

# Numbers 21 - Brazen Serpent; Sihon, King of Amorite; Og, King of Giants

II. Failure of the first generation (Num 11:1—25:18)

(3) Failure in the wilderness in and around Kadesh Barnea (Num 15:1—20:13)

(C) Defeat of Arad at Hormah (21:1-3)

(D) Bronze serpent on Edom's eastern border (21:4-9)

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(F) Victory over Sihon King of the Amorites (21:21-32)

(G) Victory over Og of Bashan (21:33-35)

## Numbers 21

(C) Defeat of Arad at Hormah (21:1-3)

**1** When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive.

**1** When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, then he fought against Israel and took some of them captive.

**1** When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the Atharim caravan route, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive.

**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.

**2** So Israel made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed hand over this people to me, then I will utterly destroy their cities."

**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."

**2** Then Israel made this vow in the LORD's presence: "If you give these people into our control, we intend to devote their cities to total destruction."

**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. Arad was a Canaanite city (about 20 miles east-northeast of Beersheba).

- These very people, with the Amalekites, had destroyed some of the Israelites about 38 years earlier at the very same place, Hormah (Num 14:45). The Lord answered, and Israel destroyed many Canaanite towns.

- To commemorate God's faithfulness they called the region Hormah "destruction"  
(probably the reference to Hormah in Num 14:45 reflects the incident here)

3 The LORD heard the voice of Israel and turned over the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. And the place was named Hormah.

3 The LORD heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah.

3 When the LORD heard what Israel had decided to do, he delivered the Canaanites to them, and Israel exterminated them and their cities. They named the place Hormah.

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.

(D) Bronze serpent on Edom's eastern border (21:4-9)

4 Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey.

4 Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey.

4 After this, they traveled from Mount Hor along the caravan route by way of the Sea of Reeds and went around the land of Edom. But when the people got impatient because it was a long route,

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.

- On this occasion, Israel relied on God. Israel's vow to "devote them to destruction" was also in line with God's promises

- These Canaanites were to be dispossessed. Unable to cross Edomite territory, Israel had to go around, which meant turning back towards the Red Sea (and this in the middle of the 40th year)

5 So the people spoke against God and Moses: "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we are disgusted with this miserable food."

5 The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."

5 the people complained against the LORD and Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" they asked. "There's no food and water, and we're tired of this worthless bread."

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.

6 Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

6 The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

6 In response, the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people to bite them. As a result, many people of Israel died.

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

- Impatience gave way to open rebellion once more and contempt for the manna which God had provided was again voiced

7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and against you; intercede with the LORD, that He will remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people.

7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people.

7 Then the people approached Moses and admitted, "We've sinned by speaking against the LORD and you. Pray to the LORD, that he'll remove the serpents from us." So Moses prayed in behalf of the people.

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.

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and put it on a flag *pole*; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, and looks at it, will live."

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live."

8 Then the LORD instructed Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent out of brass and fasten it to a pole. Anyone who has been bitten and who looks at it will live."

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 So Moses made a bronze serpent and put it on the flag *pole*; and it came about, that if a serpent bit someone, and he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and fastened it to a pole. If a person who had been bitten by a poisonous serpent looked to the serpent, he lived.

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.

- How strange! Moses should make another serpent, yet it was serpents that caused all the trouble to begin with!

- Were there not enough of them in the camp already? No explanation or rationale throughout the entire OT...

[Later, Hezekiah had to destroy the bronze snake because it had become an object of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4)]

#### (E) Journey to Moab (21:10-20)

**10** Now the sons of Israel moved out and camped in Oboth.

**10** Now the sons of Israel moved out and camped in Oboth.

**10** After this, the Israelis traveled and encamped at Oboth.

**10** And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth.

11 Then they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, to the east.

11 They journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, to the east.

11 Then they traveled from Oboth and encamped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness that is in the vicinity of Moab's eastern border.

11 And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ijeabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrising.

12 From there they set out and camped in Wadi Zered.

12 From there they set out and camped in Wadi Zered.

12 From there, they traveled and encamped in the valley of Zered.

12 From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zered.

- The route Israel took is difficult to reconstruct since many of the places named can no longer be identified

- The next place mentioned is Ije Abarim, in the desert on the east side of Moab but otherwise unidentified

- From there they traveled on to the Zared Valley which then formed the border between Moab and Edom

There is a more complete itinerary in Num 33. There Zalmonah and Punon are listed between Hor and Oboth (33:41-43). The route seems to be east of Edom because Punon (or Feinan) evidently was the site of copper mines in that region. The material for the bronze snake may also suggest a proximity of copper deposits. Oboth most likely was at the northern end of the Arabah, north of Punon. This is supported by the fact that the tribes turned north after paralleling the Edomite hill country in a southerly direction (Deut 2:1-3).

