THE FALL OF A GREAT LEADER
AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

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One distinctive feature that sets the Bible apart from all other historical writings is its relentless willingness to mention

the transgressions of its heroes. Even Moses, who, without a doubt, is regarded as the greatest and most powerful of the O.T. prophets and leaders, does not have his failures omitted. He was a leader - a leader who was tremendously used of God, and yet one who fell into sin. For the benefit of all of God's leaders today, lessons can be learned from the sin of Moses. Lessons that will aid the leader when pressures mount. Lessons that will guard against the hideous sin of unbelief. Lessons that will reveal the increased demands that come with the title "leader". And lessons that will warn against the high cost of disobedience paid by God's leaders who sin.

THE PRESSURE OF DIFFICULTIES ON LEADERSHIP

IN DIFFICULTY, PEOPLE-PRESSURE IS INEVITABLE

In Numbers 20:1-5, Moses the leader faces the pressure that comes when difficulty arrives. After 37 years have passed, the stage seems set for history to repeat itself, as the second generation appears no different than the first in their complaint about a lack of water at Kadesh. Why did God allow the situation regarding the lack of water to occur in the first place? What was His purpose?

> "First, the second generation was to be put to the test in order to find out whether it was better than the first; second, Yahweh's greatness and might were to be impressed upon them by His ability and readiness to help them in their hour of need in order to prove Himself as the God of their covenant. By purposely creating a situation in which the people lacked water (a most precious commodity in the desert), Yahweh causes the second generation to realize their dependance upon Him, as well as His readiness to help them as

He had done to their fathers".

Difficult times tend to come all at once. This appears to be the case with Moses. At Kadesh, Moses experiences pressure from all angles. In verse one, Miriam's death no doubt was a burden to Moses. The absence of water not only would cause irritation among the nation of Israel, but also with the leadership - Moses and Aaron (v.2). The effect of this great need was collective opposition (v.2b), and also verbal strife [ ].

This opposition apparently was initiated by "ringleaders" who called and assembled (niphal-passive stem) the people together. Moses faced verbal complaint in verse three (cp. Ex.17:2-3) by the people who cried out: "If only we had expired or breathed out [ ] our lives when our brethren died before the Lord!" In other words, they were implying "anything would be better than this!" More pressure is added in verses 4 & 5 as Moses' motives are questioned and he is credited (blamed) for a work that he did not do. It was God - not Moses and Aaron - who led Israel out into the wilderness. And it was the sin of Israel that resulted in her roaming around in the desert for 40 years (it was not Moses' fault). Moses also faced internal pressure as he recalled the last experience at Kadesh 37 years prior. He was 120 years old and was very concerned that Israel would produce a repeat performance and thus incur God's judgment again and restrict him from ever entering the land as he so greatly desired.

IN DIFFICULTY, GOD'S PRESCRIPTION IS INDISPENSIBLE

The leaders - Moses and Aaron - did what all of God's leaders should do in times of pressure

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.M. Margaliot, "The Transgression of Moses and Aaron - Numbers 20:1-13", The Jewish Quarterly Review, LXXIV, No.2, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrouns, October, 1983), p.217-218.

and need: they entered God's presence and sought Divine answers (v.6). "They fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them". God then gave Moses and Aaron exact prescriptions (commands) which in turn demanded exact obedience (v.8). Moses is explicitly told to

1) take the rod, 2) assemble the congregation, and 3) both Moses and Aaron were to speak to the rock (note: the verb for "speak" is plural in the Hebrew-).

It is interesting that God told Moses to take "the rod" with him, since he was not to use it, though he did use his rod in other miracles involving water (Num.7:20, 14:16). This time, however, "Moses took the rod from before the LORD." This phrase points to the same rod that budded - which God used to vindicate the Aaronic priesthood. After this event, it was then kept "before the testimony (the Ark with the 2 tables of the Law) to be kept as a sign against the rebels" so that God might put an end to Israel's grumblings (Num.17:10). Now Israel is grumbling again, so God tells Moses to get the rod to remind the nation about her former sin of grumbling.

