

# Numbers 20-21

Bible Study

## Review

### Chapter 17

- Aaron and his sons are shown by God to be the legitimate priests
  - Aaron's rod budding by miracle in front of the ark
- The people react in an extreme way fearing death to approach the tabernacle

### Chapter 18

- God calms the fears of the people—the priests are responsible for the tabernacle if something is done in a wrong way
  - Support for the priests and Levites
  - Tithes—in return for their work and service

### Chapter 19—Red heifer

- Death the most unclean state—much death in the wilderness wandering
  - To sacrifice each time a death would be difficult
- A red heifer, female is killed outside the camp...the ashes are gathered and mixed with water to be used as a purifying agent
- This was the end of information given during 38 years of wandering—chapter 20 brings us to the 40<sup>th</sup> year

## Chapter 20

Israel has come to the 40<sup>th</sup> year of wandering

<sup>1</sup>Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, **and** the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

Israel has returned to Kadesh in their final year of wandering...nearly all those 20 years and older at the Exodus have died...Miriam now 130 years old dies as well—she was older than Aaron by possibly 10 or 15 years...later in the chapter Aaron dies [v. 29]

(JSB, Tanakh) “This is the first month of the 40<sup>th</sup> year according to 33:38, which places Kadesh before Aaron’s death in the fifth month of that year”

(NICOT) “As chapter 20 stands in the text, it consist mainly of a discussion of the reasons why Israel’s first-generation leaders were not able to go into Canaan.

It begins with a brief notice of Miriam’s death, followed by what was, in retrospect a death-sentence for both Moses and Aaron [v.12], and closes with the account of Aaron’s death”

Around mid-March

v. 1 (middle of verse)

“came into the wilderness of Zin, **in the first month**, and the people stayed in Kadesh”

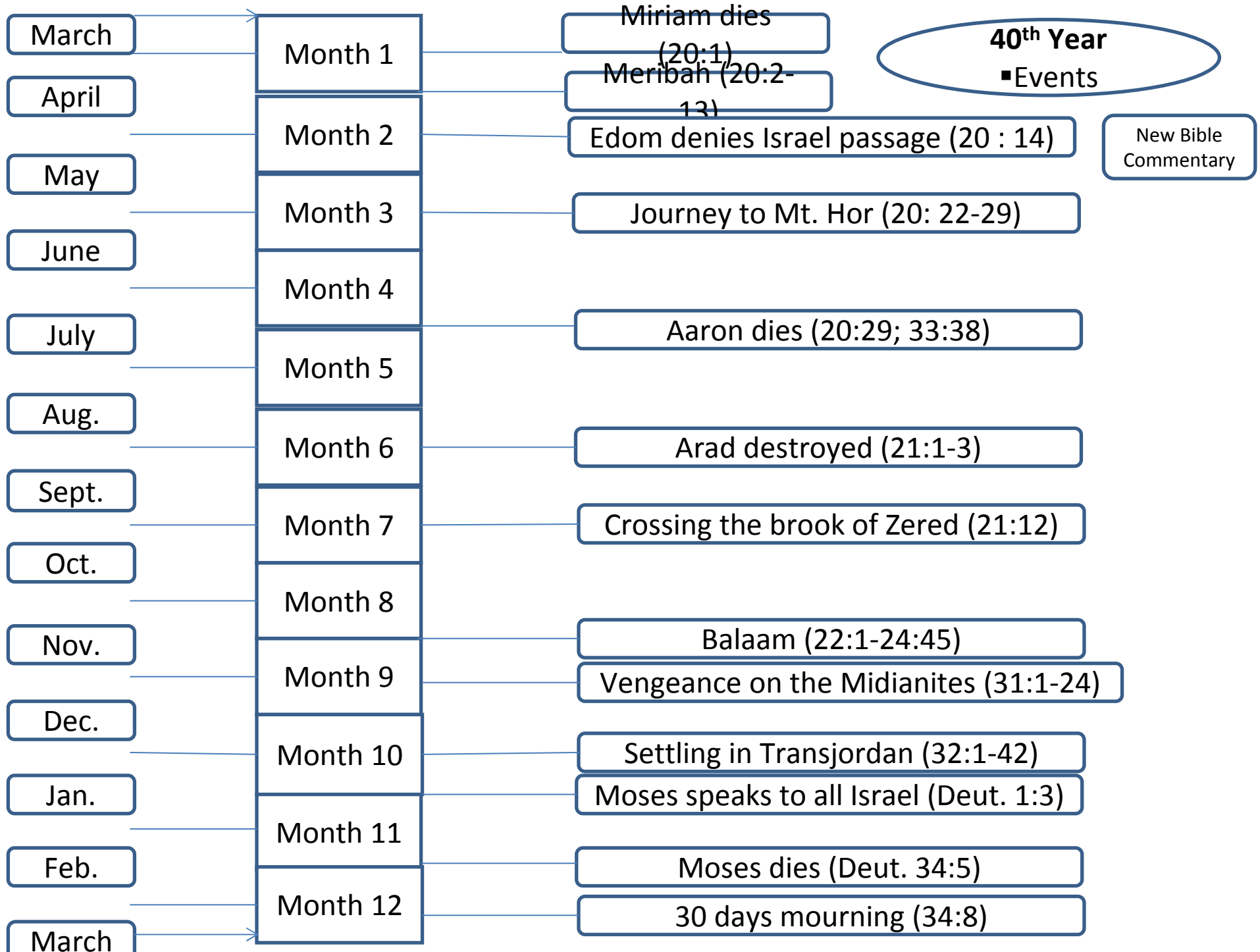
Numbers 33:36

<sup>36</sup>They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which *is* Kadesh.