13 From there they journeyed and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that comes out of the border of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

13 From there they journeyed and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that comes out of the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

13 Then they traveled to the other side of Arnon and camped in the wilderness that borders the territory of the Amorites. (Arnon borders Moab between Moab and the Amorites,

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 For that reason it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD, "Waheb in Suphah, And the wadis of the Arnon,

14 Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD, "Waheb in Suphah, And the wadis of the Arnon,

14 which is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD reads, "Waheb and Suphah and the wadis of the Arnon,

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,

- The Israelites' successful journey through Moab to that point was celebrated in a poem originally found in a lost text, the Book of the Wars of the Lord

15 And the slope of the wadis That extends to the site of Ar, And leans to the border of Moab."

15 And the slope of the wadis That extends to the site of Ar, And leans to the border of Moab."

15 and the slope of the valleys, that extends to the dwelling places of Ar and the borders of Moab.")

15 And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.

**16** From there *they continued* to Beer, that is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Assemble the people, that I may give them water."

**16** From there *they continued* to Beer, that is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Assemble the people, that I may give them water."

**16** From there they traveled to the Well of Beer, where the LORD had instructed Moses, "Gather the people together and I'll give you water."

**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 to it!

17 Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Sing to it!

17 That's also where Israel sang this song: Rise up, well! Sing to it!

**17** Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

- Ar (or el Misna-) was a city in the northern part of Moab about 10 miles south of the Arnon (22:36; Cf. Deut 2:9,18)

18 "The well, which the leaders dug, Which the nobles of the people hollowed out, With the scepter *and* with their staffs." And from the wilderness *they continued* to Mattanah,

18 "The well, which the leaders sank, Which the nobles of the people dug, With the scepter *and* with their staffs." And from the wilderness *they continued* to Mattanah,

18 It's the well that the leaders dug, the one carved out by the nobles of the people with their scepters and staffs. Then they moved on in the wilderness from there to Mattanah,

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:

19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

19 then from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

19 And from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth:

20 and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the land of Moab, at the top of Pisgah, which overlooks the desert.

20 and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the land of Moab, at the top of Pisgah which overlooks the wasteland.

20 and from Bamoth to the valley of Moab where their fields are, and from there to the top of Mount Pisgah, that looks down toward the open desert.

20 And from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.

- Leaving the eastern Arnon Valley the people moved on to Beer ("well")

- Moving still northward, alongside the desert, they came to Mattanah (or Khirbet el-Medeiyinah), Nahaliel, and Bamoth (8 miles south of Heshbon) and finally arrived at the foothills of Pisgah

- Pisgah was a few miles due east of the northeast edge of the Dead Sea, almost to the Plains of Moab across from Jericho

- At last Israel seemed to be on the verge of invasion and conquest of the Promised Land

#### (F) Victory over Sihon King of the Amorites (21:21-32)

**21** Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying,

**21** Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying,

**21** Later, Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who conveyed this request:

**21** And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying,

22 "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn off into field or vineyard; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the king's road until we have passed through your border."

22 "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn off into field or vineyard; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the king's highway until we have passed through your border."

22 "Permit us to pass through your land. We won't trespass in your fields or vineyards. We won't drink water from any well, and we'll only travel along the King's Highway until we've passed through your territory."

22 Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders..

- Shortly before Israel's approach Sihon, King of the Amorites, had dispossessed Moab of all their territory N. of Arnon

- Israel begged leave to pass peaceably through the Amorite land by the king's highway, but "Sihon gathered all his people" and came to Jahaz (between Dibon and Medeba) and fought against Israel and was defeated

23 But Sihon would not permit Israel to pass through his border. Instead, Sihon gathered all his people and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and came to Jahaz and fought against Israel.

23 But Sihon would not permit Israel to pass through his border. So Sihon gathered all his people and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and came to Jahaz and fought against Israel.

23 Instead of letting Israel pass through his territory, Sihon mustered his entire army and marched out to meet them in the wilderness. He arrived at Jahaz and attacked Israel.

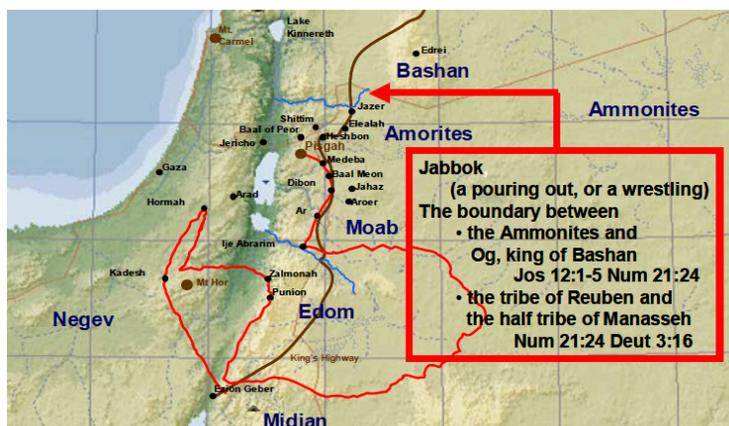
23 And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

24 Then Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the sons of Ammon; for the border of the sons of Ammon was Jazer.