Moses did obey with exact obedience on two of the three commands. He took the rod (v.9), and he with Aaron gathered the congregation together to witness the miracle that God intended to perform. If Moses would have obeyed the third command exactly, it would have been a testimony to the people who witnessed. The act of speaking to the rock by its unusual nature would draw attention to the rock and not Moses. This indeed was God's intention, for the N.T. describes this rock as none other than Jesus Christ! (I Cor.10:4) This "speaking to the rock" would reveal the rock as being the source of water, and not the efforts of Moses. Moses, however, failed in regard to the third imperative.

THE SIN OF DISBELIEF BY LEADERSHIP

DISBELIEF MANIFESTED IN MOOD (ATTITUDE)

In the Bible, God speaks of leaders who had moments of unbelief. Such lack of faith manifested itself in despair, such as Elijah (who fled from Jezebel) and John the Baptist (who had moments of doubt concerning Christ). In Numbers 20:10, God records Moses as one who also manifested a lack of complete trust in Yahweh by the attitude he displayed. In this verse he "shows his exasperation, his famous temper (cp. Ex.2:11-12), and his astonishing egotism." "The faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the Lord" "The faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the Lord" Moses, who needed at this point to fully trust God for patience and self-control, did not. " Moses, who needed at this point to fully trust God for patience and self-control, did not.

Moses was about to sin internally, which would be "slippery steps" leading to outward disobedience. In verse 10, he displays 3 sinful attitudes - 1) impatience, 2) anger, and 3) pride (or self-exaltation). His impatience is evidenced by his abrupt appeal for Israel to "**listen now!**" His anger is seen as he addresses them as "**rebels**" (Literally - "you continual disobedient ones!"). Though his description was accurate and true, his tenor was one of anger. Psalm 106:32 & 33 describe Moses as having been "provoked to wrath at the waters of Meribah...(and) because they

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" "The faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the LordEugene Arden, "How Moses failed God", Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LXXVI, (Philadelphia: The Society of Biblical Lit. and Exegesis., March, 1957), p.52.

" Moses, who needed at this point to fully trust God for patience and self-control, did not. C. F.Keil & F. Delitzch, "The Pentateuch", Commentary on the O.T. Vol.I., (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Pub. Co., 1985), p.131.

were rebellious against his spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips." A man's anger never exhibits the righteous behavior that God expects (James 1:20).

In his self-righteous anger, Moses then displayed a spirit of pride and independence by his statement, "Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Moses' downfall began when he took additional presumptuous action and spoke to the people (v.10) about their quarrels, threats, and unjustified arguments, rather than doing exclusively what God said - namely, "speak to the rock" (v.8).

DISBELIEF MANIFESTED IN WORD (PRESUMPTION)

Moses' "rash words" mentioned in Psalm 106:32-33 are the words reflected in his implication that he & Aaron had the power to provide water out of the rock. Such pride by its very nature fails to foster true belief in and reverence for Yahweh. Many argue that the word "we" in verse 10 refers not to Moses and Aaron, but to Moses and God. The most obvious antecedents to the plural pronoun "we," however, are Moses and Aaron. The "we" is blasphemous, nonetheless, whether Moses intended it to refer to himself & Aaron or even to himself and God. The Bible is clear that it was God, not Moses, who provided the water out of the rock. In Psalm 78 it is evident that God "split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers" (v.15,16; cp.Is.48:21). Moses not only usurped God's place in word ("we") but this led also to deed ("he smote the rock").

DISBELIEF MANIFESTED IN ACTION (DISOBEDIENCE)

In the Bible, God shows no distinction (dichotomy) between faith (trust), and obedience. Faith always results in obedience, and unbelief always results in disobedience, as was the case with Moses.

In Numbers 20:12, God's response to Moses' disobedience reveals his disbelief. The Lord said: "you did not believe (trust in) Me"

[ ].

