

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## NUMBERS 19-21

A little over a month ago, on July 1st, 2025, at 6:00 in the evening, on a remote hilltop in northern Israel, an animal was burned and sacrificed according to Jewish ritual. An organization called "[Boneh Israel](#)" and its rabbi, [Yitzchak Mamo](#), oversaw a *trial run - a practice..*

*Some Christians believe their sacrifice was a sign of the soon return of Jesus...* The Bible teaches before our Lord returns an Antichrist will rise and claim to be god. This Antichrist will enter a rebuilt Temple and require the world to worship him. Of course, there's been no Jewish Temple in Jerusalem since Rome destroyed the last Temple in 70 AD. Today, two Islamic structures have been built on Mount Moriah, and two billion Muslims adamantly oppose a new Temple.

But what was strategic about July 1 and the sacrifice in northern Israel, is that a new Temple can't be built without the proper purification of the Temple Mount. That cleansing requires the ashes of a red heifer. So the July 1st sacrifice was a practice run for a red heifer.

The animal sacrificed on July 1st was one of five red heifers bred in Texas and shipped to Israel in September of 2022. Their arrival may've been a precipitating factor in the recent war between Hamas and Israel. After October 7 a Hamas spokesman listed the five red heifers and the intent to rebuild a Temple as reason for their attack. Initially, the Palestinian codename for the October 7 invasion was [The Al Aqsa Flood](#). Al Aqsa is the name of the mosque that would be most threatened if a Jewish Temple were rebuilt.

Who would've thought that an obscure passage in Numbers 19 may just be the key to setting in motion the prophecies related to the second coming of Jesus.

Numbers 19 discusses the mysterious ritual of *the ashes of the red heifer* - a sacrifice that has puzzled Jewish rabbis for centuries. Tradition says even King Solomon, a man renowned for his wisdom, despaired trying to understand the meaning of the red heifer.

**It was quite different from the other biblical sacrifices...** This ritual of the red heifer was given to Moses after God spoke to him on Mount Sinai about *the five Levitical sacrifices...* It was offered outside the camp, rather than on the bronze altar... The Priest watched this sacrifice, rather than offer it... This was the only sacrifice that left the priest unclean... And the most significant distinction is that the red heifer was

*female*. All the other Levitical sacrifices were males...

Remember Hebrews 9:13-14 sheds light on all the OT sacrifices, *including the red heifer*, “For if the blood of bulls and goats *and the ashes of a heifer*, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” OT sacrifices affected a ceremonial cleansing, but Jesus’ blood cleanses us spiritually...

*Yet how does a red, female cow speak of the man among all men, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ?*

Well, recall Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Apparently, God’s image in humanity is a combination of both male and female - *Adam’s maleness*, and *Eve’s femaleness*.

God is a blend of *male strength* and *female sensitivity*. Several times in the OT God our Father compares His love for Israel with the love of a mother.

Thus, Jesus is not just bullish, He’s also nurturing and responsive. I’m not suggesting there’s anything feminine about Jesus. He is a *he-man*, not a *she-man*. But Jesus is man as God originally designed men to be. He had an exterior like iron, but a heart like velvet. Jesus is a blend of bull and heifer - tough yet tender.

And this is why whether you need *strength and power* **or** *sensitivity and empathy* the person to turn to is Jesus. **Put it all together, and holy cow, all this talk about a red heifer undeniably points us to Jesus!**

Verse 1, “Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come.’” The heifer was to have red hair and hooves. Rabbis today say if just two hairs of a different color are found in the cowhide it’s disqualified.

There’s also to be no defect. Modern Jews look for a heifer that’s never even been *ear tagged*... The animal is also to have never been worked or carried a burden.

Moses learned of *the burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering* all on Mount Sinai - at the giving of the Law - but this offering came later... **Jesus’ sacrifice also came much later!**

“You shall give (the heifer) to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him...” Note, it’s to be slaughtered *not by* the High Priest as the other sacrifices, but **before** him. And likewise, Jesus was also

crucified not *by* the Hebrew High Priest, Caiaphas, but *before* him

Caiaphas, the Priest in Jesus' day sentenced the Savior to death, but then Caiaphas had to pressure Pilate to pull the switch. The chief priests even attended the crucifixion - mocking and ridiculing Jesus. He observed the sacrifice, but Rome had to carry it out.

