



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 24 2023

Scripture Story: Numbers 20; 21:1-9.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 37 and 38.

drama in the desert



Photo by Frank Bondurant

keytext

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.’ ”

(Numbers 21:8, NIV)

flashlight

“The wilderness wandering was not only ordained as a judgment upon the rebels and murmurers, but it was to serve as a discipline for the rising generation, preparatory to their entrance into the Promised Land. Moses declared to them, ‘As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee,’ ‘to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no’” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 407).

what do you think?

Traveling has several big hassles associated with it.

If you're flying on an airplane, boarding a train, or riding on a bus, all faraway trips require some preparation. List five things you must do before embarking on any trip. One is provided for you.

1. Pack everything you'll need for the trip.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

did you know?

It is difficult to pinpoint how many Israelites there were who walked through the wilderness toward the promised land of Canaan. The Bible records that there were 600,000 males above the age of 20 (Exodus 12:37; Numbers 2:32). If you used this number as a starting point making allowances for women and children, the total number of Israelites could easily exceed 2 million people. How much food do you think it required to feed 2 million people every day? Yet God did it every day for 40 years. What an awesome God we serve!

INTO THE STORY

Complaints

“In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

“Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, ‘If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! Why did you bring the LORD’s community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!’ ”

Detours

“Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: ‘This is

what your brother Israel says:

You know about all the hardships that have come upon us. Our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt.

“ ‘Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.’ ”

“But Edom answered: ‘You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword.’ ”

God’s punishment and grace

“They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!’ ”

“Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. . . .

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.’ ”

(Numbers 20:1-5, 14-18; 21:4-6, 8, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What parts of this week's story were new to you? (*Underline* them.)

What characters in the story are most interesting to you? Why?

What complaint from the Israelites are you most likely to make?

Draw a *rectangle* around the most emotional words and phrases.

What lesson or lessons did God want to teach His people?

What new thing did you learn about God from reading these Bible passages?

What lesson can you apply to your life this week, based on your reading?

punch lines

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (**Proverbs 17:22, NIV**).

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' " (**Hebrews 13:5, NIV**).

"Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me" (**Psalm 31:3, NIV**).

"Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools" (**Ecclesiastes 7:9, NIV**).

"Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record?" (**Psalm 56:8, NIV**).

"But godliness with contentment is great gain" (**1 Timothy 6:6, NIV**).

further insight

"Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity."—Ellen G. White,

Steps to Christ, p. 14.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Exodus 12:31-36.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson if you have not already done so. What were some of the preparations you listed that have to be made before any trip? Here are a few: You have to be sure that you know the directions to your eventual destination, or be sure you're with someone who does; you must have all necessary identification on you at all times; you must arrive at the station or airport allowing sufficient time to check in, purchase tickets, navigate delays, etc.

Were the Israelites able to make any preparations for their trip through the wilderness? When they left Egypt, what did they pack? Were they anticipating a long journey?

Sunday

Read Psalm 56:8.

Read carefully the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson. Notice that there are three distinct episodes related here. What does each of the stories tell us about the difficulties the Israelites faced in the wilderness? Were they justified in being angry with Moses and with God? Explain your answer below.

What special comforts might the Israelites have had in Egypt as slaves? Why would they long to go back? Do you sometimes forget where God has brought you from?

Monday

Read Numbers 21:8.

The *Key Text* for this week's Bible study has to be one of the strangest verses in the Bible. God tells Moses to make a bronze snake, wrap it around a pole, and anyone who looks on it will live. Why did God urge Moses to do this, instead of curing all the people with a word from His mouth?

How much faith do you think it took for dying

Israelites to look at a snake on a pole for healing? What was God trying to teach the Israelites about His power and their willingness to trust Him?

Tuesday

Read Numbers 20:6-12.

The *Flashlight* quotation for this week tells us that there was a method to God's punishment of the Israelites in the desert. A great example of this is found in our reading today. When the Israelites were complaining about thirst in the desert, what did God tell Moses to do? What did Moses do?

How did God respond to Moses' disobedience (verse 12)? Was God's punishment too hard on Moses and Aaron? Moses allowed his anger to control him, and he disobeyed God. How would the people have viewed God if He had allowed Moses and Aaron to go unpunished? God forgave Moses and even allowed him to see the Promised Land, though he could not go in.

Wednesday

Which of the *Punch Lines* texts caught your attention? Paul counseled Timothy that godliness, or God-likeness, with contentment is great gain. Rewrite this scripture in your own words, explaining what you think it means. What does it mean to be contented?

King David, the writer of many psalms, longed for God's leadership because he knew that God was his rock and fortress, or his safety. Why was it so difficult for the Israelites to claim God as their rock and fortress? When do you tend to complain about the direction in which God is leading you? What about your friends? Do they do the same? How can you change this habit?

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

One of the most difficult parts of the journey faced by the Israelites was the trip they took around Edom, a nation that refused to let them pass through their territory. Take a moment to read the sixth and seventh paragraphs of chapter 38 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Edom lay a short distance from the Promised Land. It was God's will that Israel should go through this territory, but something prevented them from going through Edom, and it wasn't Edom's king who denied them passage. Are you doing something that might be preventing you from achieving the blessing God has for you?

Friday

Read Psalm 31:3.

Israel's journey in the wilderness to the Promised Land should have taken a few days, but it took them 40 years. Can you identify some things that delayed them from receiving their blessing? (For instance, their constant complaining and disbelief in God.)

Write a short prayer to God. Identify anything in your life that is preventing God from living in you and working His will through you. Close by asking God for strength to trust His leading even when the way seems difficult.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 37 and 38.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.