Commands omitted. The external manifestation of Moses' sin was two-fold: 1) He **did** what he was not told to do (struck the rock), and 2) He **did not do** what he was told to do (speak to the rock). Omitting from God's commands is just as dangerously wrong as adding to them. It is important to note that an omission will eventually pave the way for an addition. Because Aaron was Moses' translator (Ex.4:14-17), the implication is that Moses was to speak to the rock, and Aaron was to repeat his works loud enough for all of the people to hear. The sin was not merely in Moses' striking of the rock, but in both his and Aaron's failure to "speak to" it. If the sin was exclusively in Moses' striking of the rock, the transgression of Aaron could not be explained (v.12). This truth reveals that sins of omission are just as costly as sins actually committed outwardly.

Sins committed. Along with Moses' failure to speak to the rock as commanded (v.8), his disobedience is seen in his action of striking it. God, by commanding Moses to speak to the rock "before the eyes" of Israel, intended the people to rejoice at the sight of abundant water, and to "doubly and trebly rejoice at the knowledge that their God is with them and is showing Himself by one of his happiest miracles. It is this circumstance which Moses, in a fit of indignation, turns into a bitter denunciation; he curses the people, and in smiting the magic rod against the rock, destroys the hallowed moment that God had so clearly intended."

In order to honor God as "being holy," trust or belief (faith) is a prerequisite. The idea in the Hebrew is that Moses did not have enough trust in God to treat HIm as being Holy (v.12). His striking the stone revealed a lack of faith. After all, it was striking the rock that brought results

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"Arden, p.52.

the last time God provided water for the people (Ex.17:6). Consequently, this time, rather than obeying God and trying something new, such as "speaking to it", Moses struck it - and for good measure he struck it twice.

Moses' act of striking the rock twice was so done "as if it depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone." Moses' disobedience revealed his failure to " Moses' disobedience revealed his failure to trust God's faithfulness to His word.

In summary, Moses' sin was an unbelief that manifested itself in 1) mood, 2) words, and 3) action. His anger (the catalyst) prompted him to utter words he was not to speak (compare Hebrews 12:15 which describes a "root of bitterness" that springs up, troubling both the individual and defiling others). Moses' pride underlied his question "must we bring forth water..." and detracted from Yahweh's exclusive ability to provide the necessary water, and his forceful striking of the rock twice indicates his continued anger as well as his lack of faith in regard to the ability and good-will of God to provide water the way He intended. Moses' reaction as a whole - his anger, his words, and his action - can now be seen to have been diametrically opposed to the plan and intention of Yahweh which Moses was made to understand very clearly.

THE INCREASED DEMANDS ON LEADERSHIP

LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO PAY FOR THEIR OWN SIN

Deuteronomy 1:37 has caused much controversy concerning the time Moses' sin and restriction from the land took place. In this verse Moses says: "Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither." In the context (vv.34-40) of verse 37,

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" Moses' disobedience revealed his failure to Keil, p.131.

.Margaliot, p.218.

Moses is basically recalling the unbelief (coupled with grumbling & complaining) of Israel when they refused to enter the land after hearing the bad report of the 10 spies (Num.14:28-30). At that time God took an oath, saying, "**not one** of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers" (Dt.1:35). The only exceptions were Caleb (v.36) and Joshua (v.38). [note: Moses was not even included as one of the exceptions]. Although Moses did not have part in the unbelief evidenced at the time Israel refused to enter the land (Num.14:26-27), the implication from verse 35 is that God in his foreknowledge knew Moses also would not enter the promised land. Though the announcement of Moses' exclusion from the land occurred 38 years after that of the Israelites at Kadesh, the reason for the exclusions was the same - unbelief. While Israel refused to believe God's word at Kadesh (Num.14:22-23; cp.Dt.1:32), Moses refused to believe God's word by the waters of Meribah at Kadesh (Num.20:12).

The phrase "for your sakes" (because of you - v.37) still needs explanation. The phrase, which occurs 2 other times in Deuteronomy (Dt.3:26; 4:21) and with 2 other distinct yet synonymous words, seems to show that Moses is shifting the blame for God's anger and judgment toward him. The questions that must be answered are: "When was God angry with Moses `because of' Israel?" and "When did God say: `not even you shall enter there'?" Basically two views are held to by theologians brave enough not to by-pass this perplexity.

One view bases its position on the proposition that leadership receives full responsibility for the sins of the people it leads. For example, a boss whose worker makes a mistake stands fully responsible for the error.

