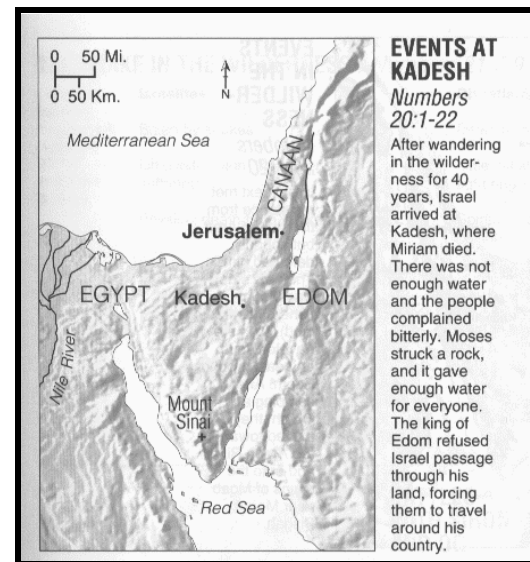


Events at Kadesh

We return once again to Kadesh in the wilderness. The events of this chapter take place 40 years after the Israelites left Egypt. Kadesh is a familiar place because it was the site of the rebellion in chapter 14 after the return of the spies from Canaan. Now the people are at it again. The cycle of complaining and bitterness continues. It is only through God's mercy that any of their descendants reach the promised land. It is only through God's mercy that any of us are saved.



Water From the Rock (20:1-13)

A brief note is inserted early in the chapter concerning the death of Miriam. It is to be noted that in keeping with His word, God would not allow any of the previous generation except Caleb and Joshua to enter Canaan.

Just as their fathers and mothers had grumbled against Moses, so now did the children. A dispute broke out over the fact that there was no water in the camp and the people again rose in opposition to Moses. Again they raise the complaint that they would rather have stayed in Egypt than had Moses lead them out into this desert.

Moses and Aaron appealed to the LORD and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. God told Moses to take his staff, gather the people together, and speak to the rock. The rock would then pour out water.

Moses gathered the people and reprimanded them, then he struck the rock with his staff and water flowed out. Following this, God was angry with Moses, "because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites." Moses was told that he would not enter the promised land either.

- ▶ What could the people have done instead of grumbling about the lack of water?
- ▶ Had the LORD really withdrawn His support from them?
- ▶ How did God respond to the people's sin?

- ▶ What was it that caused God to be angry with Moses? Consider it on the basis of (a) Moses' mood when he addressed the people in v10 (b) Moses' pride as evidenced in v10 (c) Moses disobedience to God's word
- ▶ Some people have thought that Moses' sin at Kadesh was the fact that he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had said. Although it is true that he did not strictly follow the word of the LORD, Psalm 106:32-33 indicate that Moses' rash words were an even bigger problem.
- ▶ Moses faced the results of his sin on earth, but how was Moses saved from eternal death because of his sin? See Hebrews 11:24-28

Edom Denies Israel Passage (20:14-21)

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau who had years before been cheated out of his birthright by Jacob (Gen 36). Thus Edom and Israel had not gotten along well. Edom was the territory to the southeast of Canaan and the Israelites preferred to pass through Edom to get to Canaan rather than go through the desert around it.

Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom asking permission to pass through. Moses promised that Israel would not steal anything from the vineyards or the wells of Edom. They would stay on the main road and simply pass. Edom responded that they could not go through. Moses again promised that they would pay for anything they used in their country. In response, Edom sent out an army to keep Israel from crossing into their land. Israel was forced to go south around Edom.

The Death of Aaron (20:22-29)

The time had come for Aaron to die. Aaron was the brother of Moses and also the first high priest, so before his death Eleazar his son was made high priest in the sight of all the people.

- ▶ Why couldn't Aaron enter the promised land?
- ▶ Why do you think God made the transfer of the priesthood so visible to all the people?
- ▶ Why was it important that Israel have a high priest at all times?
- ▶ How is the death of Aaron described in v24? What comfort is that description to us?