Numbers 33:38

<sup>38</sup>Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there **in the fortieth year** after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the **first day of the fifth month**.

Around mid-July



<sup>2</sup>Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

<sup>3</sup>And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

<sup>4</sup>Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?

<sup>5</sup>And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It *is* not a place of grain **or** figs **or** vines **or** pomegranates; nor *is* there any water to drink.”

v. 2 “no water” kadesh had been a source of water but this time upon returning it was dry (JSB) “Some Rabbinic traditions connect Miriam to water, and find significance in the juxtaposition of Miriam’s death to the absence of water”

v. 3 “the people contended”  
This is now the younger generation complaining that their was no water—they are proving to be as rebellious as their parents [Ezek. 20: 13-18]

(New Bible Com.) “The desert years ended as they began, with complaining. It is possible now that the second generation was copying the ways of the first”

<sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

<sup>7</sup>Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>8</sup>“Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. **Speak to the rock** before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.”

<sup>9</sup>So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

God's glory appeared to Moses and Aaron because of the contention and told them to gather the congregation and with the (rod which had budded), to speak to the rock and water will come out

v. 8 “speak to the rock”

(BKC) “The rock in question was probably one from which springs ordinarily flowed and from which they had drunk many times in the past”

<sup>10</sup>And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them,  
“Hear now, you rebels! **Must we** bring water for you out of this rock?”

<sup>11</sup>Then Moses lifted his hand and **struck** the rock **twice** with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Although water did come from the rock, Moses did not do exactly as God had told him...he struck the rock twice instead of merely speaking to it

v. 10 “Must we bring water for you out of this rock”

Moses words suggest that he was bringing water out of the rock



<sup>12</sup>Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

<sup>13</sup>This *was* the water of <sup>£</sup>Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.

v. 13 “Meribah” = contention, strife

(NICOT) “This site is remembered by a place-name that memorialized this contention rather than the sin of Moses and Aaron”

v. 13 “He was hallowed among them”

(NICOT) “God showed his own holiness, separateness, power, everything that made him God—in two ways:

First, he showed it by giving water to his thirsty people and their animals.

Second, he judged the sin of his trusted leaders Moses and Aaron. In doing so, he showed that everyone must fulfill his commandments, even his leaders!”

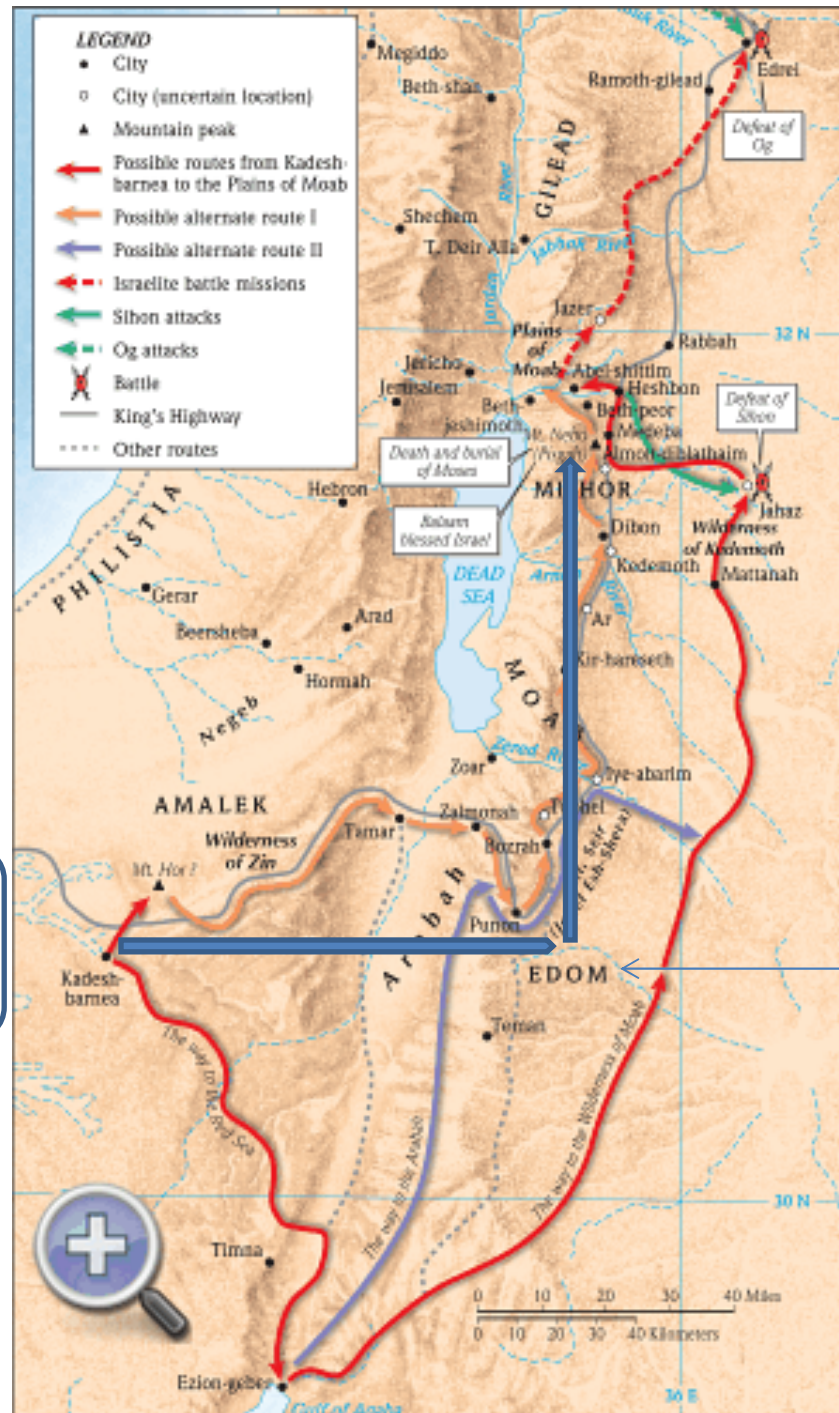
v. 14-21 Israel's request to pass through Edom—wandering is over the journey is about to begin

