

Moses - 9 – Moses' Final Days and Final Words

Death of Miriam and the Waters of Meribah

The final days of Moses began with his sin at Kadesh. Miriam had just died when the children of Israel had murmured and contended with him about water.

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. 2 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. 2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. 3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! Num. 20:1-3

In his anger and wrath, he had did respond properly and failed to honor God in both word and deed. Because of this failure, both he and Aaron were not allowed to enter the promised land. This event was then called "the water of Meribah" because of Israel's sin.

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." 13 This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them. 14 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. Num 20:12-14

After Edom refused to allow them passage through their land, they journeyed from Kadesh to Mt Hor. There Aaron died for the events at "the water of Meribah," thus revealing that he too had been banned from entering the promised land because of those events.

Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. 23 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: 24 "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he 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. Num 20:22-25

The Death of Aaron

God made a big event of Aaron's death. Moses, Aaron and his son Eleazar go up to Mt Hor while all the congregation watches the event. Moses stripped Aaron of the garments of the High Priest and put them on Eleazar his son. No mention is made of how Aaron died, but he died after the clothes were removed and before Moses and his son leave the Mountain.

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; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." 27 So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28 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 Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days. Num 20:25-29

The Bronze Serpent

Soon after Aaron's death, Moses must again deal with the murmuring and grumbling of the people. God again manifested his anger in sending fiery serpents among the people. Although the people begged for mercy and Moses prayed for them, God did not remove them.

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." 6 So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. 7 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. 8 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." 9 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. Num 21:5-9

Instead God had Moses make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. Then if they were bitten they had to look upon that brass serpent to be healed from the bite. Jesus later used this event as a type of Himself.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Jn 3:14-17

Balaak and Balaam

As Israel continued the journey to Canaan, they seek passage first through the land of the Amorites where Sihon came out to battle and was defeated(Num 21:21-27). As they sought to pass through Bashan, Og came out to battle and he too was defeated(Num 21:33-35). It is immediately after this that Balak hires Balaam and Balaam counsels Balak to put a stumbling block in front of Israel and 24,000 men in Israel perished.

Moses Was the Last of his Generation

Immediately after the plague caused by Balaam's counsel to Balak, God asked Moses to number Israel for the second time.

And it came to pass, after the plague, that the Lord spoke to Moses and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying: 2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel." ... just as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt." Num 26:1-4

The timing of this census was explained at the end of the chapter.

But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the Lord had said of them, "They shall surely die in the wilderness." So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. Num 26:64-65

Hence in this plague the very last individuals who had been numbered in the first census had died and there was no one except Caleb and Joshua. So Moses was then truly alone.

Summing up a Life

Moses was eighty years old when he called by God to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt and he faithfully led them through the wilderness. Our time frame is based on his age when he began and his age when he died.

*And Moses was **eighty years old** and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh. Ex 7:7*

*Moses was **one hundred and twenty years old** when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. 8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended. Deut 34:7-8*

So for forty years, Moses led Israel, but during those same forty years, God's wrath was being poured out upon them because of their unbelief.

*And I have led you **forty years** in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. Deut 29:5-6*

*For **forty years** I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Ps 95:10-11*

*For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry **forty years**? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Heb 3:16-19*

Comparing the two census' we get an idea of the changes that had occurred after 603,550 men died.

Israel Numbered at the beginning and end of Numbers.

	1:17-54	26:1-65			1:17-54	26:1-65	
<u>Reuben</u>	46,500	43,730	-	2,770	<u>Ephraim</u>	40,500	32,500 - 8,000
<u>Simeon</u>	59,300	22,200	-	37,100	<u>Manasseh</u>	32,200	52,700 + 20,500
<u>Gad</u>	45,650	40,500	-	5,150	<u>Benjamin</u>	35,400	45,600 + 10,200
<u>Judah</u>	74,600	76,500	+	1,900	<u>Dan</u>	62,700	64,400 + 1,700
<u>Issachar</u>	54,400	64,300	+	9,900	<u>Asher</u>	41,500	53,400 + 11,900
<u>Zebulun</u>	57,400	60,500	+	3,100	<u>Naphtali</u>	53,400	45,400 - 8,000
<u>Israel</u>	603,550	601,730	-	1,820	<u>Israel</u>	603,550	601,730 - 1,820
<u>Levi</u>	22,000	23,000	+	1,000			

Moses Sought a Leader to Replace Him

As soon as Israel arrived at Mt Abarim, God informed Moses that he had reached the end of his life and it was time for him to die.

