

Message #23**Numbers 21:21-35**

Israel was getting close to the Promised Land and things were finally looking good. Israel had stopped complaining and they had started worshipping. They were finally praising God for His provision of water and they were not complaining (Num. 21:17-18).

As Israel started moving right in her relationship with God, she was immediately confronted with hostile and hateful opposition. That is the way it works. When God's people are really moving in the right direction, it is like they are hit with negatives. But what God's people will learn here is this:

WHEN YOU ARE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, NO MATTER WHAT THE OPPOSITION, YOU WILL BE VICTORIOUS.

In these verses, Israel must fight two major battles, which Israel will win because God will give her victory. She must fight these battles even before she gets into the Promised Land. We may remember that when the spies came back from the Promised Land, she not only did not want to trust God and fight, she wanted to go back to Egypt. Had she done what God wanted her to do, she would have been conquering the enemies in the land. Now she has to fight just to get into the land.

God was teaching Israel a lesson and that is, you stay faithful to Me and I will give you victory.

In this section there are two main battles that Israel wins:

BATTLE VICTORY #1 – Israel defeats the Amorites. 21:21-32

Once again Israel needed to cross some land to get to the Promised Land.

According to **verse 21**, Israel sent some diplomatic messengers to Sihon, who was the king of the Amorites.

We may recall that this was the same approach that was used with the King of Edom (20:14, 17) that didn't work. It is interesting that the King of Edom is not named, but the King of the Amorites is named; it is Sihon.

Sihon and the Amorites controlled the land from the Arnon river in the south to Jabbok (**21:24**). This land was located about 20 miles north of the northern end of the Dead Sea.

According to **verse 22**, the diplomatic delegation of Israel went to King Sihon and made a request to cross their land. They promised that they would not turn into any field or vineyard, they would not drink any water from their wells; they would stay on the King's highway until they got through their land.

Moses is assuring these Amorites that they were coming in peace. They did not mean any harm to them. All they wanted to do was to travel on the King's Highway through their territory.

This was the same "King's Highway" requested in Numbers 20:17. This was a 200-250 mile long public highway trade route that ran from Saudi Arabia on the west side clear up north to Damascus. If you look at a map of the Sinai Peninsula, you will observe that there are two gulfs that come off the north end of the Red Sea. The Gulf of Suez, which is to the west and the Gulf of Aqaba, which is to the east. The King's Highway runs from the Gulf of Aqaba to the east all the way to Damascus and beyond.

Now when you think of the King's Highway, it was not a paved highway built by the state, like our highways. It was more like a well-marked, well-known trail used by people, horses, mules, chariots and wagons. It was a well-known, well-traveled road.

So Moses was doing the politically correct thing by sending this delegation to ask permission to travel on that road to the Promised Land. He did not just want to trespass through the land without asking permission.

Verse 23 says Sihon would not permit it. He would not permit Israel to pass through the land. He probably got the idea from the King of Edom, but he would pay a severe price. He decided not only to not permit Israel to cross the land, he gathered all of his people to go fight against Israel.

Don't miss this point - the closer we are to God and the closer we are to the blessings of God, the warfare intensifies. Satan and his forces are out to stop God's people from getting to where God wants them to be. But he cannot do it. He cannot win. Sihon was about to learn that lesson.

Now it is very possible and probable that Moses remembered what God told him in Exodus 23:23. "For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them." God had specifically predicted that the Amorites would be destroyed and He was now going to literally fulfill that prophecy.

According to **verses 24-25**, Israel went on the offensive. Israel's fighting men struck them with the sword and took all their land and cities.

The Amorites were trapped and slaughtered. In fact, according to **verses 25-26**, the Amorite capital city of Heshbon, located about 25 miles east of Jericho, was taken and Israel was living in all the cities of the land.

According to **verses 27-30**, there was a famous "proverb" that praised Sihon. The word "proverb" (Mashal) is one that refers to a parable or saying, put in long sentences (Num. 23:7, 18) (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 517).

People who were using proverbs were one time praising Sihon for him taking Heshbon and conquering the Moabites. Proverbs were being written and quoted about it.

The proverb of Heshbon really was a secular proverb that ends up presenting truth about God. It is an “Amorite War Taunt” that was originally written by an Amorite composer, after Sihon had conquered Heshbon and the Moabites. Jeremiah would actually quote this many centuries later (Jer. 48:45-46). This was a proud proverb. It is comprised of six stanzas. The first five all have to do with what Sihon did to the Moabites, and the last one what Israel did to Sihon.

Stanza #1 - The Amorites may come and build Heshbon. **21:27a**

Stanza #2 - Heshbon is now established as the city of Sihon. **21:27b**

Stanza #3 - Fiery judgment came from Sihon and destroyed Heshbon and other Moabite cities.
21:28

Stanza #4 - Woe judgments have hit the Moabites and Chemosh, their false deity, didn't save them. **21:29a**

Stanza #5 - Sihon the Amorite King took the Moabite sons and daughters captive. **21:29b**

These people were proud. Singing their songs about how great they were, how great their city and king were. But that all changed right here. Israel added a stanza.

Stanza #6 - The Israelites cast them down and took their land. **21:30-31**

The Amorite proverb just took on a new ending. Instead of Sihon using this composition to celebrate his Moabite victory, Israel used it to celebrate their victory over the Amorites.

Things are beginning to change. Israel is now trusting God and has learned some lessons. They are praising God and obeying God and they are getting victories. **Verse 31** says not only were they able to cross the land of the Amorites, they could live in the land. In fact, Moses sent out spies to all areas and those spies came back and they went and took the land.

In fact, before Israel would take the Promised Land, Moses would actually give Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh this very land as their own (Numbers 32:33).

BATTLE VICTORY #2 – Israel defeats Bashan. **21:33-35**

After the Israelites had taken the land, they turned their attention to Bashan. Bashan was a very fertile and productive region located east of the Sea of Galilee and south of Mount Hermon.

John Kitto claims this was a “beautiful land.” He said it was a land of “extraordinary richness... clothed in thick forests, varied with verdant slopes, and possessing extensive plains of fine red soil.” There was rich pasture grass and lofty mountains. It was a beautiful land.

When the king of Bashan, whose name was Og, got wind of the fact that Israel was moving into his area, he apparently did not get the Amorite memo that you better not fight against that nation.

According to **verse 33**, he took all of his people to fight Israel. According to Deuteronomy 3:11, Og was a huge man. His bed was six feet wide and 13 ½ feet long.

Og took his people about 40 miles south east of the sea of Galilee to fight the Israelites at Edrei.

So once again Israel is nearing the Promised Land and that warfare is intensifying.

In **verse 34**, the LORD came to Moses with the following five messages:

Message #1 - Do not fear Og - doesn't matter how big or strong he is.

Message #2 - I have given him into your hand.

Message #3 - I have given all his people into your hand.

Message #4 - I have given you all of his land.

Message #5 - You will do to him what you did to Sihon, destroy him.

According to **verse 35**, Israel killed him and his sons and killed all the remnant of people and possessed the land.

LESSONS TO LEARN:

- 1) The more obedient we are the more blessings we receive.**
- 2) The more we are obeying God's Word to get those blessings, the hotter the warfare.**
- 3) The closer we get to experiencing the ultimate blessings, the greater the opposition.**
- 4) When we are faithful to God, He will drop our enemies, one right after another.**