



The Exodus

Lesson 15: Wandering In The Wilderness, Part 1

(Numbers 16:1-17:13; 20:1-29)

The Israelites were now punished to wander in the wilderness for a total of 40 years – one year for every day the men scouted the land of Canaan. Now, Korah (a Kohathite), Dathan and Abiram (from the tribe of Reuben), and 250 leading Israelite men and representatives came together to complain against Moses and Aaron. They said that Moses and Aaron should not put themselves above the other Israelites since they were all God's people.

So, Moses told Korah and his followers that God would choose, and told them all to take firepans the next day and offer incense to God. When they did this, God told Moses and Aaron to get away from where these rebels lived and to make all the Israelites do the same. Moses told the people God's warning and said that they would know God had chosen him by the way Korah and the other rebels would die. If they would die like all people die, God had not sent him. But, if they would die because the ground opened up and swallowed them, then they would know God had sent him.

When he finished speaking these words, the ground split open under Korah and the rebels, swallowing them, their households, and their possessions. God also caused fire to consume the 250 men who were offering the incense. Then, those firepans that were used for offering incense were taken and used on the altar.

The next day, the Israelites complained that Moses and Aaron had killed God's people. So, God's glory appeared at the tabernacle. God was angry with the people who complained and wanted to destroy them – and started to do this. It seems that God had started in the front of the crowd of Israelites and they began to fall down dead one-by-one. So, Moses told Aaron to take a firepan, put fire in it, and add incense. Then, he was to run to the middle of the people and stand between the dead and the living. When he did, the plague stopped. 14,700 people died from this plague because they complained!

God told Moses to take one staff from the leaders of each of the twelve tribes and write each man's name on each staff. Aaron's name was to be written on Levi's staff. Then, they were to be placed in front of the ark of the covenant in the

tabernacle. The staff that sprouted would be the man God chose. When Moses did this, it was Aaron's staff that sprouted, formed buds, blossomed, and produced almonds! This staff was to be kept in front of the ark of the covenant as a sign for the rebels and end all these complaints.

As the Israelites continued in the wilderness (in Kadesh), Miriam (Moses and Aaron's sister) died and was buried there. Then, there was no water for the Israelites and the people were upset again. They complained about not dying with the others and for being brought out of Egypt. God told Moses to take the staff and assemble the people so they could watch. He was to speak to the rock – and it would provide water for the people.

But, Moses did not obey God. Instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded him, he said, "Listen, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?" (Numbers 20:10). Then, he raised his hand and hit the rock twice with the staff. Although God made water come out of the rock, He was not pleased with Moses and Aaron. He told them that because they did not trust Him in front of all the Israelites, they would not bring the Israelites into the land of Canaan! The waters were called Meribah (which meant "quarreling").

As the Israelites continued to wander in the wilderness, the king of Edom would not let them pass through their land. So, they came to Mount Hor. While they were there, God told Moses and Aaron that Aaron would die there because he and Moses had not obeyed God with the waters of Meribah. Aaron's son, Eleazar, was to go with Moses and Aaron up Mount Hor. The high priest's clothing was then taken off Aaron and put on Eleazar. Then, Aaron died. Eleazar was now the high priest and he and Moses came down from the mountain – and Israel mourned for Aaron for 30 days.

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: CS54

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Study Questions:

1) How long would the Israelites wander in the wilderness? Why did God make them do this?

2) Who complained that Moses and Aaron put themselves above the other Israelites? What did God do to the rebels?

3) Why did the rest of the Israelites complain against Moses and Aaron?

4) What did God do to them? How did this plague stop?

5) How did God show He had chosen Moses and Aaron?

6) Why did the people complain in Kadesh?

7) What did Moses and Aaron do that did not please God? How would God punish them?

8) Who became the high priest after Aaron died?

Memory Verse:

“You will bear the consequences of your iniquities forty years based on the number of the forty days that you scouted the land, a year for each day. You will know my displeasure” (Numbers 14:34).

Draw a picture of the lesson you learned about: