

12.31 No Passage Through Edom; Aaron's Death (Numbers 20:14–29; 33:38, 39)

(The teacher might combine this story with “12.32 Victory at Hormah; Going Around Edom” and “12.33 The Bronze Serpent.”)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006. Ideas or quotes from this source will be noted by (Ganz).

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Edom*: a country near Mount Seir, southeast of Israel inhabited by descendants of Esau [locate on the map found at the end of this lesson]
- *Mount Hor*: a mountain near Kadesh

Scripture (ESV)

Numbers 20:14 Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: “Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: 15 how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers. 16 And when we cried to the Lord, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. 17 Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King’s Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.” 18 But Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you.” 19 And the people of Israel said to him, “We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.” 20 But he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.

22 And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. 23 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, 24 “Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. 25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor. 26 And strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. And Aaron shall be gathered to his people and shall die there.” 27 Moses did as the Lord commanded. And they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. And Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. 29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron had perished, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.

33:38 And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the Lord and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. 39 And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor.

Introduction/Review:

Way back in the book of Genesis, we learned about Jacob and Esau. Do you remember that Jacob made a red stew and sold it to Esau for the birthright of the family? At that time, Esau had said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” Therefore Esau was known as Edom, for *Edom* means red.

Later, when Jacob returned home after being away twenty years or so, Esau lived in a land with the same name—Edom. This land, named after him, was in the hill country of Seir, which was southeast of Israel.

Bible scholars differ on the locations of some of the places listed in the Bible. Kadesh Barnea, the area closest to the Promised Land where the spies gave a discouraging report, where Miriam died, and where the Israelites would now go, is one of those disputed places.¹

We believe Mount Sinai, according to Galatians 4:25, is located in Arabia—east of the east finger of the Red Sea. Kadesh Barnea, then, was likely at or near what is today known as Petra,² not to the south of Israel but near the Jordan Valley close to Edom and Moab.

Story:

At Kadesh Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom with this plea: “Thus says your brother Israel.” Why would the messengers say they were *brothers* to Edom? Because Jacob/Israel was Esau’s actual brother; the family relationship remained these hundreds of years later.

The request

The messengers continued: “You know all the hardship that we have met: how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers, but when we cried to the Lord, he heard us and sent an angel to bring us out of Egypt. Now we are here in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not go into your fields or vineyards. We will not drink water from your wells. We will go along the King’s Highway, not turning aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.”

The response

But Edom answered, “You shall not pass through. If you do, we will come out and war against you.”

✓I wonder if the messengers from Israel had a hard time believing their extended family would actually refuse such a simple request. They repeated, “We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, we or our livestock, then we will pay for it. Just let us pass through on foot, nothing more.”

But Edom’s king answered, “You shall not pass through,” and to show he meant business, his army came out against Israel in strong force. [See Nancy Ganz for several reasons why Edom refused passage.]

Since God had said Israel could not fight against their Edomite brothers and since Edom refused to allow Israel through their territory, Israel turned back. ✓Having to turn back must have been disheartening, for it meant retracing their steps and going by a more lengthy and difficult route to the Promised Land.

(In this passage nothing is said by the Edomites about selling water and food, but it appears from Deuteronomy 2:28 and 29 that Edom did sell these commodities to Israel: “You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink . . . as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me.”)

The death of Aaron

Mount Hor was in the vicinity of Kadesh. God spoke to Moses and Aaron at this mountain: “Aaron shall die here, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel.” Why would Aaron not be able to enter the promised land? [He, with Moses, rebelled against God’s command at Meribah/Massah to speak to the rock in order to get water.] So now it was time for Aaron to die.

“Moses,” God continued, “take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. Aaron shall die there.”

Moses did as the Lord commanded. The three went up the mountain while all the congregation watched. At the mountaintop Moses put Aaron’s priestly garments on Eleazar, Aaron’s son, and Aaron died there. ✓We assume Moses and Eleazar buried him. Then only two men, Moses and Eleazar, came down the mountain.

When the congregation saw that Aaron had died, they all wept and mourned for him thirty days. Aaron died in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt. He died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year of Israel's being in the wilderness. He was 123 years old.

¹The map found below shows Kadesh farther west than the following quotation would allow. "Mount Hor is situated on the eastern side of the great valley of the Arabah, the highest and most conspicuous of the whole range of the sandstone mountains of Edom, having close beneath it on its eastern side the mysterious, city of Petra" (<https://biblehub.com/topical/h/hor.htm>).

²"Petra [see photo below] is an ancient city that lies in present-day Jordan and dates back to the fourth century B.C. . . . Using an early form of the technique known as rock-cut architecture, the Nabateans literally carved several of the city's buildings out of the surrounding stone surfaces" (<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/petra>).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus, the believer's eternal High Priest, will never die. "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:5, 6).
- As in Moses' and Aaron's lives, sins have consequences.