And notice Eleazar took the heifer outside the camp. This was another peculiarity with the sacrifice of the red heifer. The killing occurred outside the camp, rather than on the bronze altar in the Tabernacle. Jesus too was taken outside the camp and crucified along the road to Damascus, north of Jerusalem, outside its wall.

Today, on the Mount of Olives, a high altar has been erected where the Jews hope to offer the red heifer.

Verse 4, "and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned." The heifer was incinerated - burnt to a crisp.

"And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer." Three items were burned with the heifer: **a stick of cedar wood, a branch of hyssop, and a strip of scarlet thread.** Jesus too was sacrificed on a **piece of wood**, a cross... A **branch of hyssop** with spongy, absorbent leaves, was used to hold the wine that moistened Jesus' lips while hanging on that cross. This allowed Him to utter his final words... And **a strip of scarlet thread**, symbolized the atoning blood that oozed from His wounds and covered all our sins...

Verse 7, "Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening."

Here's another peculiarity... The red heifer was the only sacrifice that left the High Priest unclean. Again, it foreshadowed Caiaphas' evil role at Jesus' crucifixion.

Jesus died for the sins of the Jews, but those same Jews admitted to the crime of sentencing an innocent man. I'm sure Caiaphas was in the crowd who replied to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children."

In verse 8 the instructions continue, "And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin. And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever

to the children of Israel and to the stranger who sojourns among them.”

The ashes of the red heifer were mixed with water. That water became the vehicle that carried and applied the ashes to what was to be purified. The solution was used for years to come in different acts of purification.

According to Jewish tradition purification came only from the ashes of the previous red heifer, so in recent years archeologists and thrill seekers have been on the prowl for 2000 year old ashes that were used in the last Temple. Real-life Indiana Joneses, have explored the Qumran caves and other ancient hiding spots.

During the time of the first temple the red heifer was burned on an altar on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. Today the Mount of Olives is under Muslim control and would need to be cleansed before a new red heifer could be sacrificed, but purification is only from the ashes of the previous heifer, so it's possible that the next big archeological find in Israel could be discovery of the ancient ashes of a previous red heifer.

From verse 11 onward lists examples where this mix of water and ash were utilized, “He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean...”

Verse 14, “This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days...” Say you walk into a tent where someone just died. It's not your *in-tent* to come in contact with death, but you're *in the tent*. It's guilt by association - *the wrong place at the wrong time*. Regardless of your *in-tent* you're still unclean.

And this is why the blood of Jesus is so vital. Before I came to Christ I was so thoroughly a sinner I wasn't even conscious of certain sins. Some sins I committed willfully. *It was my intent*. But mostly I sinned because I was *in the tent* of someone who was dead. I was born under Adam's roof - born a member of the human family - in the human tent - and as a consequence I inherited his sin nature. Only Jesus can cleanse me from *wrong intent* **and** from *being in the wrong tent*.

Notice also, verse 15, in the tent of a dead man “every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean.” Death contaminates everything in the tent, even non-living elements. And this is true of Adam's tent. God gave Adam authority over all nature, so when he died, death spread and affected all that was in his tent. *All nature – from weather to wildlife* - was defiled.

Beginning in verse 17 we're told how this ritual worked... “For an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and

**running water shall be put on them in a vessel.”** When a person was deemed unclean, the ashes that had been gathered and stored were mixed with running water. A branch of hyssop was dipped into the solution and the ashes were sprinkled on the unclean person. *This was how the sacrifice was applied to the sin.*

And this is a powerful picture of the work of Jesus. When you think about it, *how can the sacrifice of a man two thousand years ago manage to affect a person today? The answer is in the ritual of the red heifer.* Throughout the Bible, *water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, while hyssop is a type of the Word of God.*

And here’s how our purification, NT purification works... the effects of the cross are carried by the water of the Spirit, and applied to the heart when a person put their faith in God’s Word. The Spirit and the Word are the vehicles that bring to us the merits of the cross. People are saved by the cross of Christ, but His salvation has to be received personally through the sprinkling of the water *by the Spirit and with the Word.*

And notice verse 21, this ritual of the red heifer is called **“a perpetual statute.”** A major distinction of this sacrifice was its permanence! All the other sacrifices were repeated continually, but the ashes of a single red heifer lasted for decades. Only seven red heifers were sacrificed in biblical history - one by Moses - one by Ezra - and five after Ezra... And only one heifer was offered during any one lifetime. A truth that also speaks of Jesus - His cross deals with all sin, once and for all.