> "The reason for Moses' exclusion from the promised land, in this context (Deut.1:34-39), seems to be directly related to his responsibility for the Israelites (i.e."on your account") before the Lord. Although Moses was personally without blame for the failures of the

Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, his identification with the people as their leader meant that he also accepted with them the result of their failure."

This view asserts that Moses restriction from the Land was because of corporate guilt, not individual guilt. That is - Moses, as the representative of Israel, was corporately restricted from entering the Land while at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 14:22-39), and was proven and declared to be individually guilty by his own personal unbelief and rebellion 38 years later (Num.20:12-13). Those who espouse this interpretation make the application that sin effects others. When the 10 spies lacked faith and sinned, so did Israel, and the national sin left its toll on Moses, who was forensically restricted from entering the Promised Land "on account of" Israel.

Whereas, in I Kings 14:16, the people are punished because of the leader's apostasy, in Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26, 4:21, the leader is punished because of the peoples' lack of faith. This truth, is further evidenced in II Kings 8:19, where Judah is preserved by God "on account of [ ] David His servant's sake."

While this view does contain elements of truth, it conflicts with God's principle that "everyone shall die for his own sin" (Jer.31:30; cp. also Ez.18:19-24).

In Deuteronomy 1:37, it at first glance appears that Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan in consequence of the people's disobedience at Kadesh in the second year of the Exodus. This problem is easily resolved when it is remembered that the context is hortatory primarily and historical secondarily. Regarding this,

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"Peter C. Craigie, "The Book of Deuteronomy", The New International Commentary on the O.T., ed. by R.K. Harrison, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976), p.105.

"Thomas W. Mann, "Theological Reflections on the Denial of Moses", Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol 98., (Ann Arbor Michigan: The Society of Biblical Literature, Dec. 1979), p.490.

Keil and Delitzsch state the following:

> We are not to infer from the close connection in which this event, which did not take place according to Numbers 20:1-13 till the second arrival of the congregation at Kadesh, is placed with the earlier judgment of God at Kadesh, that the two were contemporaneous, and so supply, after "the Lord was angry with me", the words "on that occasion." For Moses did not intend to teach the people history and chronology, but to set before them the holiness of the judgments of the Lord. By using the expression "for your sakes", Moses did not wish to free himself from guilt.

Moses says "because of you" not to blame-shift, but to warn Israel not to sin in the same way she did before.

When was God angry with Moses? And when did God restrict him from the Land? It was not at Kadesh-barnea when Israel sinned; rather, Numbers 20:12, and 27:14 reveal that it was on account of Moses' own presumptive anger and disobedience at the same spot, but on a different occasion - 38 years later. God's divine commentary on the sin of Moses in Psalm 106:32-33, provides an indisputable answer as to when Moses sinned and faced the judgment of God. In Psalm 106, God describes Israel's rebelliousness in chronological order. He moves from Egypt (v.7), through the Red Sea (v.8-12), into the wilderness (v.13-18), to Sinai (v.19-23), and then to Kadesh-barnea (v.24-27), and Baal-peor (v.28-31). **After** God had already mentioned Israel's refusal to enter the land at Kadesh (v.24-27), in verses 32-33 God introduces a distinct account - namely that of Meribah - where it is said that "it went hard with Moses **because of them**." This context clearly states that it was at Meribah, where "they (Israel) provoked Moses to wrath (Hiphil

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.Keil, p.289.

imperfect - causative stem). It was at Meribah, where it went "evil (hard, bad, troublesome -) with Moses." In other words, it was here (at this point) that Moses sinned and received the consequences for it. It was at this time, when the provocation to wrath and evil was **"because of them"** [ ]. In verse 33, God gives the reason why it was "because of them" (v.32) that Moses was provoked to wrath and evil: He says, because ( ) they (Israel) rebelled against his (Moses') spirit, with the result that Moses "spoke rashly with his lips."