Activities:

- Play dough: Aaron's clothes
- Snack: Red sugar cookies to remind of the red color of the rocks at Petra and the red stew of Esau
- Play-act the messengers' going to the king of Edom.
- Use costume robes to show Moses taking Aaron's clothes and putting them on Eleazar.
- Review questions: (Game: Print, color, and cut out the priest paper doll found at <https://practicalpages.wordpress.com/2010/02/12/bible-study-priests-garments/>. Each correct answer allows a student to place a piece of clothing on the paper doll priest.
 1. Why were Edom and Israel considered to be brothers? [Because brothers Esau and Jacob (Israel) were their ancestors.]
 2. What was Israel's request of the king of Edom? [To go through the land of Edom.]
 3. What did Israel say they would not do while going through Edom? [They would not pass through field or vineyard or drink water from a well but go along the King's Highway.]
 4. What was Edom's answer to Israel's request? ["You shall not pass through."]
 5. How did Edom reinforce their response? [By sending out an army.]
 6. What were God's instructions to Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar at Mount Hor? [To climb the mountain; to take Aaron's clothes and put them on Eleazar; Aaron would die there.]

Memory Verse[s]:

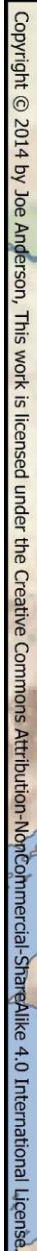
- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the "Exodus 20:1–17" song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the "Lessons" and "Songs" pages at teachingthebibletochildren.org. "Stop! It's the Law," a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same "Songs" page.

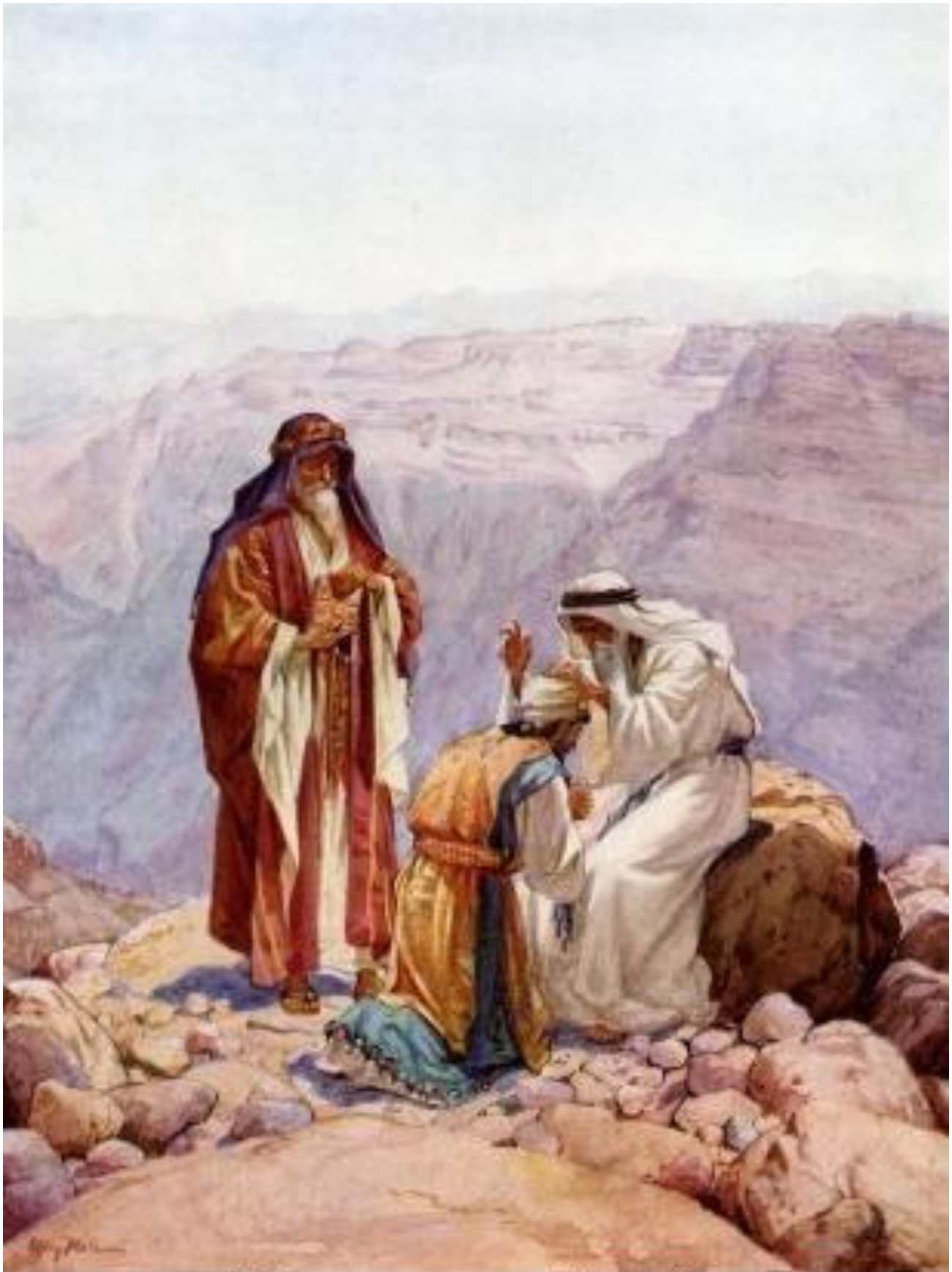
Handwork: Students will color the clipart of the high priest found below. Use the colored picture for reference.

Edom

Mount Hor

Nuweiba Beach Crossing -- Sinai at Jabal al-Lawz





"The Consecration of Eleazar"
By William Brassey Hole (1846-1917)





Petra (<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-aKFk5JPPc9Q/Vma6PExKPmI/AAAAAAAAADnM/idqqR2FQX4c/s1600/The-Treasury-Petra-Jordan.jpg>)