The Mishnah, a source of Jewish tradition, says there were actually nine red heifers sacrificed in all. *The tenth will be burned at the time of the Messiah!*

Now between chapters 19 and 20 thirty-eight years transpire... *and what happens for those 38 years?* Read the blank line between the chapters... Nothing happens! Israel wanders in the desert for 38 years.

*If you’re an old fan remember Pascal Perez?* The Braves’ rookie pitcher scheduled to start a game on August 19, 1982. On his first trip to Atlanta stadium he got on I-285 and drove for hours. He kept circling suburbia. He didn’t know which exit to take. He drove and drove and drove and was late for his first game. He ended up with a cool nickname, **“Perimeter Perez.”**

In essence, this happened to the Hebrews. They spent 38 years driving in circles. No progress was made until the exodus generation had died off. It was the longest funeral procession in history. Imagine, for 38 years Israel averaged one-hundred deaths a day.

But in **Chapter 20** a new generation takes over. Gen-Z is in now in charge, but they start out singing the same old song. **“Then the children of Israel, the whole**



congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.” Josephus, the Jewish historian, says an expensive state funeral was held in honor of Miriam, Moses and Aaron’s sister.

But notice where the Hebrews are - right back where they started 38 years earlier. *Kadesh* was the same border town from where the spies were sent into the land. Now they’ve returned to the scene of the crime. Here’s where the first generation buckled under to unbelief. Rather than *faith* they were overcome by *fear*.

“Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

*Speaking of figs - go figure!*

Gen-Z is drinking the same pickle juice and vinegar as their fathers. They’re as unwilling to trust the Lord as their parents. They sound like the skeptics that died in the wilderness. Rather than have faith, they accuse God of unfaithfulness. They’ve learned nothing.

Remember Exodus 17 this same situation occurred shortly after the first generation left Egypt. They came to a place with no water supply, and the people began to complain. In response, God told Moses to strike a rock. And a miracle occurred. Life-sustaining water gushed from a lifeless rock. But rather than trust God to do what He’s done before, the people complain.

Imagine Moses’ anger and frustration? *“Haven’t you stubborn people learned anything in thirty-eight years? You’ve had manna in the morning. Quail whenever you’ve wanted. We’ve never died of thirst? Don’t you know by now God takes care of His people?”* Moses was steamed with Israel! His patience is wearing thin.

“So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. **Speak to the rock** before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.” This is amazing, despite their unbelief God shows mercy. God does for Gen-Z what He did for the Baby Boomers. *He gives grace!* In verse 8, God tells Moses to speak to the rock, and water will flow

out to quench their thirst.

*But here's what Moses does...* Verse 9, "So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels!" You can hear the anger and frustration in his words. He's ticked off with these people. "Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank." In Exodus 17 God told Moses to take his staff and strike the rock. He did and water gushed. But this time God doesn't say anything about striking the rock. He tells him to speak to the rock. Instead, an angry Moses smacks it twice.

And here's what happens... Even though Moses disobeyed God, the Lord refused to allow an impulsive and ill-tempered pastor rob His people of a blessing.

God will deal with Moses later, but for the moment He blesses His people. Water pours from the rock.

And this is often the case... At times God blesses a church not because of its leader, but in spite of him. Just because water is flowing, and miracles are gushing doesn't mean God is validating the minister's faithfulness. God may just want to bless His people. He'll deal with the pastor later. That's the case here...

Verse 12, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Moses made a costly mistake. And this is a Christian leaders' greatest danger, **misrepresenting God**. Moses screams at these Hebrews, calls them "*rebels*." He vents thirty-eight years of frustration on these people. *But that was not God's attitude at all...*

God loved the Hebrews. God was starting over and was prepared to be as patient with the new generation as he had been with their faithless parents. God told Moses to speak to the rock, instead Moses struck it!

Psalms 106:32-33 provides insight into this episode, "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips." Moses sinned with his lips. God understood Moses' anger, but expected some restraint. Moses was to speak for God, not vent his own aggravations.

And without realizing it Moses marred a beautiful picture God was painting for future generations – *even us*. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness, and says, “*that Rock was Christ.*”

The rock was a symbol of Jesus. And Jesus needed to be struck. The crucifixion was necessary for man to be saved, *but how many times did Jesus need to be struck? Only once!* He died once for all, for the remission of sin. In fact, just before He breathed His last, He uttered the words, “*It is finished.*” All that needed to be done had been done for us to be saved. The cross is sufficient. Today, if you want to be forgiven of all you’ve ever done, just speak to the Rock, Jesus.

