

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 21:1-3**  
**“Hormah... Destroyed”**

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**NUMBERS 21:1-3**

**Verse 1-3**

*When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. <sup>2</sup> Then Israel made this vow to the LORD: “If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities.” <sup>3</sup> The LORD listened to Israel’s plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns; so the place was named Hormah.*

- The issue which is involved here is the Biblical concept of HEREM. Often referred to as "the ban," HEREM is a vow taken by one dedicated to God. The vow is clear. The dedicated follower of God declares to God that anything in his life which cannot be totally devoted to God must be totally destroyed. In this text Israel places the cities of the nation of Arad under HEREM.
- Because the Hebrews do not believe that the nation of Arad can be totally devoted to God, they declare that they will destroy the cities of that place and everything else in that land.
- God accepts Israel's decision to place Arad under HEREM. However, Israel makes no effort to conform Arad to the will of God. Because Israel believes that it is impossible to make Arad totally acceptable to YHWH, Israel totally destroys that nation.
- See Numbers 14:39-45. The situation between Arad and Israel is made more complicated because Arad was the nation that Israel attacked after God told them to turn back into the desert. Israel lost this battle because they acted against the will of God.
- The name given to the nation of Arad by Israel is Hormah. In Hebrew Hormah means destroyed.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Hormah... Destroyed*. 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*.)