

The chapter outlines what happened during the long period of sojourn of the children of Israel as they left Egypt and then were forced to wander in the wilderness because of their rebellion and refusal to fight the inhabitants of the land. At least it highlights the places they went to, although not always the incidents that took place upon the way.

It was pointed out to me that the great incident of the rebellion which took place in the Wilderness of Paran is neither referred by name nor actually referred at all. Rithmah, verse 18 was that place, but it is not cited elsewhere. It was a place in Paran. The reason that the rebellion was not mentioned maybe because the journeys of the twelve tribes was still the same, just long delayed because of the intransigence of a foolish people who had not ascended in hearts and minds to Zion, but had remained rooted below in the condemned world of the sad and pathetic mundane.

There are 42 stages in their journeys which are broken down into three sections.

1 Leaving Egypt and entering into the wilderness. 15 places

2 Wandering for thirty-eight years. 19 places

3 Final journey into the land. 8 places.

These are real places detailing an historic journey by a large number of people in a world of transition of change, because of this we can calculate something of the logistics of their experiences as they passed through.

The average time for staying at these different places varies significantly for each section. The first section was for about a total of one year so each stop over was for about **three weeks** on average. They did spend a designated amount of time at the final destination of that section, where they were condemned to wander in the wilderness for a total of 40 years, (an extra 38) this

was at Rithmah where Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days before the spies were sent out.

During the wandering for 38 years the average stay was for **2 years**. This until the death of Aaron when they reached Mount Hor, see Numbers 20v22-29.

During the last year, after the death of Aaron, for whom they mourned 30 days or a full month, they journeyed another 8 times with an average stop of about **40 days**.

The pace of progress was most rapid when fleeing Egypt, then stubbornly slow for the next period, then returning to a faster pace for the approach to the land. This is in keeping with expectations. The path which God had etched out for the people of Israel was clear even if they were reluctant to head in the required direction. Despite any of their misgivings they would enter into the promised land but at the time of God's choosing in response to the decisions they made, even as they thought that they were in control of their own destiny and could walk in whatever way they wished or imagined.

The chapter goes on to speak about the requirement to destroy all the artwork of the Canaanites in verse 52 *"Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places"*. These were part of the iniquity of the Amorites which had now come to a *"fulness"* Genesis 15v16. To leave the original inhabitants there would be to court disaster, Israel was warned not to compromise with such people. God knows the heart when others do not.

"But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, then it shall come to pass, that those that ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell."

"Moreover, it shall come to pass that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them". God set out the parameters of His care

for them. It was not “kill or be killed” but kill or God would be coming for you! They would have earned their fate as those who thought that they could rewrite the rules of morality!

A Voice from the Altar

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