The Bible, in Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21, declares that God was "angry" with Moses. The word God uses is [ ] which literally means "to breathe", or "to emit breath through the nostrils." As a verb it occurs only in the figurative sense - "to be angr

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" In both Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21, the verb [ ] is used in the Hithpael stem and indicates God's action of showing Himself angry with Moses. A very clear statement in Deuteronomy 32:51 records God telling Moses that he would die as Aaron did (v.50) "because " In both Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21, the verb [ ] is used in the Hithpael stem and indicates God's action of showing Himself angry with Moses. A very clear statement in Deuteronomy 32:51 records God telling Moses that he would die as Aaron did (v.50) "because **you** (plural) broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel...(and) because **you** did not treat Me as Holy in the midst of the sons of Israel" (v.51).

" In both Deuteronomy 1:37 and 4:21, the verb [ ] is used in the Hithpael stem and indicates God's action of showing Himself angry with Moses. A very clear statement in Deuteronomy 32:51 re
S. P. Tregelles (ed.), Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976), p.65.

LEADERS ARE PRONE TO SIN LIKE THE PEOPLE THEY LEAD

In Numbers 27:14 God clearly reveals that Moses sinned just like the people did. In addressing Moses and Aaron, God said: "you disobeyed (rebelled - plural) My command in the Desert of Zin in the disobedience ( ) of the congregation." Moses' failure to carry out the Lord's instructions precisely was as much an act of unbelief as the people's failure to trust God's promises instead of the spies's pessimistic reports (Num.14:11).

Like Moses, the sin of Israel began in their hearts (Ps.78:8, 95:7-11), manifested itself in their speech (they "murmured" - Deut. 1:27, 34; Num. 14:2), and resulted in disobedient action (when they refused to obey the command to enter the land - Num. 13:31-33). Israel's disobedience was also like that of Moses' in that they presumed upon God when they later attempted to take the land in their own strength (Num.14:41-45).

While Moses' sin matched Israel's in degree (quality), a distinction is seen in the duration (quantity). Moses' one-time act of unbelief and disobedient rebellion is contrasted with the continual sin of Israel. In Numbers 20:10, Moses addresses Israel by saying "you rebels". The phrase "you rebels" [ ] is a masculine plural Qal participle of [ ] ("Marah") which means "the rebelling ones" and describes their rebellion as a permanent condition (c. also Ps.78:8). In Hebrews 3:10, in a context describing the first generation of the Exodus, God said, quoting Psalm 95:10: "they always go astray in their heart."

It is further evident that Israel had persisted in her unbelief. In Deuteronomy 1:32 the participle with the negative [ ] should be rendered "you were not believing" indication that the Nation's unbelief was continual. When Israel sinned at Kadesh-Barnea, God points to their continual disbelief

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.Gordon J. Wenham, "Numbers", The Tyndale O.T. Commentaries, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-varsity Press, 1981), p.150.

and unfaithfulness (v.51). He declared that they put Him to the test ten times (v.22) in only 2 years: 1) at the Red Sea (Ex.14:11-12); 2) at Marah (Ex. 15:23,24); 3) in the wilderness of Sin (Ex.16:2); 4) & 5) in connection with Manna (Ex.16:20,27); 6) at Rephidim (Ex.17:1-3); 7) at Horeb (Ex.32:7); 8) at Taberah (Num.11:1); 9) the complaint of the mixed multitude (Num.11:4); and now 10) at Kadesh-Barnea (Num.14).

While God, on the one hand, declared that "all the men...(who) have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the Land..."(v.22-23), on the other hand, Moses - the leader - sinned in the manner he did at Maribah one time and was restricted from entering the Land.

LEADERS FACE STRICTER JUDGMENT THAN THE PEOPLE THEY LEAD

Judgment on leadership is more strict because of the fact that of all people, leaders should know better. James 3:1 says: "let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." Jesus declared the principle that "to whom much is given much shall be required" (Lk.12:48).

While Israel faced God's judgment for her perpetual rebellion and unbelief, Moses did for his one-time act.

> Moses' unbelief was not a total distrust in the omnipotence of God, but rather was a momentary wavering of that immovable assurance, which the two heads of the nation ought to have shown the congregation, but did not show.

