

**1 And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Looking at maps, of the wilderness journey of Israel, we see that they are near the southern end of the land that they will eventually inhabit, but they still have a long journey ahead of them to reach the place they will actually enter the land and begin their occupation.

***"heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies"***

I believe this phrase tells us that king Arad had heard that Israel was headed his way, on the same pathway; that the spies that were sent by Israel to spy out the land.

King Arad and his armies came to meet them and fought against them and captured some of the Israelites.

**2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Israel, having lost this battle with king Arad, turns to God, with their whole heart, and asks God's help in overcoming this enemy and in recovering their captives.

**3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: God heard and granted the request of Israel, and God named this place Hormah.

**4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Again, looking at maps, it appears that Israel is in the region on the west side of Mt Hor, where Aaron died and was buried. This verse gives us to believe that King Arad had come down to where Israel was and attacked them.

Israel, with God's blessing and divine assistance, chased king Arad back to his country and destroyed his cities.

The army of Israel has returned back to Mt Hor and Israel will now proceed southward to the Red Sea, then turn northward again and pass by Mt Hor on the east side.

**5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Looking at the maps we see that as they proceed southward, which is away from the Promised Land, they are now encountering some rough travel conditions again. They do what Israel always does and start complaining.

We see, now that Aaron is dead, that they complain against God and Moses. At least they got the order right this time. However, we point out again, they are where they are because of disobedience in their life way back down the road of life.

We are reminded; God is faithful to carry out his judicial judgment, that He pronounced against Israel, upon all those who were 20 years old and upward, at the time the judicial judgment was proclaimed.

Their complaint is the same; they don't like the bread (manna) and they want their yeasted bread and there is a shortage of water. They are still looking back and desiring the things of the past that they enjoyed, forgetting the hardship and bondage from which God has freed them.

This is a stark reminder to us today. We should never become complacent and disdain God's word of truth and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We should remember daily the works of salvation manifested in our lives. Just as God is allowing this hardship in the lives of Israel; I believe God allows hardships in our lives, to bring us to remembrance, of how much we owe Him for the salvation and eternal life He has afforded us.

I am reminded of a song in our Lloyd hymnal:

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*The exercises of saints various.*

- 1 HOW hard and rugged is the way,  
To some poor pilgrims' feet!  
In all they do, or think, or say,  
They opposition meet.
- 2 Others again more smoothly go,  
Secured from hurts and harms;  
The Saviour leads them gently through,  
Or bears them in his arms.
- 3 Faith and repentance all must find,  
But yet, we daily see  
They differ in their time and kind,  
Duration, and degree.
- 4 Some long repent and late believe;  
But, when their sin's forgiven,  
A clearer passport they receive,  
And walk with joy to heaven.
- 5 Their pardon some receive at first,  
And then compelled to fight,  
They feel the latter stages worst,  
And travel much by night.
- 6 But be our conflict short or long,  
This commonly is true,  
That wheresoever faith is strong,  
Repentance is so too.

We shall see that Israel is complaining and they are going to suffer even more and then be brought to that state of repentance.

**6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We point out here; the judicial wrath of God is instant for this particular sin of Israel. It is not drawn out over this 40 year journey that they are upon.

God sent their judgment in the form of the fiery serpents that bit them and whose bite caused death. Even in this judgment; we see that God is still fulfilling the judgment (all that are 20 years and upward shall die) of the sin that has brought them where they are.

**7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Again we see the poured out wrath does its work and the people repent.

Again we see; the people turn to Moses, who they just complained against, and ask him to intercede for them with God.

Again we see; Moses' heart of compassion for this people and the forgiveness of his own heart. How do we see the forgiveness of his own heart? He goes to God on their behalf. This tells us that Moses has forgiven them or he couldn't have interceded for them.

Don't you see the picture of our Saviour and LORD Jesus Christ, who we complain and murmur against having compassion time and again and interceding on our behalf to God the Father? What great compassion and mercy our Saviour exhibits on our behalf. Praise the Lord! for mercy and grace!

**8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: One thing we see in this; the Lord provided a way that if bitten by the fiery serpent a person might live. It is the way that God provided for Israel at this time.

We have a couple of prophetic pictures here that apply to us today.

Consider; if God sends conflict in our lives, to correct us and turn us from our own way to his, we are the kind recipients of God's mercy and Grace. We have evidence that we are God's people.

We see also; when we are rebuked by God, His word of truth awakening our conscience and bringing us to repentance, we have to seek for life in the way that God has provided.

For Israel; God provided the fiery serpent as the means of bringing them to repentance and the brazen image of the fiery serpent on the pole to look to for life.

This is a picture for us; when we are brought to the understanding, that we are going to die an eternal death because we have been fallen in sin, we have the way provided for us to live. This is the image, provided for us in the bible, of Christ Jesus being lifted up upon the crucifixion cross that the plague of death for sin might be stayed in our own lives.

As this brazen serpent on the pole was the cure provided by God for Israel; So, Christ upon the cross is the way God has provided for us in this the day of salvation by grace. We are brought to this understanding by the scripture in: ***Joh 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.***

Praise God the Father for providing God the Son, the means of deliverance from the penalty of sin and the eternal death by way of God's judicial judgment and for the way of salvation and eternal life. This thought seems to put in perspective the words of Jesus in: ***Mt 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***

**10 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth. 11 And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ijeabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrising. 12 From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared.**

Clarke Lee's Commentary: In the reference for this verse, we are referred to: ***De 2:13: 13 Now rise up, said I, and get you over the brook Zered. And we went over the brook Zered. 14 And the space in which we came from Kadeshbarnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them. 15 For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed. 16 So it came to pass, when all the men of war were***

*consumed and dead from among the people, 17 That the LORD spake unto me, saying, 18 Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day: 19 And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.*

In this reference we find the completion of those who were condemned to die in the wilderness. All that remained at this time died, except Joshua and Caleb.

**13** From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. **14** Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, **15** And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab. **16** And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. **17** Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: **18** The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah:

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see in verse 17 that Israel sang. Isn't it interesting that Israel has now gone from complaining to praising the Lord? According to Vernon McGee, the complaint above was the eighth and final complaint of Israel on the wilderness journey. One other thought:

Israel sang because they were doing something themselves. We see that they are saying we dug our own well and got water. "**18 The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it**" They seem to forget to mention that it was God that provided the water. If you look back now you will find that Israel complains when they don't have anything to do and they forget about the miracles of God being performed in their daily lives. This is a great warning to us today, how? If we do not see the great miraculous power of God working in our own life, we are subject to sing our own praise and say; see what my hands have wrought; forgetting, as Israel did, that the water is furnished by God.

In verses 16-18 we have a prophetic picture of how the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to come to fruition. How, you ask? Think about what happened here. The people did not dig the well but the princes and nobles. The princes and nobles are images of the ministers of the gospel today. How?

As the nobles and princes digged here, so God's ministers today have to dig into the word of God in study. When God provides them the revelation of the truths and mysteries of his Word of Truth, they then share that with God's people, so that all of Israel drinks from the well of salvation by grace, the testimony of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the scripture in: **Joh 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**

Well, some will say: You are holding forth two opposing doctrines in your analogies of this text. To which I answer, no, remember what we are told in: **Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** In both scenarios, the people are working out their salvation by being busy doing the things God has directed them to do. We just have to be careful to not trust in what God has enabled us to do, thinking that we have done something in our own might.

This is so amazing to me, that God would set forth a principle that will be made plain in the age of Salvation by Grace. It is as miraculous as the water He provided here for the salvation of Israel.

**Continued in: Numbers 21 Bible Study Notes Part 2 of 2**