

# Show Me Your Glory

## Lessons from the Life of Moses

### Lesson 16

### Numbers 20

#### *Day One:* Moses' Error at Kadesh

Timeline for the Wilderness Wanderings: *during the first month the Israelites traveled from Rameses to the Desert of Sin (Ex.12:31–16:1). They spent one additional month trekking to Mt. Sinai, where they stayed put for eleven months (Ex. 16:2–Num.10:11). From there they journeyed for a little more than a month until they reached Kadesh Barnea, where they spent about six months (Num.10:12–19:22). After their departure from Kadesh Barnea (Deut. 2:14), the Israelites' precise whereabouts during the next 37 years and four months is unknown. After this period of silence they returned to Kadesh Barnea and during the following year forged ahead to Canaan by way of the Transjordan. (Excerpt taken from NIV Archaeological Study Bible; Zondervan, 2005.)*

Read Numbers 20:1–29. Today our study will focus on verses 1–13.

The children of Israel had begun their wilderness wanderings at Kadesh (Num.13:26), and would now end them there. Miriam, who was well advanced in years, died and was buried there. In the first month of approximately the fortieth year after the exodus, the people of God arrived at the border of the Wilderness of Zin and stayed in Kadesh. If that location sounds familiar it is because it was there that the people had refused to enter the land of Canaan (Num.13:26) and where God had decreed that those who complained against Him were destined to die in the wilderness (Num.14:26–30).

1. In your own words, describe the familiarity of the scene depicted in verses 2–5.

Where was the land of abundance the people had heard so much about? Where were the promised figs, vines, and pomegranates? Once again from every direction Moses heard the complaints of God's people. Shouldn't this younger generation have learned from the disastrous mistake of their parents?

2. Initially, what prudent move do Moses and Aaron make? v. 6

3. What does the Lord command them to do? v. 8

4. Moses and Aaron gather the congregation together before the rock. Revealing his anger and frustration with the people, how does Moses address them? vv.10–11
  - a. What do *you* think Moses' words reveal about his heart?
  - b. Instead of speaking to the rock as God had instructed Moses to do, what surprise move does Moses make?
  
5. What sentence does the Lord pronounce on their disobedience? What reason does God give for this severe discipline? v.12

*Selah . . .*

Do *you* think God was being too harsh with these two men? Please explain.

The first time God miraculously provided water for His people Moses called the place Massah and Meribah, meaning *testing* and *quarreling* (Ex.17:7). This time he named it Meribah, meaning *to strive*. Aaron agreed with Moses, sharing his judgment (20:24). (Note: we'll continue our look at Moses' error on *Day Four* of our lesson.)

*Heartbeat . . .* “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” Psalm 103:10

## *Day Two:* Just Passing Through

Read Numbers 20:14–21.

The years of wandering were drawing to a close for the nation Israel. Nearing the end the people pressed north, desiring to pass through Edom on the king's highway, which was the main road used for business travel. Edom had a long history with Israel—the people of Edom were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Genesis 36:1). Moses uses diplomatic means to remind the Edomites of God's dealings with His people and to request permission from the ruler to pass through the land.

1. Moses dispatched messengers to the king. Of what did they remind him in the following verses?

- a. v.14
  - b. v.15
  - c. v.16
2. How does Moses convey his understanding for the concern of allowing two million people to traverse the land? v.17
  3. What was the king's reply to Moses? vv.18–20
    - a. Moses offers to restrict their passage to the highway and do what for the king?
    - b. How did Edom reply to the second offer?
    - c. What was Israel forced to do?

Israel's plea was one of exiles in a strange land for a long time—they just wanted to get home! It was a reasonable request, and one that Moses made safe for Edom to grant, but Edom came out against God's people in a show of force and with the sword.

### *Selah . . .*

Just like God's children wandering in the wilderness, Christians today have little to ask from the world for themselves, except to pass peaceably and safely through on our journey to our heavenly home. The Bible teaches us that we are not simply to refrain from doing evil, but to do some good as we sojourn: "*You are the salt of the earth*"; "*You are the light of the world.*"

- ❖ Share a recent example of how the "world" has rejected you or treated you unfairly. How did you handle it? How were you *salt* and *light*? Please explain.

*Review this week's memory verse.*

## *Day Three:*            The Ministry Continues On

The entire community of Israel left Kadesh, turning away from Edom and toward the direction of Mt. Hor. Since both Moses and Aaron had sinned against the Lord when Moses smote the rock, God had declared that neither of them would enter the Promised Land. It was time for Moses to say good-bye to his beloved brother and ministry companion, and a new priest would be anointed for service.

Read Numbers 20:22–29.