But here is where Moses spoiled the symbolism. He marred the picture. In essence, Moses took a big, fat crayon and scribbled all over a priceless Rembrandt. Moses misrepresented God, and it cost him severely. Because of his disobedience Moses was excluded from the Promised Land. Moses will take the Hebrews to its border, but it’s Joshua who will lead them in.

And Moses’ punishment is a profound lesson for us all. Nobody is exempt from God’s will, not even a Moses. James 3:1 tells us, “*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*” Even the Lawgiver is bound by the Law. In fact, God holds the leader to a higher standard.

Trust me, at times ministry can be frustrating. Folks get hard-hearted, and unreceptive, and noncompliant, and apathetic. And as a leader you’re tempted to lose your patience. You can blow your lid in the name of Jesus, and lash out at the very people God loves, and Jesus died to save, and you’ve been called to serve. **Be careful.** Misrepresenting God is a serious offense.

My job is not to express my own opinion - it’s to represent God’s eternal truth... I’ve been called to be an ambassador for Christ. I represent heaven not me.

A final thought, though Moses’ anger marred God’s symbolism, even in his disobedience another picture was established. Moses represents the Law, and in the end the Law couldn’t take the people into the Promised Land. That job was left to a man named *Yeshua*. And *Jesus* is the Greek for the Hebrew *Yeshua* or *Joshua*.

The Law leaves us lost and dead in the wilderness. It’s Jesus Christ who leads us into God’s bounty. Even in his failure Moses provided us a lesson for all time.

Verse 13, “*This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.*” The Hebrew word translated “*Meribah*” means “*contention.*”

“*Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom.*” God is preparing Israel to enter the land of Canaan. They’ll cross over the Jordan River just north of the



Dead Sea. Easiest and quickest access to that point of entry was through the borders of Edom.

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Moses figures since they're relatives he'll ask for Edom's help, so he sends messengers. They recount Israel's history in Egypt, the exodus, their wandering the King's Highway... and now they promise not to eat from Edom's fields or drink their water. The Hebrews just want safe passage through their territory.

Verse 18, "Then Edom said to him, *"You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword."* The king of Edom not only refuses Moses' request, he threatens military action... Moses wants to avoid battle so he circles south around the territory of Edom. This isn't a good start to a conquest of Canaan.

Verse 22, "Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: "Aaron shall be gathered to his people..."

Aaron is going to die. But notice, the wording that describes death - he's not *buried in the ground*, or *laid in a tomb*, he's "gathered to his people." Yes, there is an afterlife. Die and you go to a populated place.

"For (Aaron) shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah." Evidently, Aaron had somehow been a party to Moses' failure.

Verse 25, "Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." Mount Hor is about 20 miles southwest of the Dead Sea. "So Moses did just as the LORD commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation." This was the first transition of priestly power, and the Hebrews needed to see that the institutions God established were greater than any one individual. Aaron dies, but access to God doesn't die out with Aaron. Eleazar succeeds him as high priest. After Aaron dies Israel mourns for him thirty days.

But now is a time for marching not mourning. Israel moves north where they experience their first confrontation with the Canaanites. In **Chapter 21** they battle the king of Arad and have troops taken prisoner.

Verse 2, "So Israel made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." And the LORD listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them

and their cities. So the name of that place was called Hormah.” The Hebrew word “*Hormah*” means “utter destruction.” We’ll discuss why God called for complete annihilation of the Canaanites when we study Joshua.

Verse 4, “Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.” To avoid conflict with Edom Moses took a southern detour. He’s now backtracking over 100 miles, and the Hebrews become discouraged. They seem to be *regressing* rather than *progressing*...

And again they start to grumble. “And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.” Again, *murmuring about manna!*

“So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.” The idea of the snakes being “fiery” may refer to their color - perhaps they were red or a copper color. It also could’ve spoken of their bite. Their venom caused a burning, fiery sensation. Whatever it was, these snakes carried lethal venom. People were dying.

“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” What a strange remedy. Folks get snake-bit, so make a brass serpent on a pole, and anyone who looks at it will be healed.

Yet in John 3:14-15 Jesus provides some interesting commentary on this episode, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus saw Himself in Numbers 21, a portrait of His work upon the cross.

