

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 20:14-21**  
**“Edom Rejects Israel”**

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
charleshjensen@aol.com

**NUMBERS 20:14-21**

**Verses 14-17**

*Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: “This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come on us. <sup>15</sup> Our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, <sup>16</sup> but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. <sup>17</sup> Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.”*

- Esau was the brother of Jacob (See Genesis 25:22 ff). The brothers were twin boys. Esau was born first and, therefore, was his father's heir. However, Jacob stole the birth right from his brother. Jacob became the leader of the Hebrews. Esau became the father of the kingdom of Edom. Thus, Israel addresses the Edomites as "brothers" in this passage because they share a common ancestor, Isaac. Isaac is the grandfather of both nations.
- Israel is encamped at Kadesh on the edge of Edomite territory. Moses asked permission for the nation of Israel to peacefully pass through the nation of Edom. Moses promises that Israel will not take anything that belongs to the Edomites or do any damage to the land as they pass through the land.
- The approach to the king of Edom is very polite and carefully worded. The clear expectation is that the Edomites will allow this request because Israel and Edom are "family."

### **Verse 18**

***But Edom answered: “You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword.”***

- However, Edom refused to give permission for Israel to pass through their territory.

### **Verse 19**

***The Israelites replied: “We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot—nothing else.”***

- So Israel renewed her request, specifically offering to pay for any damages they caused to Edom as they passed through that land.

### **Verses 20-21**

***Again they answered: “You may not pass through.” Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. <sup>21</sup> Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.***

- Again, Israel was denied permission to pass through Edom. To show the strength of their denial to Israel, Edom put a large army in the field. The Edomite King wanted Israel to know that he would prevent them from passing through his territory with military force if necessary.
- Israel turned away from Edom.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Edom Rejects Israel*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)