1.     God calls Moses and Aaron up to Mt. Hor where the aging high priest would take his final breath.
  - a.    State once again the reason for Aaron's death. v. 24
  - b.    God instructs Moses on the graceful transfer of power that is to take place. Who will inherit the position and how will it be done? vv. 25–26

As the holy garments were removed from the father and placed on the son, it must have comforted Aaron to see his son dressed in the robes of his appointed office as high priest. Aaron died there somewhere on the mountain and we can assume that his brother and son buried him there. Aaron's death foreshadowed that of his brother's and further marked the passing away of the first generation.

2.     How long did the house of Israel mourn the death of Aaron, signifying his importance to the nation? v. 29

No one is indispensable to the ministry. The people had lost the man, but they had not lost the priesthood. The God-ordained position Moses occupied was temporary, but the divine office Aaron held as high priest was permanent, meaning it would pass on to his heirs. There were no duties that Aaron had performed which Eleazar could not do as well, and so the holy service was perpetuated from one generation to the next.

### *Look closer . . .*

In the New Testament, the service of the priesthood is assumed by the believers in the church (1 Peter 2:9). The Apostle Paul taught Timothy, his son in the faith, expecting him to pass on God's Word to others. What were Paul's words to him in 2 Timothy 2:2?

- ❖ Can you think of someone who has modeled Christ's example for you to follow?
- ❖ Is there someone you have taken under your wing to instruct in the ways of God? Will you pray for them today?

## *Day Four:*

## A Severe Discipline

Reread Numbers 20:1–13 for review.

Some people will consider this discipline of Moses and Aaron very troubling; others will think it unreasonable. We have to remember their unique roles; each at times functioned as mediator between God and the people. It was, therefore, critically important that they also demonstrated complete obedience to God because they represented Him.

As in previous verbal assaults hailed at Moses and Aaron, they went to the *tabernacle of meeting* and fell on their faces in the Lord's presence.

1. Look carefully at verse 8. What does the Lord's response tell *you* about His feelings at this moment for His people?

God appeared in glory once more at the tent door, but this time He did not express anger, judgment, or discipline toward the people. There was only a gentle word from the Lord for Moses to take his rod (the same rod with which he performed the wonders in Egypt) and go with Aaron to speak to the rock, and it would bring forth water for the thirsty nation.

2. Contrast the difference between Lord's words for the people with Moses' words for them in verse 10.

The Lord was not angry with the people, but Moses certainly was! He'd had enough of their murmuring; he was fed up with their complaints! He had just buried his sister and was still mourning over her loss. It was a very vulnerable time for Moses and his anger got the better of him. Unfortunately, he let that anger cloud his judgment, causing him to misrepresent the Lord and he would have to pay dearly for it.

### *Look closer . . .*

Let's take a close up look at a couple of the lessons we can learn from Moses' mistake.

Lesson #1: *Disobedience is grounded in unbelief.*

- God told Moses that he disobeyed Him "*because you did not believe Me*" (20:12). This time God did not judge the people—He judged Moses for being determined to do things his own way, believing his plan was better.

- ❖ Personal application: Are you in a situation right now and you know what the right way—God’s way—is, but you believe you might have a better plan? Be careful! Your plan may be grounded in unbelief. Ask God to show you. Please jot down your personal thoughts.

Lesson #2: *Disobedience diminishes God’s glory.*

- God’s word to Moses was “*you did not believe Me to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel*” (20:12). In other words, Moses’ disobedience lessened or weakened the Lord’s holiness in the eyes of the people.
- Moses was never able to completely control his anger, and ultimately his misrepresentation of God kept him out of the Promised Land.
- ❖ Personal application: Do you perhaps have an *unbroken habit* (such as anger) that has brought reproach upon the name and glory of Christ? If so, you must confess it—forsake it—and receive God’s forgiveness before you incur the consequences from it. Whatever you sow, the Scripture says, you will also reap. Make note in the space below what the Lord ministers to your heart.

King David, the great psalmist of Israel, once prayed: “*Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression*” (Psalm 19:12). Will you make this your prayer today?

*Review this week’s memory verse.*

*Day Five:*

## Praying with Purpose

**Selah . . .** Be still and consider how to *work out* in your daily life what God has *worked into* your heart through your study of His Word. Then pray each aspect through.

❖ **A Point Pondered:** Is there an example from the lesson or a truth from Scripture that has taken on a new meaning this week? Please note it below.

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❖ **A Path Pursued:** Knowledge must be applied in order to make a difference. Name one thing you can act upon in obedience to the Holy Spirit's leading.

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❖ **A Promise Possessed:** If God has spoken a particular verse or word of hope to your heart, write it down and pray it back to Him.

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❖ **A Praise Proclaimed:** God loves to hear you praise Him! What aspect of God's character particularly blessed you this week? Will you praise Him today?

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❖ **A Prayer Presented:** Write out the most pressing request on your heart and lift it to the Lord.

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**Other requests:**

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## Notes