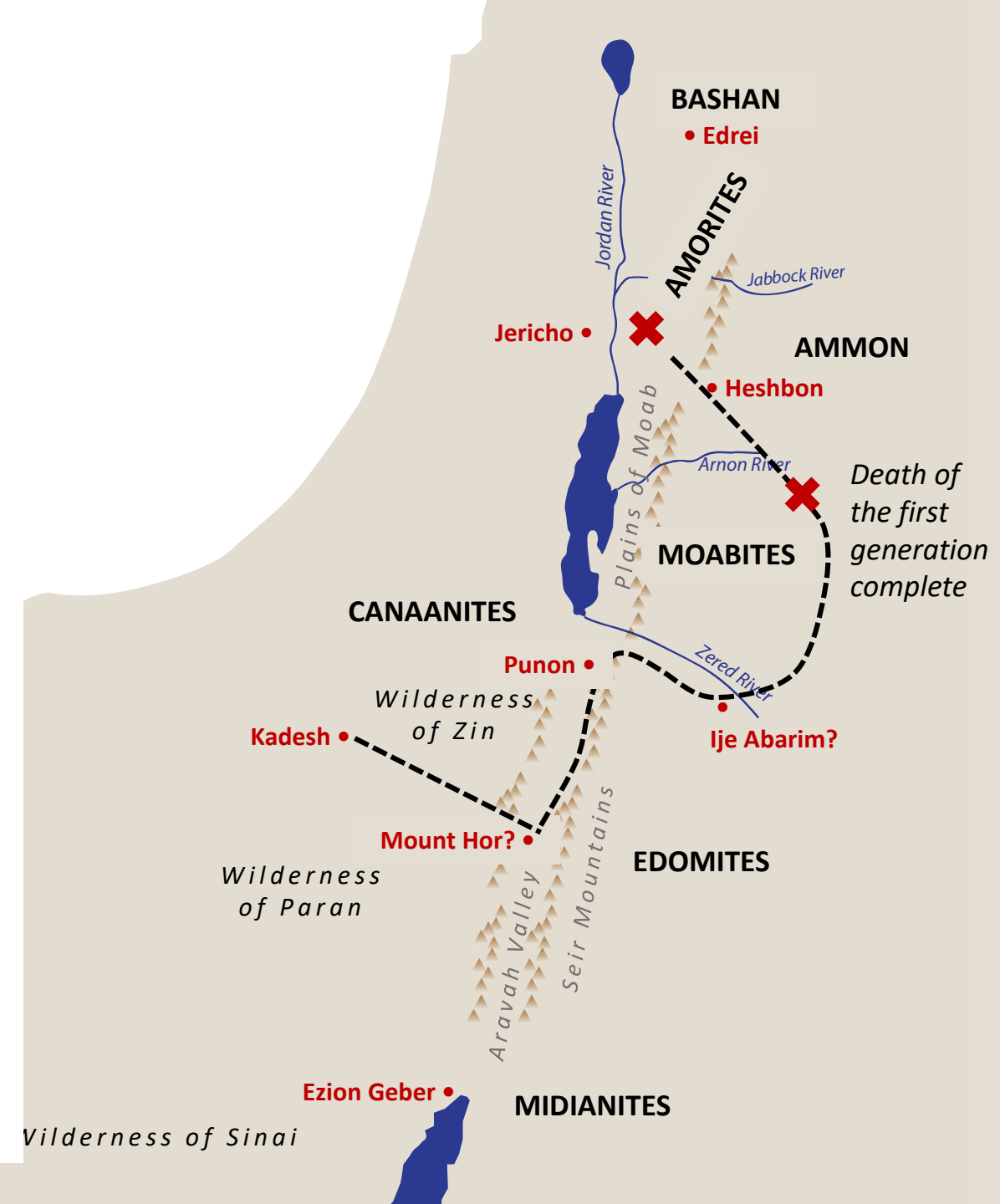
Moving On

Battle with King Og of Bashan at Edrei

Read Numbers 21:33-35/ Deuteronomy 3:3-11.

- This time we don't send messengers. The Lord tells us to go and we go.
- The Lord delivered the enemy into our hands.
- We take the cities and utterly destroy them:
 - Sixty **fortified** cities with high walls, gates and bars + many rural towns
 - Destroyed all the men, women and children.
- We took livestock and material goods as spoil
- King Og of Bashan was the last of the giants in the area

This land will become Gad and Manasseh's inheritance



The Enemy We Don't See: Balak, King of Moab

Chapters 22-24 are a distinct departure from the rest of the text because the focus shifts away from Israel and gives us a narrative of what is going on in the enemy camp in Moab.