- <sup>14</sup>Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. “Thus says your brother Israel:  
‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us,  
<sup>15</sup>how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.
- <sup>16</sup>When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border.
- <sup>17</sup>Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.’”

Edom—called Edomites, were descendents of Jacob's brother Esau

Moses had a new strategy—instead of going through the south where they had been defeated before [14: 44-45]...

He decided to request from Edom, passage on the famous King's Highway, then go north to Moab, and cross the Jordan river from the east



Moses' plan was to go **east** through Edom and then **north**

Edom

<sup>18</sup>Then Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through my *land*, lest I come out against you with the sword.”

<sup>19</sup>So the children of Israel said to him, “We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing *more*.”

<sup>20</sup>Then he said, “You shall not pass through.” So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

<sup>21</sup>Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

<sup>22</sup>Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor.

### Edom denied Moses request

(Parallel) “Israel wanted to go east from Kadesh through the land of Edom, which included that area south of the Dead Sea. This request was denied, forcing Moses and the people to travel over fifty additional miles through a hot, barren and hostile desert”

### v.22 “came to Mount Hor”

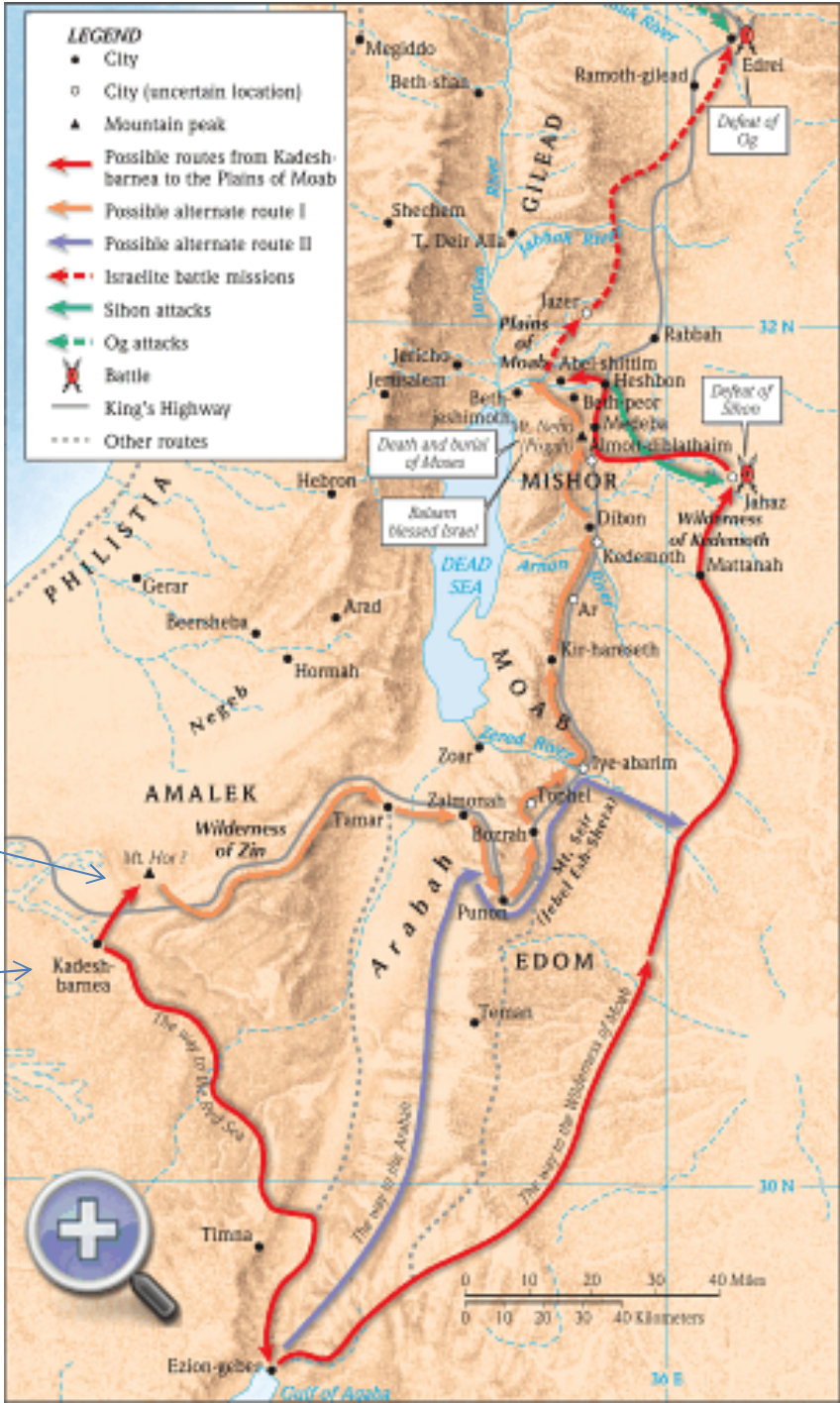
Mount Hor was located on Edom’s border, about 15 miles northeast of Kadesh

Israel turned away from Edom: 1) a brother nation 2) Edom probably had seasoned battle forces 3) Deut. 2: 4-5 God said: “don’t meddle with them”