Moses' transgression was extremely serious because it was committed in public. In front of the entire congregation of Israel, Moses "broke faith" with Yahweh (Deut.32:51). The phrase "broke

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.Keil, p.130.

faith" is derived from the Hebrew Qal perfect verb [ ] which means "to act treacherously" or "to be faithless." The fact that it is a perfect verb points to Moses' one-time act of faithlessness "at the waters of Maribah - Kadesh." The piel perfect verb translated "treat Me as Holy" [ ] again points to the one-time incident when Moses & Aaron failed to "set God apart" by their disobedience.

While Israel faced the consequences for their continual faithlessness and failure to uphold the holiness of God, Moses as the public leader faced a stricter judgment, when he acquired the consequences for his one-time sin. This should serve as a sobering warning to anyone who is leading God's flock today.

THE HIGH COST OF DISOBEDIENCE IN LEADERSHIP

FAILURE IN TESTIMONY IS THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE

A testimony fails despite pragmatic results. When Numbers 20:8 is compared with verse 11, one finds that although Moses totally disobeyed God's instructions, God still provided abundant water. Moses' disobedience still brought about results. Though Moses' striking of the rock brought forth water, it was not produced in the divinely intended way, and this sin marred Moses' testimony as he failed to sanctify God "in the eyes of the children of Israel." An important lesson for contemporary leaders (preachers etc.) to learn is that **the end doesn't justify the means,** and **results don't justify disobedience.**

A testimony fails despite the fact that God still receives glory. God is concerned that His leaders uphold Him as trustworthy and holy (sacredly set-apart) in the midst of His people, because His reputation is vitally important to Him (Dt.32:51; cp. Ezekiel 36:16-38). Moses' failure in preventing the full power of Yahweh from becoming evident in the eyes of Israel robbed God of the fear and reverence that was due Him. The miracle would have been more impressive if

Moses spoke to the rock, rather than striking it as he had done before in the presence of the elders (ex.17:5-6).

In contrast to Moses' faithlessness however, God demonstrated His faithfulness, because the waters flowed "abundantly". God received Glory even though it wasn't through His man - Moses. Numbers 20:13 has a contrasting assertion from that in verse 12. On the one hand, while God said that He was not shown to be Holy [-Hiphil stem] by Moses, Yahweh, proved Himself holy

[-Niphal stem] among the people (v.13).

> "The meaning of [ ] is here not passive, but reflexive, `He made Himself holy"; within this context, `He showed, proved, asserted His sanctity'; more accurately, He reasserted it after it had been desecrated."

Deuteronomy 32:51 reveals in an interesting play on words that it was at Kadesh [ ] that Moses failed to uphold God as

holy [ ]. And yet it was at Kadesh where God received glory even through man's disobedience (Num.20:13).

RESTRICTION IN BLESSINGS IS THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE

The result of Moses' disobedience was a limitation on the blessings he could have received. While God no doubt had a desire for Moses to enter the Promised Land, because of sin he was now restricted to merely seeing it from afar - that is from "Abarim," the range of mountains east of the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea (Numbers 27:12; cp. Deut.34:4-5). Moses is limited to a "look" at the Land. In Deuteronomy 32, God commands him to go up Mount Nebo and "look at the land of Canaan, which

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"Margaliot, p.226.

I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. Then die on the mountain...for you shall see the Land at a distance, but you shall not go there..."(vv.49,50,52).

Desecrating Yahweh's name (reputation) is extremely serious, as evidenced by the magnitude of the restriction. "The retribution stands in direct relation to the nature of the transgression and its enormity." It is also very important to note that the severity of the discipline is matched to the sin based on Moses' position as the " It is also very important to note that the severity of the discipline is matched to the sin based on Moses' position as the leader of the people.

The regret of a leader. The result of disobedience is always regret. The regret of Moses is evident by his repeated statements that he would not enter the Land (Deut.1:37; 3:27; 31:2). His regret is also evident by his pleading with God to enter the Land (Deut.3:23-29), and by his somber statements such as: "I shall die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but (in contrast) you shall cross..." (Deut.4:22).

