

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 20

In this chapter is an account of the children of Israel coming to the wilderness of Zin, where Miriam died, and where wanting water they murmured, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁶Numbers 20:1-5), upon which Moses and Aaron applied to the Lord, who ordered Moses to speak to a rock, which should give forth water, and which being smitten by him, accordingly did, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁶Numbers 20:6-11), but Moses and Aaron, in their conduct of this affair, displeased the Lord, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹²Numbers 20:12,13), after this, Moses sent to the king of Edom to desire a passage through his country, which request was refused, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁴Numbers 20:14-21), upon Israel's coming to Mount Hor, Aaron, by order, went up to the mount, and, when stripped of his clothes, which were put on his son Eleazar, he died, lamented by all the people, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹²Numbers 20:22-29).

Ver. 1. *Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation,* etc.] Not immediately after the transaction of the above things, recorded in the preceding chapters; as the sending of the spies into the land of Canaan, and their report of it; the business of Korah, and the giving of several laws respecting the priesthood, and the purification of the people; but thirty eight years after: nor was this the congregation that came out of Egypt; their carcasses, by this time, had fallen in the wilderness, as had been threatened, excepting some few, so that this was a new generation: what passed during this time we have very little account of, excepting their journeyings from place to place, in (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁶Numbers 33:1-56), by which it appears, there were eighteen stations between the place they encamped at when the spies were sent, and this they now came to; and that the place from whence they came hither was Ezion Geber; from hence they journeyed,

and came unto the desert of Zin; which is different from the wilderness of Sin, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁶Exodus 16:1) as appears by their names, which are different, and by the stations of the Israelites, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁶Numbers 33:11,36), hither they came

in the first month; the month of Nisan, on the tenth day of it, according to the Targum of Jonathan, which was the first month of the fortieth year of their coming out of Egypt, so Aben Ezra; with which agrees the Jewish chronologer^{f282}, which says, this was the fortieth year, and the beginning of the month Nisan:

and the people abode in Kadesh: which is by some thought to be different from Kadeshbarnea, from whence the spies were sent, and lay to the south of the land of Canaan, whereas this was upon the borders of Edom; but Doctor Lightfoot^{f283} shows them to be the same: it is supposed to be eight hours north or northnorth-west of Mount Sinai, which may be computed to be about twenty miles^{f284}; here the Israelites abode about four months, (see ~~4938~~Numbers 33:38) the above Jewish chronologer says three months, wrongly:

and Miriam died there, and was buried there; the Jews say^{f285} she died there the tenth day of the month Nisan, which was ten days after the Israelites came to this place; though, according to the Targum of Jonathan, it was the same day they came thither: Patricides, an Arabian writer, says^{f286} she died on the seventh day of Nisan, aged one hundred and twenty seven; no mention is made of the people mourning for her as for Aaron, (~~4919~~Numbers 20:29) and for Moses, (~~4948~~Deuteronomy 34:8) perhaps because of their distress for want of water, as follows.

Ver. 2. *And there was no water for the congregation*, etc.] Which was so ordered, for the trial of this new generation, to see whether they would behave any better than their fathers had done in a like circumstance, the first year they came out of Egypt, (~~4970~~Exodus 17:1-8)

and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron; just as their fathers had done before them, being of the like temper and disposition.

Ver. 3. *And the people chode with Moses*, etc.] Contended with him in a wrangling and litigious manner, showing no reverence nor respect unto his person on account of the dignity of his office, and the many favours they had received from him; and this at a time, when, instead of quarrelling with him, they should have condoled him on the loss of his sister, and bewailed their own loss also of one who had been a prophetess to them, and a leader of them, (~~3004~~Micah 6:4)

and spake, saying, would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord; either at Taberah by fire, or as Korah and his company in like manner, or as the fourteen thousand and seven hundred by a pestilence, (^{Q110E}Numbers 11:1-3 16:35,49) which they thought a much easier death, either of them, than to die of thirst: they might well call them brethren, not only because of the same nation, and nearly related to them, but because they were of the same temper and disposition, and indeed brethren in iniquity; and they seem to use this appellation, as being of the same sentiments with them, and in vindication of them, and adopt almost their very language; (see ^{Q142E}Numbers 14:2).