v. 22 "...journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor"

Mount Hor

Kadesh



v. 23-29

Death of Aaron and appointment of Eleazar as high priest

<sup>23</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying:

<sup>24</sup>“Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.

<sup>25</sup>Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor;

<sup>26</sup>and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered *to his people* and die there.”

v. 24 A reminder of why Aaron would not enter the promised land—the rebellion at Meribah

“Aaron shall be gathered to his people”

(Expositors, notes) “is characteristic of the OT narrators, particularly when the death is of a notable person of faith in God”

- The death of Miriam earlier and now Aaron, signify the passing away of the first generation...Moses is left and he will die soon

<sup>27</sup>So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

<sup>28</sup>Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

<sup>29</sup>Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the **house of Israel** mourned for Aaron thirty days.

(Expositors) “Before Aaron died he was to see that his son Eleazar was his sure successor...three men ascended the mountain; two returned...the presumption is that Aaron was buried there by his brother and son”

(Parallel) “The death of Aaron marks the end of Israel’s wanderings. From this point on the nation either marched or halted, but did not wander.”

v. 29 “house of Israel”  
One of the 13 occurrences (5<sup>th</sup>) of the expression before the division of the two kingdoms (I Kings 12:17)

## Chapter 21

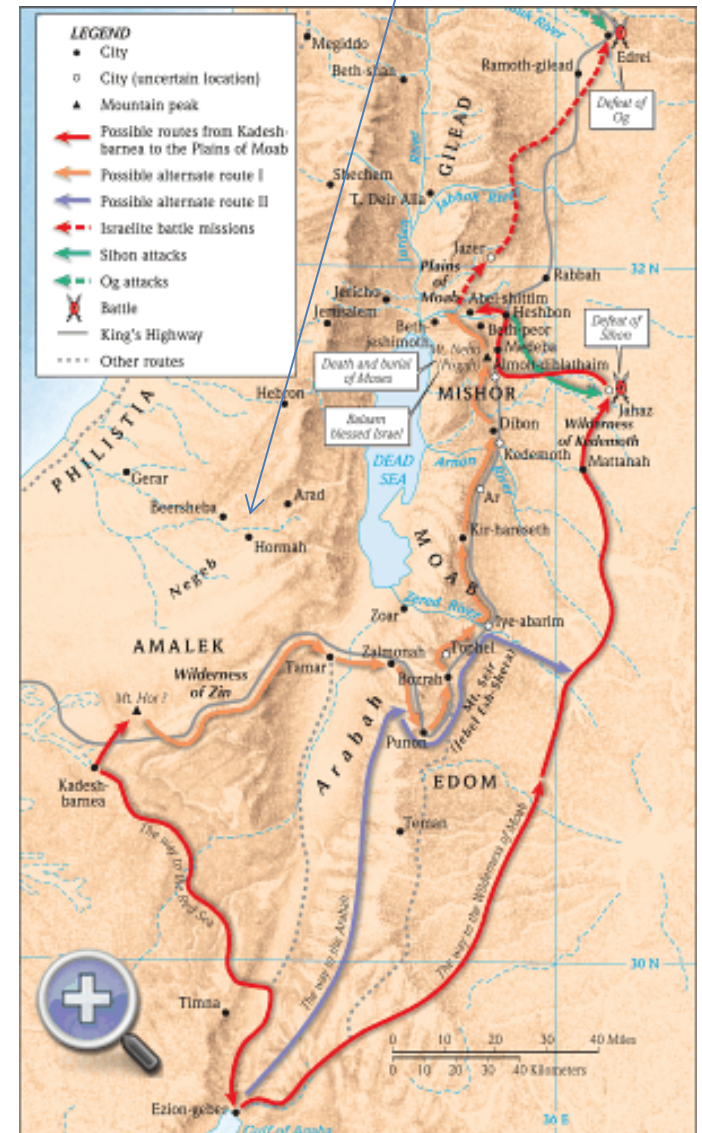
<sup>1</sup>The king of Arad, the **Canaanite**, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim. Then he fought against Israel and took *some* of them prisoners.