In Deuteronomy 3:23-29, the lesson to be learned is that sin leaves lasting scars (consequences). In this section Moses unveils, in his personal testimony, his earnest desire to enter the promised land. Moses testified that he pleaded (literally - "sought the favor or grace [ ]) with Yahweh to enter the Land. "The verb used (Hithpael of) is a strong one, implying a solemn request for the Lord to be compassionate (see Ps.30:7-8 for a similar use

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" It is also very important to note that the severity of the discipline is matched to the sin based on Moses' position as the Margaliot, p.228.

" In verse 24 Moses addresses God as "Master Yahweh" or "Lord Yahweh" [ ] which is a name or title for God used only twice in Deuteronomy and both occasions in prayers of Moses (cp.9:26). The combined title is indicative of a deep personal tone of request. Moses in desperation then appealed to God's " In verse 24 Moses addresses God as "Master Yahweh" or "Lord Yahweh" [ ] which is a name or title for God used only twice in Deuteronomy and both occasions in prayers of Moses (cp.9:26). The combined title is indicative of a deep personal tone of request. Moses in desperation then appealed to God's character (His greatness, strength, uniqueness, and mighty works) saying that he as Yahweh's servant had only just begun to see all that God would do (v.24). Moses' request shows the deep sorrow and tragedy in his life.

> "He had begun to see the marvelous works of the Lord, from the Exodus to the conquest of the lands east of the Jordan. But now, just when the climax was drawing near, he would be unable to see the Lord's fulfillment of the ancient promise.
> It was a promise to which he had devoted his whole life, and the thought that he would not see its fulfillment was too much for him to accept without question."

In verse 23, Moses next appealed to God's emotions, begging Yahweh to allow him to cross over and see the "fair Land" that is beyond the Jordan, that "good hill country and Lebanon" (v.25). All of this pleading, however, was to no avail. Because God had declared that Moses would not enter the Land, He would not so much as listen to Moses' plea, but said: "Enough! [ ] - (I have heard enough); "Do not continue to speak to Me anymore about this matter."

Leaders need to be on guard for the unintentional misplacing of priorities. Moses persistence in intercessory prayer for Israel was a great quality he possessed. His request for God to alter His prohibition by His grace was probably not in itself illegitimate either. However, Moses' persistence in requesting a reversal of God's prohibition in a sense reflects a slight shift

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in Moses' focus. The vision of the promise had become a consuming passion to set foot in the Land, but the vision had slipped from the Lord of the promise to the promise itself. Moses had taken his eyes off of the God of Canaan Land, and wrongly refocused them on Canaan Land itself.

The removal of a leader. Disobedience leaves its own consequences. God was now to remove Moses from his position of leadership as evident by His stern words: "you shall not bring this assembly into the Land" (Numbers 20:12). God's refusal to hear and heed Moses' proposal in Deuteronomy 3:23-29, reveals the tragic result of sin.

Forgiveness of sin does not always carry with it alleviation of the consequences of that sin. While sin can be removed, its scars very often cannot be. For example, when God restricts a divorced man from holding the office of Pastor or Deacon (II Tim.3:2,12), this does not imply that such a sin is unforgivable. What it does mean (as with Moses) is that the sin's scar is not removed. The leadership of Moses faced a restriction and God's leaders in churches must be devoid of such restrictions to remain qualified to serve in an official capacity.

Does God's refusal to restore Moses to the former privilege of entering the land mean that God did not forgive Moses for his sin? No! David, who sinned with Bathsheba (II Sam.11:1-13) and murdered Uriah her husband (II Sam.11:14-27) was forgiven (II Sam.12:1-15; cp.Ps.51). But it is vitally important to note that the repercussions (after-effects, "scars" etc.) never were removed. Nathan the prophet told David: "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house...The child also that is born to you shall surely die" (II Sam.12:10,13). The Bible's universal, unchanging principle stating, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"(Gal.6:7) is again proven true.

The result of Moses' disobedience was a pre-mature death. Moses would be gathered to

his people, just as Aaron was, even though he might have enjoyed many more years of leadership as evidenced by the words stated after his death: "Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated" (Deut.34:7).