Ver. 4. *And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness,* etc.] The wilderness of Zin, whither by various marches and journeys, and through different stations, they were at length come:

that we and our cattle should die there? with thirst; they seem to represent it, as if this was the end, design, and intention of Moses and Aaron in bringing them thither; their language is much the same with their fathers on a like occasion; which shows the bad influence of example, and how careful parents should be of their words and actions, that their posterity be not harmed by them; (see ^{Q173E}Exodus 17:3).

Ver. 5. *And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt,* etc.] They represent that affair in such a light, as if they were forced out of Egypt by Moses and Aaron against their wills; or at least were overpersuaded by them to do what they had no inclination to, namely, to come out of Egypt; though they were in the utmost bondage and slavery, and their lives were made bitter by it, and they cried by reason of their oppression, and the hardships they endured; but this was all forgot. Aben Ezra says, it is a strange word which is here used, which shows the confusion they were in:

to bring us unto this evil place; dry and barren, where there were neither food nor drink, as follows:

it is no place of seed; or fit for sowing, as the Targum of Jonathan, any sort of seed, as wheat, barley, rye, rice, etc.

or of figs, or vines, or pomegranates; it is not a soil fit to plant such trees in, nor would they grow were they planted:

neither is there any water to drink; for them and their cattle, and therefore must be a miserable place for so large a body of people to subsist in.

Ver. 6. *And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly*, etc.] Like fugitives, as Aben Ezra; they fled from them through fear, lest they should rise and fall upon them, and stone them, as their fathers were ready to do in a like case, (¹⁰⁷⁰Exodus 17:4). It is very likely this assembly gathered about the tents of Moses and Aaron, who went from thence unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; where the Lord had promised to meet Moses, and speak unto him, (¹⁰⁷⁰Exodus 29:42)

and they fell upon their faces; to pray, as Aben Ezra, that God would forgive the sin, of the people, and not break forth in his wrath against them, as he sometimes had done, and as their sin deserved, and that he would grant them what was needful for them. In the Vulgate Latin version the following words are added as their prayer,

“and they cried unto the Lord, and said, Lord God, hear the cry of this people, and open to them thy treasure, the fountain of living water, that they being satiated, their murmuring may cease.”

But they are not neither in the Hebrew text, nor in the Greek version, nor the Chaldee paraphrases:

and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them; either to Moses and Aaron, to encourage them to expect their prayers would be answered; or to the people, to terrify them, and silence their murmurings; (see ⁰⁴⁶⁹Numbers 16:19).

Ver. 7. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] Out of what was the token of his glory, which perhaps was the cloud, with an uncommon lustre and brightness in it: saying; as follows.

Ver. 8. *Take thy rod*, etc.] The rod of miracles, as the Targum of Jonathan; not the rod of Aaron, miraculous for its blossom and fruit, as some Jewish writers think; but the rod of Moses, with which he had done many wonders in Egypt, and at the Red sea, and in the wilderness, and particularly by smiting the rock at Horeb, when the Israelites wanted water, as they did now:

and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother; not only the heads of the people, but the body of them, as many as could be got together to see the miracle, and to receive the benefit of it:

and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; which was near, but a little way off, within sight, and might be pointed to: it was not the same rock that was smote before; that was in Horeb, this in the extremity of the land of Edom, as Aben Ezra observes; this was to be spoken to, and by a word speaking it would give out water; which was a trial of the faith of Moses and Aaron, as well as of the people, before whom, in a public manner, the rock was to be addressed, as if it was intelligent and all-sufficient:

and it shall give forth his water; not as though there was a fountain of water in it, but that water should flow from it, or God by it give water:

and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; by speaking to it: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink; sufficient for them both.

Ver. 9. *And Moses took the rod from before the Lord.* etc.] Which was laid up somewhere in the sanctuary, as well as the rod of Aaron, (^{<CHITD>}Numbers 17:7,10):

as he commanded him; being always faithful and obedient to him that appointed him.

