

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 27:12-23**  
**“The Old Passes/The New Begins”**

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**Numbers 27:12-23**

**Verses 12-14**

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. <sup>13</sup> After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, <sup>14</sup> for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes.” (These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin.)*

- YHWH spoke to Moses as the Hebrews were ready to enter the Promised Land. As Moses was part of the generation that rebelled against God, both he and Aaron were cursed with that generation and so could not enter the land. The story of Moses & Aaron's disobedience is told in Numbers 20:1-13. As a result of it, God told them that they would not be allowed to enter the land. Aaron was already dead. God was telling Moses that it was time for him to prepare to die, too.
- While there was no way for Moses to escape the consequences of his rebellion against the will of God (he would not be allowed to enter the land) God did allow him to look across the Jordon River and see the land.
- Moses never argues with God's decision. He recognized that he was being punished for his own sin and must accept the consequences thereof.

**Verses 15-17**

*Moses said to the LORD, <sup>16</sup> “May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community <sup>17</sup> to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”*

- Moses greatest concern as he faced the moment of his death was that God raise up new leaders for the Hebrew community who would make the will of God clear to the people so that they could follow the will of God. He did not ask God to give him more time. He prayed that God would raise up a leader to take Israel forward.

### Verses 18-23

*So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him."<sup>19</sup> Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence.<sup>20</sup> Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.<sup>21</sup> He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in."<sup>22</sup> Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly.<sup>23</sup> Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the LORD instructed through Moses.*

- God answered Moses' prayer immediately. God had already selected the man who would lead the nation into the Promised Land. The man was Joshua, the son of Nun, who had been one of the spies who urged Israel to move forward an entire generation before. See Numbers 13-14.
- Moses was to take Joshua before Eleazar the High Priest. The High Priest was to declare the decision of God and to tell the people that Joshua was God's choice to lead them in the future. This was the official announcement that new leadership had been selected for the community.
- Moses was to acknowledge his personal approval of the new leader. He was to give his power to Joshua. The words "give him some of your authority," imply that the passing of power from Moses to Joshua was not to be instantaneous. Moses would give Joshua his authority over time, giving Joshua more and more responsibility until Moses died.
- In the future things will be different! God spoke directly to Moses. In the future God will reveal his will in a less direct manner. It will be necessary for Joshua to seek to know God's will by coming to the High Priest who would use the "Urim" to discover God's will. The change of leadership always brings change. The future will not be exactly like the past.
- The Urim is mentioned in Exodus 28:30. Exodus 28:30 mentions the "Urim and the Thummin." What these were exactly is unknown. They were objects placed in a pocket in the High Priest's garment which rested over his heart. Israel used them to determine the will of God. They are referred to by the Hebrews as "The Lights." Although the English spelling of the word Urim does not show this, the Hebrew spelling of the word begins with the Hebrew letter "aleph," the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The word literally means "curses." Thummin begins with the Hebrew letter "taw" which is the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It literally means "perfections" or "blessing." The implication in this is that all the curses and blessings of God,

the entire will of God, can be discerned through the objects. We do not know exactly how they were used or what they looked like. However, the belief is that if the Urim was dominant in the consultation, the answer of God was "no," but if the Thummin was, God's answer was "yes'.

- Moses did exactly as he was told to do. And so, the course for Israel's future was placed in the hands of Moses' successor.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Old Passes/The New Begins*. 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*.)