<sup>2</sup>So Israel made a vow to the Lord, and said, “If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.”

<sup>3</sup>And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of that place was called <sup>ε</sup>**Hormah**.

Hormah—means ‘utter destruction’  
This was the 1<sup>st</sup> victory over the Canaanites in the same place they had been defeated when they tried to enter Canaan without God’s help or guidance  
[Ch. 14:45]

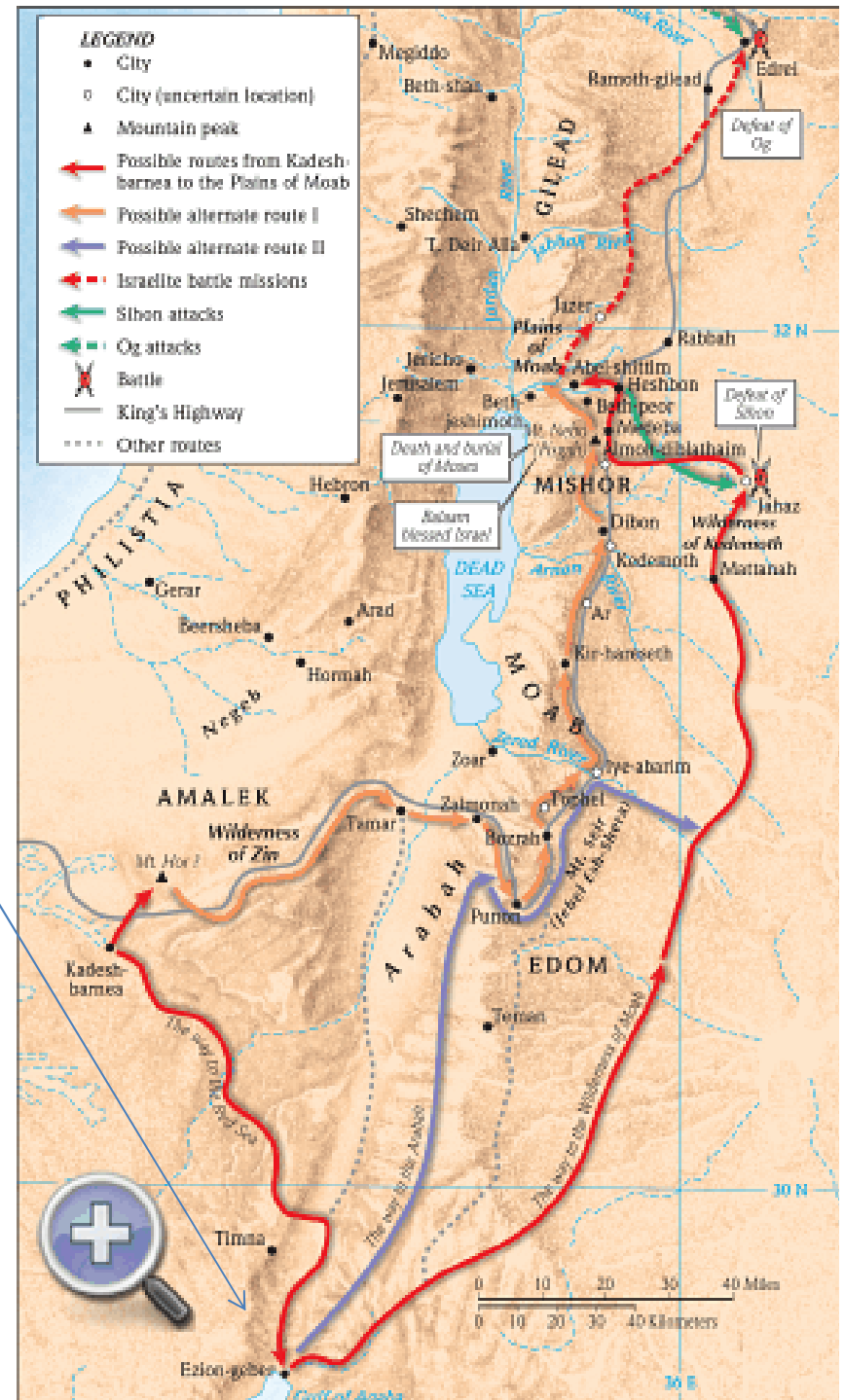
Hormah





4Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.

