

Numbers 20:15-29: Petition to the Edomites and the Death of Aaron

- The Death of Aaron
 - Israelites set out from Kadesh to Mt. Hor
 - The LORD notifies Moses and Aaron that Aaron is about to die
 - Death outside of the promised land is punishment: “because both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah”
 - Moses escorts Aaron and Eleazar (Aaron’s son) up to the top of Mt. Hor
 - Transfer of garments from Aaron to Eleazar
 - What garments are these?
 - What does this symbolize?
 - How does this connect to previous passages about the priesthood?
 - What impact does this have on our understanding of ministerial roles in the Church today?
 - Aaron dies on the mountain and Moses and Eleazar descend alone
 - What stands out about Aaron’s death?
 - How does it compare to Moses’ death?
- Israel Petitions Edom (Numbers 20)
 - Message is sent *from Kadesh* to the king of Edom
 - “Now, we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory”
 - Edomite territory did not *always* extend this far westward
 - Israelites request permission to pass through Edomite territory
 - Israelites promise not to depart from “The King’s Highway” (cf. “the main road” in vs. 19)
 - Edom refuses passage and threatens to attack any attempt is made
 - Israelites further clarify that they will *purchase* food or water
 - Edom comes out against Israel with a “large and powerful” army
- Comparison to the description in Deuteronomy 2
 - “They [the Edomites] will be afraid of you” (vs. 4)
 - Israel is not to provoke Edom to war, for they will *not* receive any of the Edomite territory
 - Israel “turned north” from Elath and traveled along “The Desert Road of Moab”
 - “So we went past our brothers, the descendents of Esau, who live in Seir” (vs. 8)
 - Offering peace to Sihon the Amorite (Deut. 2:26-30)
 - This paints a slightly different picture
 - Is Moses speaking truthfully? Did the Edomites change their mind?
- Geographical context of these two accounts
 - Topography
 - The western mountains
 - The eastern slopes
 - The Arabah / Jordan Rift Valley which separates the above two features

- Rainfall patterns
 - North + high elevation = rain
 - South + low elevation = dry
- Major water drainage from the transjordan plateau
 - Extremely deep (difficult to traverse except at a few, key, passes)
- Major roads in the area
 - The International Coastal Highway
 - The King's Highway
 - East-West extension
 - North-South desert branch
 - Other smaller connecting routes through the area
 - The Way to the Arabah
 - The Way to the Red Sea
- Significant locations
 - Major locations (Kadesh, Bozrah, Elath) likely known
 - Less known locations are almost always disputed
 - Perhaps "Punon" (Num. 33) is one of a set of copper mines located along the Arabah
 - Copper is the main ingredient in Bronze Snakes
- How do we fit this all together?
 - Note the location of Bozrah (Edomite political center) along the King's Highway
 - Note several references to "the wilderness" or "facing the wilderness"
 - No spoilers here, but use that knowledge to piece together a possible route and explanation of Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 2