But here an explanation is needed... In the Bible *bronze* is a symbol for judgment. The *serpent* symbolic for sin and Satan - the venom of sin flows through the veins of every person and causes death. So *why is Jesus represented as a serpent - a symbol of sin?*

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us Jesus was made sin for us. He took our sin on His innocent shoulders, and died in our place. On the cross of Christ God judged sin and Satan. *A bronze serpent is a judged serpent.*

His venom has been neutralized. Now all a dying man has to do to be healed of sin's venom is what the Hebrews did to be healed of the viper's poison... Just look with faith to where sin has been judged. And in our case today, we need to look to the cross of Jesus.

Salvation comes to us as it came to the Hebrews not by doing anything to earn our healing, but by simply looking on with faith. It's not by *doing*, but by *looking*...

The Chapter goes on to chart the journey to the Promised Land. Israel moves north, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, through the Moab mountains.

They come to the Arnon, which was a stream that fed into the Dead Sea. The Arnon was the northern border of Moab and southern border of the Amorites.

Notice verse 14, *"Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD: 'Waheb in Suphah, the brooks of the Arnon, and the slope of the brooks that reaches to the dwelling of Ar, and lies on the border of Moab.'"*

The source that's quoted is *"the Book of the Wars of the LORD,"* this is one of the lost books of Israel. The Bible actually references several books we no longer possess... Joshua 10:13 speaks of the *Book of Jasher*... The *Annals of Solomon* are mentioned in 1 Kings 14:19... The *Annals of the History of the Kings of Israel* appear in the same verse... We find in 1 Kings 14:29 the *Annals of the History of the Kings of Judah*...

Notice, though the book mentioned here, *"the Book of the Wars of the LORD."* If you're a pacifist, the title alone makes you squirm! But evidently, some battles are **the Lord's wars**. There is such a thing as a just war, and God isn't afraid or timid about joining the fray.

Verse 16, *"From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water.'"* Notice they drank water at Beer - *there was no beer at Beer.*

*"Then Israel sang this song: 'Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it - the well the leaders sank, dug by the nation's nobles, by the lawgiver, with their staves.'"* They found water, and dug a spring with their staves to stave off their thirst. (*"Stave"* is another word for **staff**.)

*"And from the wilderness..."* they move westward until they reach *"the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland."* Mount Pisgah is just west of the Dead Sea. It

rises 2600 feet above sea level. It's also called [Mount Nebo](#). I've been to the top, and on a clear day *what a view...* You can see from Jordan into Israel.

Just before Moses dies God will take him to the top of Mount Pisgah, and give him a view into the Promised Land. *He'll see the land, but never enter.*

Verse 21, "Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells; but we will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." And the King's Highway ran east of the Dead Sea through what is today the country of Jordan. It's still the north-south connection to the Red Sea.

Sihon ruled over a tribe of Amorites that lived east of the Jordan in this region. His people were camped in the path of the Israelites, and Moses tries to play nice.

"But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified." This time Moses and Israel win the victory and take territory. The Jabbok River was a tributary that flowed into the Jordan River 25 miles north of the Dead Sea. It's where Jacob wrestled with the angel. Israel now controls all the land they'll use to stage their crossing of the Jordan River.

The next verses are snippets of the histories of the cities Moses conquered. Sihon defeated Heshbon, but Israel conquered Sihon. Verse 31, "Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." Notice the city in verse 30, "Medeba." On our tours of Israel on our way to Petra this is where we eat lunch. A beautiful mosaic map of Jerusalem is in Medeba. There's also a great lunch spot where they cook a huge pot of meat and vegetables; then dump it on the table. It becomes a free for all - sort of a Middle Eastern low country boil.

One other detail. In verse 29 the Moabites are called "*the people of Chemosh.*" *Chemosh* was the false god of Moab. He was similar, if not the same as Molech. The Moabites practiced child sacrifice to this idol.

Verse 32, "Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there." Moses' army is suddenly on a roll!

"And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan." This was further north – deeper into Jordan.

"So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at

Edrei. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land."

*God is blessing. Israel is winning. Sihon and Og have fallen.* Their army is gaining momentum, strength, confidence, experience. And they're putting the fear in an observer name Balak, the king of the Moabites.

Imagine, what Balak is thinking. He sees 2-3 million people camped within his borders. He hears stories of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, a miracle-working God. He's now watching and noting Israel's successes - and he's growing concerned. He doesn't want Moab to be their next victim, *so he pulls out a secret weapon*. He calls in the special forces. He recruits a Babylonian soothsayer named, Balaam - and that's who we'll study next time!