This route proved to be hard and difficult and they became discouraged (middle of the 40<sup>th</sup> year)



<sup>5</sup>And the people **spoke** against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.”

<sup>6</sup>So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

v. 5 The people become frustrated with the change of plans and directions –so they complain bitterly not only about the desert but the lack of food and water

They even claim the manna given by God to be ‘worthless’

Moses had been led by God to go this route and God sent (poisonous snakes) among them because of their complaining

v. 6 “fiery serpents”

(Companion) “These fiery serpents may have been so called from the burning sensation of their bite, or from their vivid, fiery color”

<sup>7</sup>Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>8</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

<sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Upon the people’s repentance God instructs Moses to put a bronze image of a serpent on a pole and for the people to look upon it to be healed

### **John 3:14-15**

<sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

<sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in Him should <sup>£</sup>not perish but have eternal life.

The bronze serpent was a type of Christ, who being lifted up in crucifixion....

- those who look to his sacrifice gives them life

## v. 10-20 Journey to Moab

<sup>10</sup>Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth.

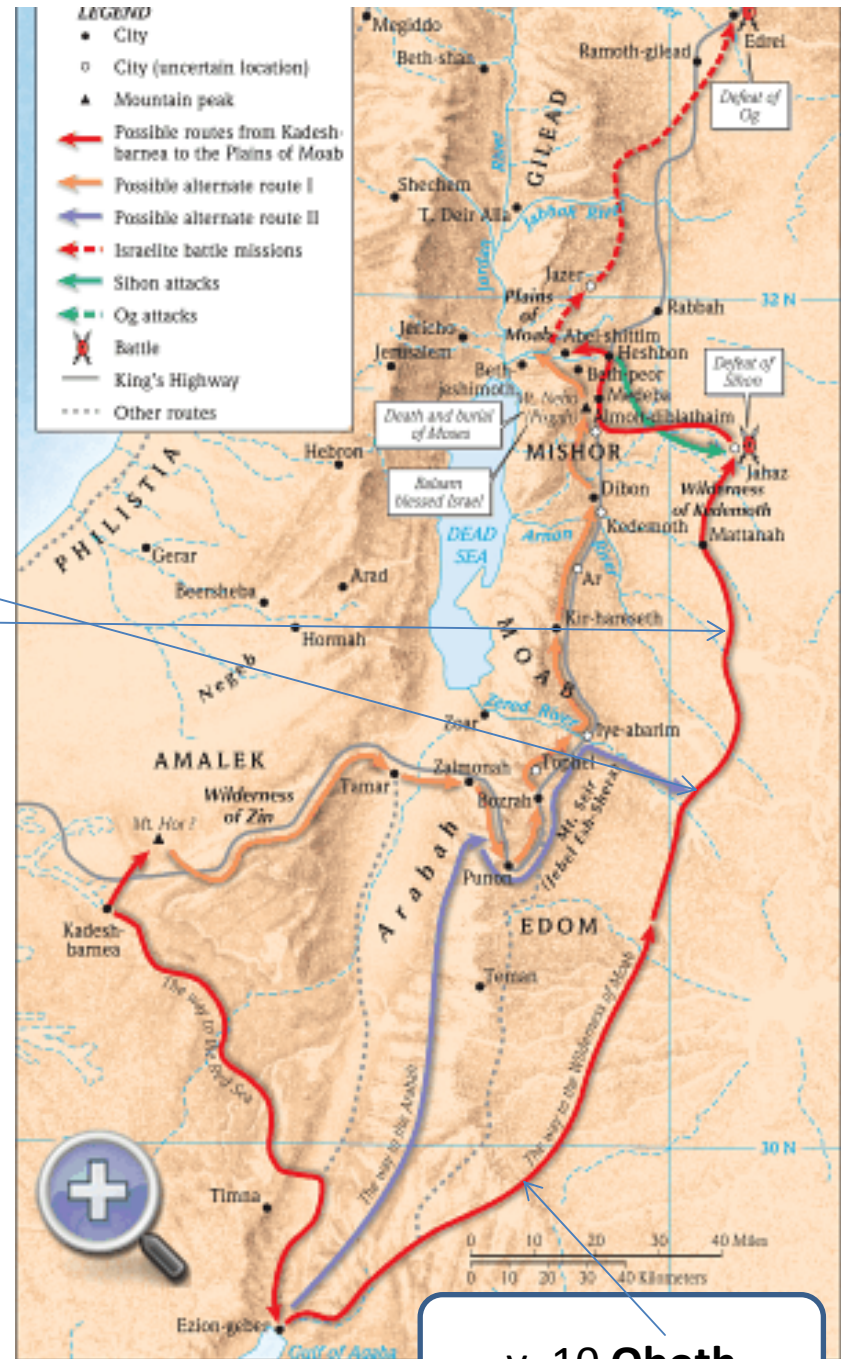
<sup>11</sup>And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which *is* east of Moab, toward the sunrise.

