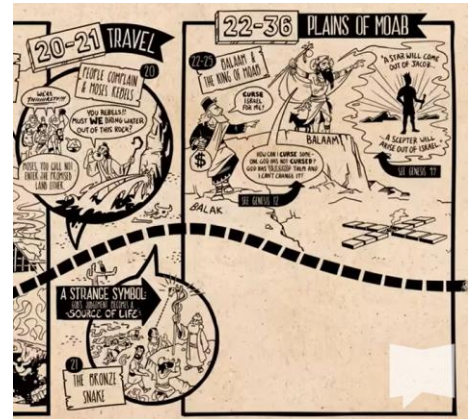
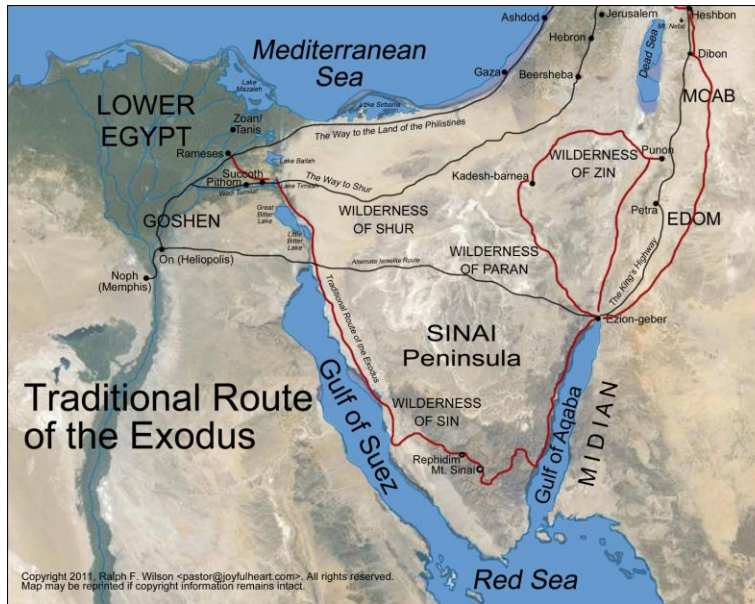


Sunday School Lesson

Numbers 20-24: On the Plains of Moab (February 16, 2025)



The Israelites are not traveling westward, up the verdant green eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, but eastward. They left the region of Paran and are now entering the Wilderness of Zin. Here Miriam, Moses' older sister, died and was buried.

Cycle of Complaints

- Israelites have shown no faith in God – variety of complaints, and wishing they were back in Egypt.
- In each case God graciously provided what they needed (not necessarily what they wanted).
- Consequence: because of their lack of faith in God, the Exodus generation will not get to enter the Promised Land.

Kadesh



- Now they complain of thirst. **Read Number 20:2-12.**
- Do you think Moses' action will be a problem?
- God, again, graciously provides: He tells Moses to speak to a rock to produce water. Moses chooses, instead, to strike the rock twice. This is an insult to Yahweh, that Moses would presume to decide for himself how to handle the situation. This is called the water of Meribah.
- Consequence: Moses, now, will not be allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Historical Blood Feuds

The Twelve Tribes were descendants of whom? _____

And who was the father's brother? _____

And, what is the name of the tribe descended from that brother? _____

The Israelites now need to pass through the land of Edom. What kind of reception can they expect? Read **Numbers 20: 14-21**.

God was not pleased with Edom's response to the needs of His Israelites. Read **Ezekiel 25:12-14**.

Aaron's Death

- The Israelites journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor (Mt. Hor is actually two mountains, about a day's journey from Kadesh and between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea.)
- Moses took Aaron and Aaron's son, Elëāzār, up the mountain.
- In a solemn ritual Moses took Aaron's priestly clothes off him and put them on Aaron's son.
- Aaron, Israel's first high priest, died and all people mourned for 30 day.

Conflicts

- Canaanite king of Arad at Hormah (= "Destruction"). Read **Numbers 21:1-3**.
- Sihon, king of the Amorites at Jahaz, refused passage. Read **Numbers 21:21-26**.
(The Arnon stream comes to the Dead Sea from the east side.)
- Og, king of Bashan, refused transit.

Fiery Serpents

- Camping across the Jordan from Jericho, there was more complaining from the people. So, God sent fiery serpents; many people were bitten & died.

- The people repented and begged for mercy.
- Moses prayed and God told him to make a bronze serpent on a pole that, when raised, the people could see it and live.

Read **John 3:14-16**.

- That snake on a pole became a problem later, in King Solomon's time.
Read **2Kings 18:4**.

Balak and Balaam

- Balak, king of Moab, son of Zippor, and the elders of Midian called for Balaam. A Gentile seer, to come curse the Israelites.
- Balaam had the messengers stay overnight. (This meeting was so significant that it is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11, and Revelations 2:14.)
- Balak sent a larger contingent of more prominent messengers to Balaam. Balaam had them stay overnight, while he waited for God to direct him.
- Balaam knew full well that God did not want him to go, but Balaam kept pushing. So, this time God told Balaam to go with them, but only do what I/God tell you to do – God was not going to let Balaam hurt His people
- Is God paying attention to this meeting between Balak and Balaam? What do you think is going through Balaam's mind?
- Balak was upset that Balaam was slow to come help. Balaam said, "Well, I have come to you now," Balaam replied. "But I can't say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth." (Even as a Gentile, he had respect for the reputation of Israel and their God.)
- Balaam had Balak build seven alters and together they sacrificed a bull and a ram on each (was Balaam hedging his bets with God?).
- What pronouncement did Balaam make? The "curse": Numbers 23:7-
- Not at all happy, Balak took Balaam to two more places for curses, but each time Balaam blessed the Israelites!
- The fourth "curse": Numbers 24:10-25. (These prophecies that Israel would conquer Moab and Edom came true in David's reign some 300 years hence.)

Summary:

- Note how in each instance, God overruled attempts to bring evil on Israel and turned the curse into blessing.¹
- In times of troubles, God provides what we need (not necessarily what we want).
- There are consequences for not following God's instructions.
- "There is a lesson here for the Church to learn. What kind of reputation do we have as a people of God? What does it take to stop us from accomplishing His purpose? Just how unstoppable are we? The world is watching."²

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5. Rudolph, Rev. Kevin, The Bible Tour Guide, Rich Publishing Co, Houston, TX, Day 54.
6. Free on-line commentaries:
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¹ Philip, p. 261.

² Rudolph, Day 54.