

Day 167 - FRIDAY: May 26th

Numbers 20

Numbers 20:1-29 NKJV

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. Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? 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." 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. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "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." So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. 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?" 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. 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." This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them. 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, how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. 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. 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.' " Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword." 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." Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him. Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: "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. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." So Moses did just as the LORD commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 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. Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states the following on this chapter:

“When the people arrive in Kadesh, decades have passed since the last chapter! Kadesh was the same location where Israel rebelled against entering the Promised Land. Back when the spies brought their evil report, God had told the Israelites they would be in the wilderness 40 years. These years have been long and bitter, with rebellion upon rebellion (compare Ezekiel 20:13–24). And now it is the 40th and final year of their wandering. Nearly all the people who were 20 years and older at the time of the exodus have died out. Miriam, at around the age of 130, dies as this final year begins (verse 1).

Sadly, those of the younger generation proved just as rebellious as their parents (Ezekiel 20:18–24). When they complained to Moses that they had no water, Moses and Aaron went to the tabernacle to ask God what to do. And God gave some straightforward instructions: Take the rod; gather the assembly; speak to the rock where the people

can see. That shouldn't have been too hard to follow. But Moses had finally had it. He was, after all this time, completely fed up with the Israelites--“You rebels,” he called them (verse 10). And while this was understandable, his anger got the better of him.

After so many years of being browbeaten by the people, Moses and Aaron, perhaps in a momentary lapse, became puffed up. Moses didn't say, "God will give you water." No, he said, "Must *we* bring water for you out of this rock?" (verse 10). And he *struck* the rock instead of speaking to it, just as he had done nearly 40 years before (see Exodus 17:6). Only this time, God had not told him to strike it. Nevertheless, he even struck it twice. God labeled this a lack of faith, saying, "You did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel" (verse 12). Apparently, then, it wasn't that Moses and Aaron didn't believe water would come out by merely speaking, but they didn't believe God's earlier warnings about the seriousness of following His instructions exactly. Or, perhaps more accurately, they didn't believe that these warnings applied to *them*—as if their closeness to God gave them some leeway. However, as they should have known, just the opposite is true. Those in leadership positions are held to *stricter* accountability—to

set the right example for everyone else. Moses and Aaron called the people rebels. Yet they rebelled against God's words themselves (verse 24; Romans 2:1). Neither would enter the Promised Land. Aaron died above their next encampment on Mount Hor at the age of 123 (verses 25–28; Numbers 33:38–39).

There is a vital lesson here for us. We are never too old to be tested. None of us are ever so perfect that we don't have lessons to learn. And no matter who we are or what position we have, we are not excused from obeying God—a fact the Israelites desperately needed to know.

Verses 14–21 of chapter 20 record Moses' attempt to negotiate peaceful passage through Edom's territory. He even offered to pay Edom for any of the land's resources they used in route. But Edom rebuffed Moses' offer. This is one of several acts of antagonism Edom shows toward the descendants of Jacob. Old grudges die hard, and sometimes they never do unless God intervenes.” [END]

Verse 12 – What a difficult lesson for Moses to learn. It's important that we learn from this example too. One of the lessons that jumped out to me is even if we have lived decades in service to God and His people, and been obedient, we must complete our race and never let up. The

race isn't finished until it's finished and we can lose out if we aren't faithful until the end (Hebrews 6:11–12). The people themselves learned a vital lesson as well. All of us can fail, even leaders. God shows no partiality. He didn't give Moses a pass in this situation, just because He had done so much to serve God.

Verse 13 – “Meribah” means strife or contention (BDB).

Verse 14 – John Gill's commentary states: “the Israelites and Edomites springing from two men, Jacob and Esau, who were twin brothers, and is observed to ingratiate themselves to the Edomites, and gain their request, pleading relation to them:”