While we are resting, the Lord Himself goes out to fight this battle for us against Balak, King of Moab. God is going to frustrate and restrain him in the most maddening and glorious fashion.

In this moment, the glory of the Lord truly shines, which is why I think this episode between Balak and Balaam is given a place in Numbers.

So often we forget just how glorious and sovereign the Lord is because we cannot see all the work He is actually engaged in and how He keeps our enemies at bay to give us periods of rest.

Balak, King of Moab

Read Numbers 22:2-6.

What do we know about Balak?

Balak is **afraid**.

- Balak judges only by what he **sees**. He sees a lot of people.
- Balak judges strength by **numbers**. Israel is strong in number.
- He is a worshipper of **Baal**, a god without **power**.
 - Baal has no mercy or concern for his people, unlike the God of Israel.
 - Baal makes no promises and keeps no promises to his people, unlike the God of Israel.
 - Baal is not a god you turn to when your national security is on the line, unlike the God of Israel.
- Balak assumes all gods are alike. He assumes the God of Israel has no power either, and certainly no concern for Balak himself.
- Balak fails to estimate the power of the God of Israel.
- He also fails to understand that Israel's God is actually looking out for Moab as well.

Balak, King of Moab

If Balak had known anything about the God of Israel...

- He would have known he had nothing to fear. God told Israel to leave Moab alone. Israel has no intention of invading Moab, but Balak imagines they are. If he were in their place, that's what he would do.
- He would have understood that the only reason he has been allowed to keep his land is because God is faithful to His promises. In Balak's eyes, his security is only in his own strength and wealth and influence
- He would have known God is the power behind Israel, and God is the power that Balak faces when he lifts himself up against Israel.
- The fear of *Israel* would not have overwhelmed him. The fear of *Israel's God* should have made him reconsider this fight.

Misplaced fear takes Balak, and he picks a fight with Israel over an imagined threat.

Balak, King of Moab

Why did the King of Moab seek out the elders of Midian as possible allies? (Numbers 22:4)

Moses' history with Midian

- When Moses fled from Egypt, he went to the land of Midian
- Lived with Jethro, the priest of Midian
- Married the priest's daughter, Zipporah, and had two sons by her. Zipporah and sons are traveling with Moses.
- Jethro was mentor to Moses.
- When Israel prepared to leave Sinai, Moses wanted his Midianite brother-in-law to come with them as a guide (Numbers 10:29-32)
- Moses has made some promises and a tentative alliance with Midian.

Enemy tactic: exploiting old loyalties

- Old loyalties can be a weak spot in our life and create a blind spot in our judgment.
- Old loyalties can compromise us.
- Old loyalties can be a tool that the enemy seeks to use against us.

Balaam

Why Balaam?

- Balaam is a **foreigner**. The name, Balaam, means “not of the people”. He comes from Mesopotamia.
- Balaam has no ties or **loyalty** to Israel. (He doesn’t have any loyalty to Moab either.)
- Balak assumes Balaam’s **faithfulness** can be negotiated and bought
- Balak assumes this soothsayer has power to **curse** Israel – just enough to weaken them.
- Balak assumes Balaam’s power is his to command.
- Balak assumes that Balaam has **integrity**.
 - First Balaam says “no” he won’t go and refuses the fee. When Balak promises honor and wealth and power, Balaam says “yes, but no promises.”
 - Balaam makes him jump through hoops with building 7 altars and offering sacrifices to a God Balak doesn’t even believe in.
 - Balaam makes a show of going off to inquire of God as if the answer may be different each time.

Change of Tactics

Each time the prophecy goes against Balak, Balak trots Balaam to the next high place, trying to get Balaam to “see” the problem. It’s Balak who doesn’t “see” the problem.

Balaam already knows what is going on. God has blessed Israel and there is nothing Balaam can say to change it. Balaam is restrained by a higher power. All that comes out of his mouth is glory to God.

Balak’s first scheme failed spectacularly. He sent a man to do a god’s job in cursing Israel, and came up totally frustrated. So now he is going to change his tactics.