The replacement of a leader. **No leader is irreplaceable.** Even though Moses was the most uniquely privileged human leader to ever live (Deut.34:10-12), God replaced him with the faithful man - Joshua. As "great" a shepherd as Moses was, he was not indispensable. Yahweh saw fit to remove Moses and replace him. God, foreknowing the damage one sin could cause, was not found "short-changed" to meet the need (vacuum) that resulted from sin in the life of His leader. The same truth applies today. None of God's preachers, teachers, etc. are irreplaceable. While it is never God's will for one of His representatives to be disqualified, God in His holiness demands that his standards be upheld (I Tim.3:1-7) and replacements be made as necessary.

The sheep learn by watching the shepherd. His life is to be a model for them to follow. When a leader's testimony fails, he then becomes incapable of credible teaching. For the welfare of the people he must step down so that God can replace him, as was necessary in the case of Moses (Num.27:18-20).

In Numbers 27:16-17, Moses demonstrates his concern over his failure in his responsibility as leader by requesting that the Lord place a spiritual man over the people. In his concern "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep without a shepherd" (Num.27:17), Moses demonstrates the compassion of a great leader. Even though the people had provoked Moses to sin at Maribah and he had missed his heart's desire, (with only death as his upcoming prospect - verse 13), Moses still had a loving concern for the people. This same type of concern is demonstrated to an even greater degree in Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34, by the "Great Shepherd" - Jesus Christ. Just as

Moses (who was about to die) prayed that a replacement for himself be given to an unworthy people, Jesus Christ - knowing of His approaching death, and the desperate need - "was moved with compassion" and then asked his disciple to pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest fields (v.38). Israel at the time of Christ's public ministry was without a spiritual leader among the nation. In fact, the leaders of the theocratic kingdom at this time were so totally corrupt that when Jesus saw the multitudes, "He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt.9:36).

Even though Israel would enter the Land, and Moses would not, he did not let this restriction (heart-breaking personal loss) keep him from being faithful to fulfilling his task. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Prov.24:16). Moses was obedient in proclaiming God's Word to Israel even though he knew he would die. As the People are being prepared to enter the Land, Moses gives them God's Word and warns against the greatest danger they will face. In Deuteronomy 4:21-22, he warns the people to take notice of his own fate which was the result of divine chastening for disobedience. The people, (having been reminded of the result of Moses' disobedience in leadership - his restriction from entering the Land - verse 22), are warned not to forget the covenant (v.23). Such forgetfulness would lead to

disobedient idolatry (v.36b), and result in God's judgment - namely - expulsion from the land (v.26-27). The strong warning is based on the fact that "The Lord your God is a **consuming** (devouring from - - "to eat") **fire**, a **jealous God**" (v.24).

Because the covenant relationship was one of love (initiated by the love of God, and responded to by the love of Israel), "to construct images would be to indicate that the first love of the Israelites

had been forgotten, and to this the response of the Lord would be Jealousy

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" In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, after describing the chastening (discipline) of the believer (v.3-11), and the moral purity demanded by a Holy God (v.12-27), the Lord commands the believer to show gratitude and awe (v.28), based on the fact that "[1] In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, after describing the chastening (discipline) of the believer (v.3-11), and the moral purity demanded by a Holy God (v.12-27), the Lord commands the believer to show gratitude and awe (v.28), based on the fact that "our God is a consuming fire" (v.29).

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CONCLUSION

As Moses (as well as the nation of Israel) found out by experience that it was impossible to escape divine discipline for sin, the N.T. believer (especially the leadership) is also warned that divine discipline for sin is inescapable. "If those did not escape when they refused Him Who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him (Jesus Christ) who warns from Heaven" (Heb.12:25). With a new covenant, more revelation, and greater benefits having been provided by Christ, much more is expected of Christians today, than was expected of Moses and the Israelite nation. Christ's leaders today must not depend upon their experience, or age to keep them from sin, and its consequential disqualifications. Moses' sin come at he end of his life - After conquering many great spiritual battles, after performing many astonishing miracles and after being so used of God. If you are a leader today "take heed lest ye fall". Leaders should dread the thought of being "a castaway" (rendered useless; disqualified for service - I Cor.9:27). The believer's goal (and especially the leader's) ought to be that as stated by the apostle Paul, who when ready to die said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!"

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