

Hukat

חֻקַּת

“Regulation”

Numbers 19:1 – 22:1

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion tells of the sin that would keep Aaron and Moses out of the Promised Land, the death of Aaron and Miriam, and other events in the lives of the Israelites. It is possible that the events detailed in this portion cover a majority of the forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

1. The Water of Cleansing - 19:1-22

a) Describe the process for obtaining the ashes of the red heifer. What were the characteristics of a suitable animal? Where was it slaughtered? What was the role of the priest? Who gathered the ashes? What was done with them?

b) What was the ceremonial status of the men who participated in the process? What was done to correct this situation?

c) The ashes of the red heifer were called ashes of purification. What was their purpose? Exactly how were they to be used?

Ceremonial Cleansing

When a person came in contact with a dead body, he or she became ceremonially unclean.

The elaborate process described in the passage serves to further train the priests (and the people of Israel) to discern between clean and unclean. God clearly wants us to understand the importance He places on ritual cleanliness.

Red Heifer Symbolism

Compare the sacrifice of the red heifer with the sacrifice of *Yeshua*. For example, where were both sacrifices to be offered? What was the blood of each sacrifice to be used for? Can you find any other interesting parallels?

Why is this Passage Here?

In the previous chapter, we read about Korah's rebellion and the death of over 15,000 people. So there is a high likelihood that people would have come into contact with dead bodies. It seems appropriate that the description of the process required to cleanse a person after contact with a dead body be placed at this point in the narrative.

Scripture Link:

Does it seem unusual to you that the Israelites would again be complaining so soon after Korah's rebellion? It is possible that this event involved a new generation nearly 40 years after Korah's demise. By comparing **Numbers 20:22-29** with **Numbers 33:38**, one can conclude that the incident described in this passage occurred toward the end of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

d) What was the status of anyone who came in contact with a dead body? What were the rules when someone died in a tent? What process was followed to correct this?

e) What was the status of the one who sprinkled the water of purification? Does this seem logical to you? Can you see any symbolism in this process?

2. Water from the Rock - 20:1-13

a) Where did the events in this passage take place? At what time of the year did they occur? What important events occurred here?

b) What were the people complaining about in verses 2-5? Does this seem familiar? Were the same people as usual complaining? What did Moses and Aaron do?

c) What exactly were God's instructions to Moses and Aaron? What exactly did they do? How closely did they follow their instructions?

d) What was God's complaint to Moses and Aaron? What was the consequence of their actions? Does this seem appropriate to you?

e) Why was the name given to this place appropriate? How did God "show himself holy among them" (verse 13)?

3. Edom Denies Israel Passage - 20:14-21

a) Which direction were the Israelites headed when they sought passage through Edom? What lay ahead of them beyond Edom?

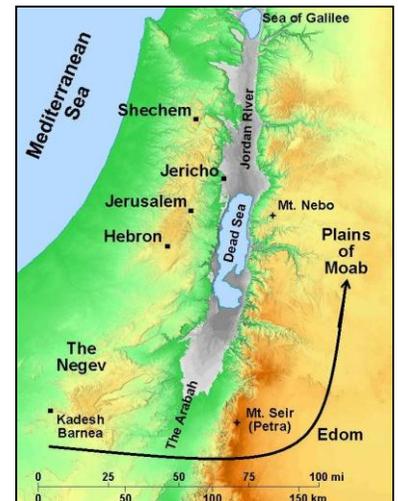
b) Why was it appropriate for Moses to identify the Israelites as the brother of Edom? What exactly did Moses request of them?

c) Why do you think the Edomites refused the Israelites passage? How did the Edomites back up their words? What did the Israelites do?

4. The Death of Aaron - 20:22-29

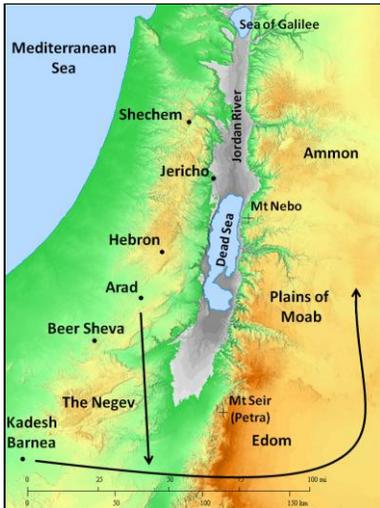
a) Where did the Israelites go after leaving Kadesh? Where was this in relation to Edom?

b) What did God tell Moses and Aaron would happen here? What was God's reason that Aaron would not enter the land? About how old do you think Aaron was at this time?