<sup>12</sup>From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered.

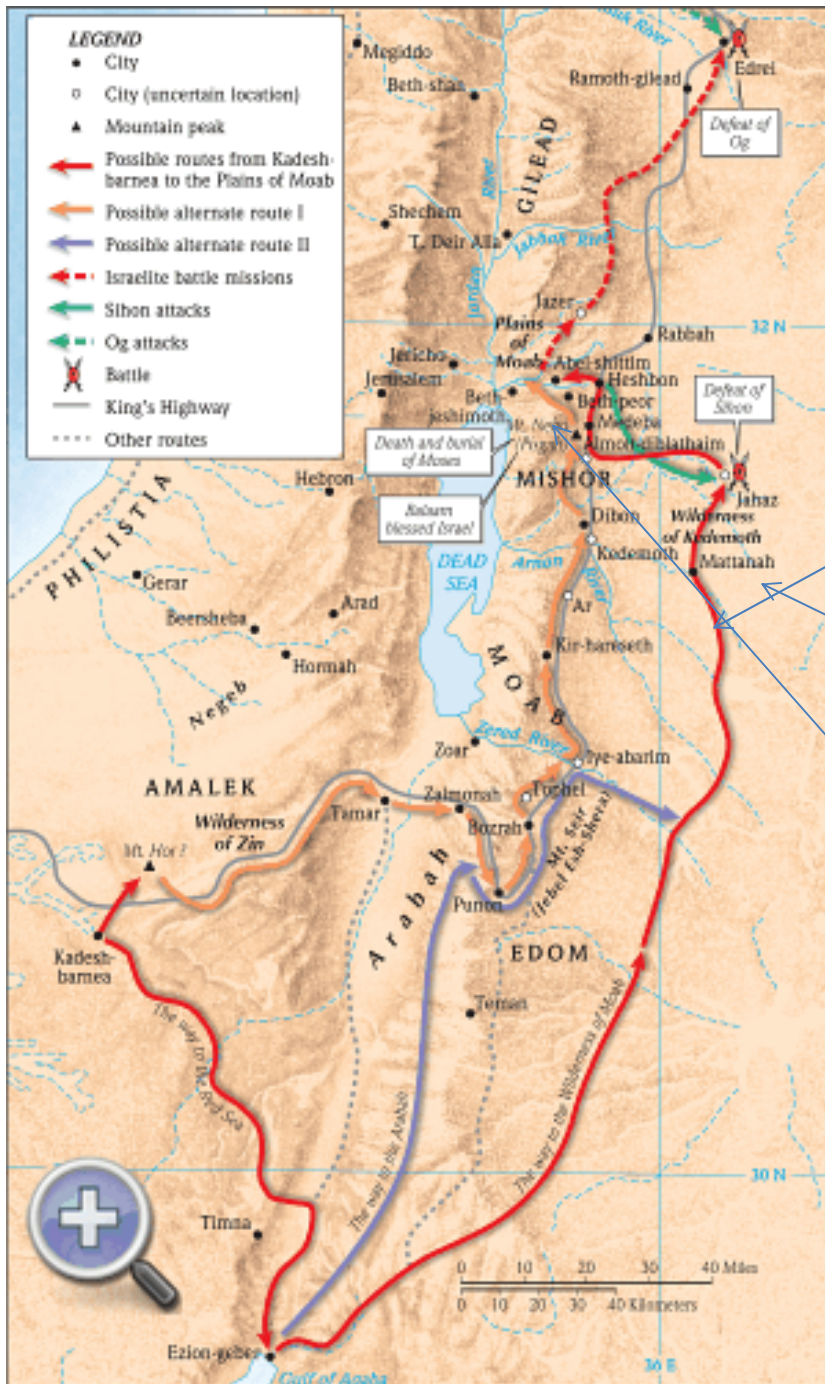
<sup>13</sup>From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which *is* in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites; for the Arnon *is* the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: <sup>£</sup>“Waheb in Suphah, The brooks of the Arnon,

v. 14 “Book of the Wars of the Lord” (LASB) “There is no existing record of the book...most likely it was a collection of victory songs or poems”



v. 10 Oboth



15 And the slope of the brooks That reaches to the dwelling of Ar, And lies on the border of Moab.”

16 From there *they went* to Beer, which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

17 Then **Israel sang** this song: “Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it—

18 The well the leaders sank, Dug by the nation’s nobles, By the lawgiver, with their staves.” And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah,