This time he is going to use women to do the job. Sending in the women was actually Balaam’s idea. *(Numbers 31:16)*

"Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, ..."

Keep in Perspective

We are leaving the first generation's world and entering a new and novel world. We are part of a new generation.

- We have been out from under a foreign master's oppression for 40 years.
- Idolatry hasn't been seen in Israel in 40 years.
- We have been through 40 lean years and our cravings still plague us. We ache for a change. The physical lack of variety is going to create an opportunity for the enemy to tempt us with new and exciting pleasures.
- We are going to be faced with battles that the first generation never had to deal with.

We think we know our enemies.

- We took King Sihon's land. We took King Og's land. We have battled giants and won.
- It never occurred to us that Moab would be our enemy. In as much as it depended on us, we are living at peace with Moab.
- It never occurred to us that Midian would deal with us treacherously.

Old Tactics, New Setting

Read Numbers 25:1-5.

New Tactics: If you can't beat them, get them to join you.

- Infiltrate their ranks and compromise them.
- Play to their **cravings**.
- Draw them **outside** their camp with the promise of glorious living.
- Bring them into slavery to their **lusts**.
- Then bring them into slavery to your **god**.

The Women of Moab

- Beautiful, exotic, inviting
- They come on the heels of our victories, like a **reward** for our effort
- Offer **pleasures** and freedom from **restraint** and abstinence

We should know better than to fall for this. It's just a twist on an old tactic.

Circumstance have changed. The physical enemy has changed. The cravings are different.

But the spiritual enemy is the same. His tactics are the same. His goal is the same.

His goal is to sever our relationship with God

- God is our **identity**. Without God we are just nameless, faceless numbers.
- God is our freedom and **strength**. Without God, we are slaves and powerless.

A Wrong Beginning

Numbers 25:1 *“The people began to [**chalal**] commit harlotry with the women of Moab.”*

Chalal is a Hebrew word used to indicate when people have begun down the path to profaning themselves or being profaned.

Chalal indicates a throwing off of **restraint**, abandoning self-control, and giving way to desires. There needs only be an opportunity – an **opening** – for the corruption to begin.

Chalal: To begin, in the sense of opening a way for corruption; make a hole in something and thus ruin the perfection or health of the entirety; to be wounded or pierced and thus violated, profaned or polluted.

- In the way an infection begins in an open wound and defiles the body
- In the way a sickness finds an opening in our body’s defenses and weakens us
- Being both sexually and ritually profaned.

Chalal (figuratively): To play the flute for

Recognizing the Counterfeit

הלל

Halal, to praise or glorify

חלל

Chalal, to profane or violate

One gives glory to God. The other gives glory to a counterfeit of God. One takes us on a path to **glory**. The other takes us down a path to **destruction**.

The words sound the same. At first glance, the counterfeit looks a lot like the real thing. It can be hard to tell them apart.

A little joining of the leg and an act of true worship becomes a profane act masquerading as worship.

The words sound the same...

Israel: We worship God. He is like to a husband to us.

Moabite women: Our god is a husband-god as well.
(Ba'al means husband and master)

Israel: We offer sacrifices to our God.

Moabite women: We offer sacrifices as well.

Israel: We treat our bodies as holy vessels in service to our God.

Moabite women: We offer our bodies in service to our husband-god as well. Let's worship our gods together in great celebration and good will. Join with us!

They offer us the invitation (v2).

The words sound right, but when those words translate into actions, they are revealed as a twisted and profane act.

The Moabite women treat sex as an act of worship and a way of glorifying their god. Sex and sacrifice.

Recognizing the Counterfeit

Recognizing the counterfeit is the new challenge we are facing at this point in the journey. It is a test of our understanding of God if we can recognize the counterfeits.

In the physical journey, the Moabite women invite us to counterfeit **worship**.

In the spiritual journey, the counterfeit worship is introduced by **false** prophets, false teachers, and false apostles.

- Their purpose is to **deceive**. Their words may sound right, but their actions will be wrong. The inconsistency between their words and actions reveals their deceitfulness and corruption.
- Their purpose is to **exploit**. Their lifestyle will often revolve around the pursuit of sensual pleasures. They will use worship as a cloak for pursuing vices.
- Their purpose is to bring us into **bondage**.

- *Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*
- *Galatians 2:4 "...false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),"*
- *1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*
- *2 Peter 2*