The Israelites headed east then north toward Moab and Ammon. Today Petra is located in Edom and the capital of modern Jordan is Amman, located in the ancient land of Ammon.

Why did the Israelites call themselves the brother of Edom?
Edom (which means "red") was the name for the land that Jacob's brother Esau settled after Jacob deceitfully obtained the blessing of the firstborn from their father, Isaac. To review, see **Genesis chapter 27, 32:3, and chapter 36.** Since Jacob (who became Israel) and Esau (who became Edom) were brothers, such terminology was appropriate.



As they traveled east toward Edom, the Israelites were attacked by the king of Arad. The small town of Arad still exists in Israel today and may be near the location where the king of Arad lived.

Always Complaining

Even after 40 years, it seemed like the Israelites were never able to break the habit of complaining. This was symptomatic of a deeper problem: distrust or lack of faith in God. However, God showed great patience with the Israelites and never stopped trying to teach them that they could trust in Him. How patient is our God!

c) Who went up on Mount Hor? What was done with Aaron's high priestly garments? Who came down from Mount Hor? What are your feelings about this story?

5. Arad Destroyed - 21:1-3

a) Where did the Canaanite king of Arad live? From which direction did they come to attack the Israelites?

b) What vow did the Israelites make to God at this time? Did they keep their vow? How was the name given to the place appropriate?

6. The Bronze Snake - 21:4-9

a) As the Israelites left Mount Hor, where were they headed? What did the people do? Has this happened before?

b) What was God's punishment for their rebellion? How did the people respond? Does this seem typical?

c) What were God's instructions to Moses to save the people? How was this response by God appropriate for the people's sin? Do you see any symbolism here?

7. The Journey to Moab - 21:10-20

a) Can you trace their path as the Israelites traveled around Edom? From what direction did they approach Moab? Can you locate the river valleys beside which they camped on a map? Can you locate any of the other places mentioned in this passage?

b) What do you think the “Book of the Wars of YHWH” was?

8. Defeat of Sihon and Og - 21:21 - 22:1

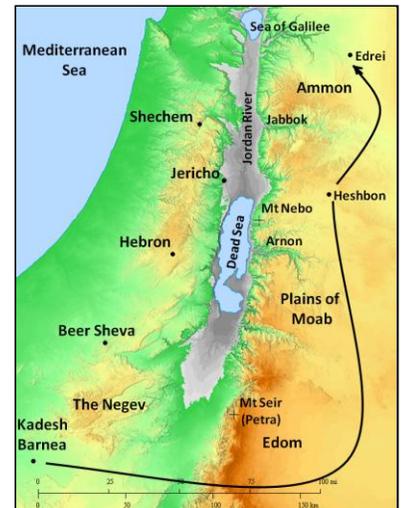
a) When the Israelites camped on the northern border of Moab, they faced two potential enemies, one to the northwest and one to the northeast. Who were they?

b) To whom did the Israelites send a message requesting passage through their land? Were they allowed passage? What happened? According to verse 31, what was the final outcome? How does this relate to Genesis 15:16?

c) Which direction did the Israelites go after the encounter with Sihon? Who did they encounter next? What was the result of this encounter?

d) Can you identify on a map the area of land that the Israelites occupied at this time? Do you know of other names for this area of land?

e) Where did the Israelites finally encamp after defeating Sihon and Og?



The Israelites traveled north through Moab toward Ammon, all in present-day Jordan. On the way they encountered Sihon, the king of the Ammorites at Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan at Edrei. They defeated both kings, took over their land and settled in it.

Digging deeper

1. **Numbers 20:9-12** records the story of Moses striking the rock at the waters of Meribah and God's displeasure with him. List some reasons that you think God might have been displeased with Moses. Do you think His punishment was harsh?

2. In **John 3:9-21**, Yeshua refers to the bronze snake that Moses put on the pole in **Numbers 21:4-9**. How does this passage from the *Brit Hadashah* relate to the Numbers story? Also, II Kings 18:1-4 tells what eventually happened to the bronze snake. Why do you think the bronze snake had to be destroyed?

In **Psalm 90**, Moses considers the plight of all human beings. In this short psalm, he notes the relative insignificance of our lives in comparison to God. It is a somewhat melancholy discourse on life, yet Moses prays for all of us that we might "sing for joy and be glad all our days." Moses' words seem fitting of an older man who is considering the end of his days on earth.

3. It has been suggested that **Psalm 90** was written by Moses after the deaths of Miriam & Aaron. Does this seem reasonable to you?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Judges 11:1-33

Brit Hadashah : John 3:9-21; 4:3-30; 12:27-50