19 from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

20 and from Bamoth, *in* the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

## v. 21-35 Defeat of Sihon and Og

Israel was trapped between Moab and the Amorites—way to Canaan was barred

<sup>21</sup>Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying,

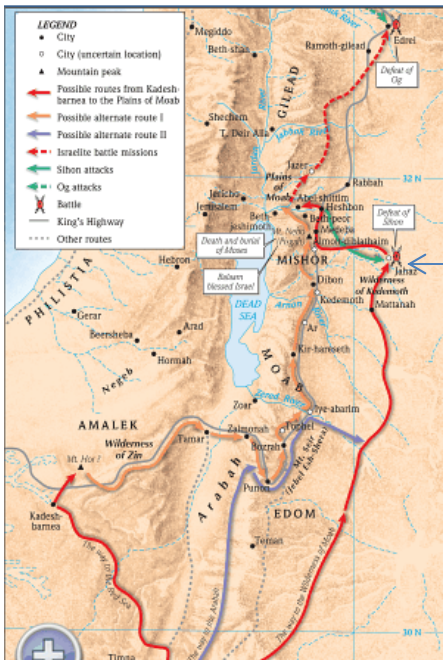
<sup>22</sup>“Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the King’s Highway until we have passed through your territory.”

<sup>23</sup>But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel.

<sup>24</sup>Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified.

v. 24 This time Israel did not turn away

Defeat of Sihon at Jahaz (v.24)



<sup>25</sup>So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages.

<sup>26</sup>For Heshbon *was* the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore **those who speak in proverbs** say: “Come to Heshbon, let it be built; Let the city of Sihon be repaired.

<sup>28</sup> “For fire went out from Heshbon, A flame from the city of Sihon; It consumed Ar of Moab, The lords of the heights of the Arnon.

v. 27-30 An ancient proverb/saying to mark this victory

(LASB) “How could this horde of wilderness wanderers successfully fight against Sihon’s well organized army?

1)The Israelites had already engaged in several military encounters (Ex.17:8; Num.21:1)

2)Moses was well trained in warfare from his days as an Egyptian prince

3)The people were prepared for war (Num. 1)

God had given the promised land to Israel. Any country that got in their way would be destroyed, for God who is mightier than any army, was with his people. Sihon was outmatched without knowing it”

<sup>29</sup> Woe to you, Moab! You have perished, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To Sihon king of the Amorites.

<sup>30</sup> “But we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon. Then we laid waste as far as Nophah, Which *reaches* to Medeba.”

<sup>31</sup> Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

<sup>32</sup> Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who *were* there.

v. 29 “Chemosh”

(LASB) “Chemosh, the national god of Moab, was worshipped as a god of war. This false god, however, was no help to this nation when it fought against Israel. Israel’s God was stronger than any of Canaan’s war gods”



v. 32-35 Og, King of Bashan—next enemy to be defeated

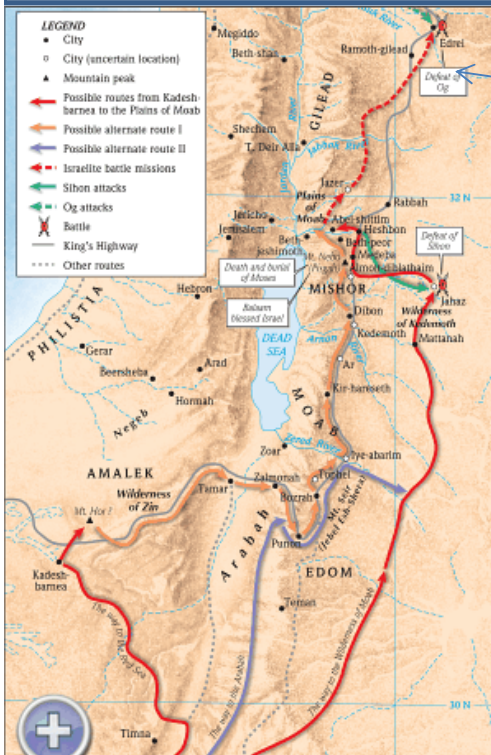
<sup>33</sup>And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. So **Og king of Bashan** went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.

<sup>34</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.”

<sup>35</sup>So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land.

v. 33 The battle of Edrei—defeat of Og

v. 34 God assured Moses that the battle was won even before it began



## Lessons

Moses and Aaron holding tremendous leadership positions were held to strict accountability

Because of their disobedience against God's words were told they would not enter the promised land—Aaron died at 123 years of age and Moses 120

We are never too old to be tested—we all have lessons to learn...no matter who we are or what position we have, we are not excused from obeying God

God sent poisonous snakes among the people because of their speaking against God and Moses

- Upon repenting God instructed Moses to put a bronze image of a serpent on a pole for the people to look upon and be healed

The bronze serpent was a type of Christ, being lifted up in crucifixion  
➤ Those who look to his sacrifice—gives them life

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### John 3:14-15

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