24 Then Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the sons of Ammon; for the border of the sons of Ammon was Jazer.

24 But Israel defeated him in battle and took possession of all his lands from Arnon to Jabbok, including the Ammonites, even though the border of the Ammonites was strong.

24 And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.



The Ammonites lay to the east of the Jabbok, toward the desert. The Ammonites' land was spared because their border was fortified and they were related to Israel through Lot (Cf. Gen 19:36,38; Deut 2:19). So Israel took all the Amorite cities including Sihon's capital Heshbon, some 25 miles east of Jericho.

25 Israel took all these cities, and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all her villages.

25 Israel took all these cities and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all her villages.

25 So Israel captured all of those cities, occupied all the Amorite cities in Heshbon, and all its towns.

25 And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.

26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon.

26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon.

26 Heshbon was the capital city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who fought against the previous king of Moab and captured all his land from his capital city to Arnon.

26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon.

27 For that reason those who use proverbs say, "Come to Heshbon! Let it be built! So let the city of Sihon be established.

27 Therefore those who use proverbs say, "Come to Heshbon! Let it be built! So let the city of Sihon be established.

27 Therefore the ones who speak in proverbs say: Come to Heshbon and let it be built! Let the city of Sihon be established!

27 Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared:

- Churlishness and unprovoked violence bring their own punishment (Prov 16:18; 18:12; Num 21:21-31)

- So Israel gained all the Amorite territory, from the Arnon to the Jabbok

- Josephus says that every man in the nation fit to bear arms fought in the Amorite army against Israel [Antiquities 4:, section 2]

28 "For a fire spread from Heshbon, A flame from the town of Sihon; It devoured Ar of Moab, The dominant heights of the Arnon.

28 "For a fire went forth from Heshbon, A flame from the town of Sihon; It devoured Ar of Moab, The dominant heights of the Arnon.

28 A fire has gone out from Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon. It consumed Ar of Moab and the lords of the high places who lived in Arnon.

28 For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon.

29 "Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To an Amorite king, Sihon.

29 "Woe to you, O Moab! You are ruined, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To an Amorite king, Sihon.

29 Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, you people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters have gone into captivity to Sihon, king of the Amorites.

29 Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

- Moses had used an Amorite poem ironically to describe Israel's destruction of the Amorites

- Sihon's former conquest had been immortalized in poetry (v27-30)

- The poets sang about the destruction of Ar of Moab by Sihon who evidently had rebuilt Heshbon and made it his chief city

- He had then marched south against the Moabites, the people of Chemosh (the principal Moabite god), and had taken them as captives

- Everything had been destroyed by Sihon, from Heshbon in the north to Dibon in the south, including places in between such as Nophah (site unknown) and Medeba (7 miles south of Heshbon)

30 "But we have shot them down *with arrows*, Heshbon is destroyed as far as Dibon, Then we have laid waste as far as Nophah, Which *reaches* to Medeba."

30 "But we have cast them down, Heshbon is ruined as far as Dibon, Then we have laid waste even to Nophah, Which *reaches* to Medeba."

30 We've fired at them. Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon. We've destroyed them as far as Nophah even as far as Medeba.

30 We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba.

**31** So Israel lived in the land of the Amorites.

**31** Thus Israel lived in the land of the Amorites.

**31** So Israel lived in Amorite territory.

**31** Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

32 Now Moses sent *men* to spy out Jazer, and they captured its villages and dispossessed the Amorites who *were* there.

32 Moses sent to spy out Jazer, and they captured its villages and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

32 Then Moses sent out explorers to scout Jazer. They captured its towns and drove out the Amorites who were there.

32 And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there.

(G) Victory over Og of Bashan (21:33-35)

**33** Then they turned and went up by the way of Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan went out against them with all his people, for battle at Edrei.

**33** Then they turned and went up by the way of Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan went out with all his people, for battle at Edrei.

**33** Then they turned toward Bashan. However, Og, the king of Bashan, mustered his army and went out to attack them at Edrei.

**33** And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei.

34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, and all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon."

34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon."

34 The LORD told Moses, "You are not to fear him, because I'm going to deliver him, his entire army, and his land into your control. Do to him just what you've done to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who used to live in Heshbon."

34 And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

- The country from the Jabbok to Hermon (Bashan or Gilead) was at this time ruled by Og, the last of the Rephaim

- He also tried to prevent the progress of the Israelites, but was utterly routed, and all his cities and territory fell into the hands of the Israelites (Num 21:33-35; Deut 3:1-14; Ps 135:10-12; 136:17-22)

35 So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was no survivor left; and they took possession of his land.

35 So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was no remnant left him; and they possessed his land.

35 So they attacked him, his sons, and his entire army, until there wasn't even a single survivor left. Then they took possession of his land.

35 So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.