Now the Lord said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. 13 And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. 14 For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.) Num 27:12-14

Moses' first concern was for those who would be left. He wanted to be certain they had a leader.

Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying: 16 "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd." 18 And the Lord said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in

their sight. 20 And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. Num 27:15-21

Moses Last Service as Leader

God reveals to Moses that the time had finally come for Moses to finish his work. He wants the terrible curse of Balaam to be punished.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people." 3 So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the Lord on Midian. 4 A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war." Num 31:1-4

The Request of Reuben and Gad

The land beyond the Jordan was perfect for raising livestock. It caught the eye of Reuben and Gad and they decided to make a request.

Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock, 2 the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon, 4 the country which the Lord defeated before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock." 5 Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan." Num 32:1-5

From Moses response, it is evident they did not intend to go beyond the Jordan to help the other tribes gain their inheritance. This led Moses to strongly rebuke them. Hence they changed their request to include the offer that they would first help their brethren then the would come and dwell there.

And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? 7 Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them? 8 Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. ... 16 Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, 17 but we ourselves will be armed, ready to go before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; Num 32:6-9, 16-17

Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, 21 and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, 22 and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the Lord and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. Num 32:20-23

At some point in this discussion half the tribe of Manasseh also joined in this plan.

So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country. Num 32:33-34

Moses Final Address to Israel

The book of Deuteronomy is an address given by Moses as his final opportunity to influence them. Much like Paul's words to Timothy, Moss reproved, rebuked and exhorted them. The name Deuteronomy is a compound Greek word. *deuteros* is second and *nomos* is law. Hence this book is called "second law"

deuteronomy ... In Hebrew 'elleh ha-debharim , "these are the words"; in Greek, deuteronomion, "second law"; whence the Latin deuteronomii, and the English Deuteronomy. (ISBE)

It is broken into several distinct discourses

1 Historical Overview of their father's refusal to enter the promised land and God's gracious mercy in allowing them to conquer the nations on the east of the Jordan 1-3

1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph ... 3 Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them, 5 On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying, 6 "The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Deut 1:1, 3, 5-6

2 Moses gives an overview of the Law he had revealed to them at Sinai. 4-26:19

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 44 Now this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. 45 These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which Moses spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt, ... 5:1 5 And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. Deut 4:1-3, 44-45; 5:1

3 Future Blessings and Curses based on their choices and conduct. 27-30

Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2 And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. 3 You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the Lord God of your fathers promised you. 4 Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. Deut 27:1-5

Instructions regarding the Blessings and Curses on Mt Ebal and Gerazim(Deut 27-29)

"These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; 13 and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. Deut 27:12-13

A. When these curses come, God will still show mercy if you repent

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. Deut 30:1-3

B. Moses warned that life and good death and evil, are the choice they have to make.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; Deut 30:15-20

C. Moses Final Instructions

When Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said ... 7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. 9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 31:1-3, 7, 9

4 God commanded Moses to write a Song. Deut. 31-32

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. 15 Now the Lord appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle. 16 And the Lord said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ... 16 Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. ... 21 Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, 31:9, 14-16, 21

Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. 23 Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you." 24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: 26 "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; 29 For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands." Deut 31:22-27, 29

5 Moses Saw the Land of Canaan from the Top of Mt Nebo(Pisgah) and then Died.

1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan ... 5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. 6 And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. ... 10 But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11 in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, 12 and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. Deut 34:1, 5-7, 10-12