

## LESSON ONE

# BEFORE THE CONQUEST

### A. AT KADESH-BARNEA:

When the children of Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea the first time, God instructed Moses to send out twelve men, one from each tribe, to act as spies. These twelve spies spent forty days going as far north as Rehob. When they returned all agreed that the land was fertile but only Caleb and Joshua asserted that they could take the land with God's help. The other ten spies claimed that it would be impossible to take and possess Canaan.

When the people listened to and believed the report of the ten spies, God threatened to annihilate Israel in punishment. However, Moses interceded and God changed the nature of the punishment. God stated that the entire nation would remain in the wilderness for a total of forty years. They were to stay there for one year for each day that the spies spent in Canaan, and that every Israelite, twenty years and older, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:20-35).

Israel now began a wandering in the desert for approximately thirty-seven and a half years. During these years they moved about in a confined area going as far south as the northern tip of the Gulf of Aquaba, about eighty-five miles in distance. Some sixteen stopping places are listed within this area. Very likely much of the time was spent at Kadesh-Barnea. They were definitely at Kadesh-Barnea at the beginning of the fortieth year for it was here where Miriam died (Numbers 20:1).

During this thirty seven and a half years plus the fortieth year, or thirty eight and a half years, one million, two hundred thousand men and women had to die (600,000 of both men and women). This meant that they averaged 85 funerals per day. Thus they were constantly reminded of the judgment of God upon them because of unbelief.

They were here at Kadesh-Barnea when the fortieth year began. After thirty-seven and a half years they were at the same place, had gone nowhere, and had accomplished nothing. It was thirty-seven and a half years wasted.

### B. THE DEATHS OF MIRIAM AND AARON:

In passing judgment upon Israel God had made exception for only Caleb and Joshua. This meant that even the members of the head family had to die before Canaan could be possessed. However, Miriam, Aaron and Moses were permitted to live until the fortieth year, or the final year of wandering in the wilderness.

Miriam died in the first month of this year at Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 20:1) and Aaron died five months later at Mount Hor at the age of 123 years (Numbers 33:38). God instructed Moses to accompany Aaron and Eleazar, Aaron's son and successor, to the top of the mountain. He took Aaron's clothes and placed them upon Eleazar, and they, alone, came down the mountain. Aaron died on the top of the mountain. The people mourned for Aaron for thirty days.

**C. THE SIN OF STRIKING THE ROCK THE SECOND TIME: (Numbers 20:2-13).**

At Kadesh the people lacked water once more. When they complained to Moses he took the matter to God. Moses was instructed to bring water from the rock as he had done at Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-17). However, this time he was instructed to speak to the rock; nothing was said about striking it.

Apparently the patience of Moses was being exhausted for here he did a very foolish thing. Instead of speaking to the rock he struck the rock twice and cried out to the people, "*Shall we bring you forth water out of this rock?*" In this act he displeased the Lord very much and God pronounced judgment that he would not be permitted to enter the Promised Land.

We need to understand the seriousness of the sin committed by Moses here. In this act he was guilty of the following:

1. He disobeyed God;
2. He had made it appear that through his own human efforts he had produced water;
3. He broke the type. Christ as the Rock (I Corinthians 10:4) was smitten only once at Calvary. One needs only to speak to Him to receive the water of life.

We should remember that it is impossible to commit a similar sin today (Hebrews 6:4-6).

**D. THE REQUEST TO PASS THROUGH EDOM DENIED: (Numbers 20:14-21).**

At Kadesh Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom asking permission to travel through his land. His plan was to go around the southern end of the Dead Sea and march north to the east side of the Jordan River. Moses promised to travel on the King's Highway. This was an ancient road that was well known. This was an easier and shorter route but the King of Edom refused. By his refusal they had to travel south and then north. It is estimated that the children of Israel had to travel some 180 miles extra.

Moses did not interfere with the Edomites and traveled around their territory. Moses also skirted the land of Moab.

Moses now requested permission to travel across the kingdom of Sihon. When the king of Sihon refused, Moses defeated him and occupied this territory to the Jabbok River. Moses then took the offensive and defeated Og, king of Bashan, who ruled as far north as Mount Hermon.

Israel now controlled most of the land east of the Jordan River from Moab in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, a distance of 130 miles.

**E. BALAAM: (Numbers 22-27).**

With these victories won, Moses assembled Israel near the Jordan River across the river from Jericho. Balak, king of Moab, became concerned, and sent messengers to Balaam, a prophet who lived in the far north. He requested Balaam to come south and curse Israel.

Balaam refused to go but finally was persuaded. However, instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blessed Israel. Balaam could not curse Israel, but he gave advice how Israel could be defiled and weakened. Through his advice the Israelites were ensnared in the cult worship of Baal-peor. As a result God punished Israel by sending a plague which took 24,000 lives. The plague was topped only when Phinehas, son of the high priest, Eleazar, slew an Israelite man

and a Midianite woman in a tent (Numbers 25:8). Moses then sent an army of 12,000 men who defeated the Midianites and Balaam himself was killed.

Let us note the following expressions in the New Testament concerning Balaam with the meaning of the expressions:

1. Error of Balaam (Jude 11): This speaks of the sin of using the gift of God for material gain, of selling God's gift, of becoming a hireling.
2. Doctrine of Balaam (Revelation 2:14): This speaks of the sin of enticing God's children to commit fornication.

#### **F. A REQUEST GRANTED: (Numbers 32).**

With the land east of Jordan conquered and found to be good pastureland, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and later half of Manasseh, asked permission to settle here. At first Moses did not agree but when these tribes assured Moses that their men would fight for the conquest of Canaan, Moses consented. He made it clear that all men of military age would have to cross over and help in occupying the Promise Land. When the agreement was reached, they began preparing the land for their families while the men were away fighting.

#### **G. PREPARING FOR THE CONQUEST:**

In preparation for the conquest Moses had a census taken (Numbers 26). The first census had been taken thirty-nine years before at Mount Sinai. During these thirty-nine years some 1,200,000 deaths had taken place and there was need to know Israel's strength as she faced the challenge of Canaan. The census revealed that there were 601,730 men twenty years and older.

It should be noted that in these thirty-nine years seven tribes had grown in number while five tribes were now smaller. The tribe that increased the most was Manasseh, which had grown from 32,200 to 52,700; the tribe that decreased the most was Simeon, which had gone from 59,300 to 22,200.

It should also be noted that no person could have been more than 58 or 59 years of age except Caleb (79 years old), Joshua (possibly 90 years old) and Moses (120 years old).

#### **H. THE DEATH OF MOSES: (Deuteronomy 34).**

A very important matter had to be taken care of at this time. A new leader had to be chosen. God's choice was Joshua (Numbers 27:15-23). As God instructed Moses, Joshua was placed before Eleazar and installed as the new leader.

On the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year Moses orally delivered the great messages of Deuteronomy. This was only two months and ten days before the Jordan River was crossed.

With his work of leadership and writing completed Moses was now ready for death. He was one hundred and twenty years old, but his eyesight was not dim nor his natural force abated. He climbed to the top of Pisgah and surveyed the Promised Land. God assured him that this was the Promised Land, then took him in death, and buried him in an unknown grave of a nearby valley.