Ver. 10. *And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock,* etc.] To which they were directed, and were to speak unto; before this they gathered not only the elders of the people, but as many of the congregation as could be well assembled together:

and he said unto them; Moses, who was bid to take the rod, and was the principal person concerned in this affair:

hear now, ye rebels; such their fathers had been, and such they now were, a rebellious generation ever since they were known by him; not only rebellious against him their chief magistrate, but against the Lord himself, murmuring against him, being discontented and disobedient, (see ^{<RUBD>}Deuteronomy 9:23,24):

must we fetch you water out of this rock? not only signifying their unworthiness of having such a miracle wrought for them, and as showing some degree of reluctance to attempt it, but as expressing diffidence about

it; not of the power of God to bring water out of the rock, but of his will to do it for such a rebellious people; or else their unreasonableness to expect any such thing should be done for them: when they were so wicked, how could they think that such a miracle should be wrought for them? so the Targum of Jonathan,

“out of this rock is it possible for us to fetch out water for you?”

so Aben Ezra, have we power to bring out water to you from it? This was said in a passion, as the manner of speaking shows; (see ^{<19462>}Psalm 106:32,33) many of the congregation as could be well assembled together:

Ver. 11. *And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice*, etc.] At first it only brought out some drops, as Jarchi conjectures, and therefore Moses smote again, when it brought forth water plentifully: the Targum of Jonathan says,

“at the first time it dropped blood, at the second time came out much water.”

Could this be credited, it would make the agreement between this rock and Christ appear very manifest, from whom, when his side was pierced with a spear, there came out blood and water, (^{<43934>}John 19:34) for justification and sanctification. In what respect this rock was a type of Christ, as the other at Horeb, and the smiting of it an emblem of Christ being smitten with the rod of justice, according to the law of God, and of the abundance of water flowing from it, as typical of the abundance of grace, and the blessings of it, as coming through a smitten wounded Saviour, (see Gill on ^{<42706>}Exodus 17:6”), where the same things are said of another rock as of this, and both types of Christ;

and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also; there was enough for them and their cattle; for it came out in great quantities, in large streams, so that it ran down like a river, and which gave them drink as out of the great depths, (^{<49785>}Psalm 78:15,16), where the Psalmist makes mention of rocks in the plural number, for there were two that were smitten in two different places, and at two different times; the one was at Rephidim, the other, as here, in Kadesh; the one was in the first year of Israel’s coming out of Egypt, this in the fortieth year of it; that was struck but once, this twice; of this second stone no mention is made by any traveller but one ^{†287}, who coming from Mount Sinai, says,

“we passed by a large rock on our left hand, in which, as in the other rock which Moses struck with his rod, appear, from the bottom to the top, openings where water hath gushed out.”

Ver. 12. *And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron,* etc.] Out of the cloud, where his glory appeared, and still continued:

because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; that Moses and Aaron committed an evil which was displeasing to the Lord is certain, but what that was is variously represented. Some say their sin was, that the order was to speak to the rock, whereas it was smitten, and not spoken to; but why then was Moses bid to take the rod with him, if it was not to smite with it, as he had done before at Horeb? and besides, this would only have been the sin of Moses, and not of Aaron; others think, that what provoked the Lord was, that the Israelites were called “rebels”; but this is a name the Lord himself gave them, (^(H170)Numbers 17:10), and was what they justly deserved; and what after this Moses says of them, which, had this been the case, he would have been careful to have abstained from, (^(R924)Deuteronomy 9:24). Others are of opinion, that what was displeasing to the Lord was, that the bringing the water out of the rock was ascribed to themselves, and not to him; “must we fetch you water”, etc. Others suppose the sin was in smiting the rock twice, and in anger; but this could only be the fault of Moses at most. Dr. Lightfoot ^{f288} thinks the particular fault was this, that Moses expressed his displeasure and resentment to the Israelites, that on their murmuring a new rock was opening, which portended a new and long stay in the wilderness, as the opening of the first rock at Horeb did when he and Aaron were in expectation of being soon out of the wilderness, and now they feared they were beginning anew their abode in it; but it is certain from the text that unbelief was their sin; they were diffident about the will of God to bring water out of the rock for such a rebellious people, and they did not put them in mind of the miracles God had wrought in former time, to encourage their faith; and so the Lord was not sanctified by them before the people, as he ought to have been:

therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them; the land of Canaan, a grant of which was made to their fathers, and particularly to this generation, and into which they would certainly be brought; but not by Moses and Aaron, who were excluded because of their unbelief, and accordingly both died before the entrance of the people into

the land. This, according to the Targum of Jonathan, and Jarchi, was said with an oath; (see ^{<S1818>}Hebrews 3:18,19).

Ver. 13. *This is the water of Meribah*, etc.] Or “strife”: this is the name by which the water had in this place, and from this rock, was called; and which is the same name given to the place at Horeb, where a rock had been smitten, and water had flowed, as now, the first year they came out of Egypt; and to distinguish this from that, this is sometimes called Meribah-Kadesh, (^{<S1825>}Deuteronomy 32:51), this being at Kadesh, as that was at Rephidim:

because the children of Israel strove with the Lord: for their chiding and striving with Moses was interpretatively striving with the Lord himself, whose ministers and servants they were:

and he was sanctified in them; that is, the glory of his divine perfections was displayed in them; either in the waters fetched out of the rock, which was a proof of the almighty power of God, and of his truth and faithfulness to his promises; or in the children of Israel, in whose sight, and for whose sake this miracle was wrought: the Targum of Jonathan expressly says, in Moses and Aaron, in not sparing these his saints, but expressing severity towards them for their sin; so Jarchi and Aben Ezra interpret it.

Ver. 14. *And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom*, etc.] This country was sometimes governed by kings, and sometimes by “dukes”, (see ^{<S1344>}Genesis 36:14-43). At the time of the passage of the Israelites through the Red sea, we read of the dukes of Edom, (^{<S1515>}Exodus 15:15), and here, thirty nine years after, of a king of Edom, but who he was is not certain. Bishop Usher takes him to be the same with Hadar, the last of the race of kings mentioned in (^{<S1339>}Genesis 36:39), to him Moses sent messengers with a request, which follows after a preamble to it; who were the messengers is not said; the place from whence they were sent is Kadesh, a city on the borders of the land of Edom; but not Kadeshbarnea, Aben Ezra says, though some are of opinion it is the same, (see ^{<S1811>}Numbers 20:1):

thus saith thy brother Israel; the Israelites and Edomites springing from two men, Jacob and Esau, who were twin brothers, and is observed to ingratiate themselves to the Edomites, and gain their request, pleading relation to them:

thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us; what an uncomfortable condition they had been in for many years, which was well known to Edom, a neighbouring country, as is reasonable to suppose; since the fame of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, passing through the Red sea, and being so long in the wilderness, was spread everywhere; this was said to move their pity.

Ver. 15. *How our fathers went down into Egypt*, etc.] Jacob and his twelve sons, with their children:

and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; even the space of four hundred and thirty years, (⁽¹²¹⁾Exodus 12:40,41)

and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers; used them ill, brought them into bondage, and made their lives bitter, laid heavy tasks and burdens upon them, as well as slew their male children, (see ⁽¹²²⁾Exodus 1:7-22).

Ver. 16. *And when we cried unto the Lord*, etc.] By reason of their bondage, and to be delivered from it, (⁽¹²³⁾Exodus 2:24 3:7):

he heard our voice; their prayer to him, as the Targum of Jonathan, for help and deliverance, (⁽¹²⁴⁾Exodus 2:24 3:7):

and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt; one of the ministering angels, as the same Targum, and so Aben Ezra; though he observes that some interpret it of Moses, as do Jarchi, Ben Gersom, and Ben Melech, which is not likely; since Moses is the person that sent this message to the king of Edom, who would not easily understand it of him, if so he meant; nor would the mention of it be of any consequence and avail with him; whereas to understand it of some divine and heavenly agent, sent by the Lord on so important an affair, might make it the more remarkable, and to be regarded by him: and indeed no other is meant than the Angel of God's presence, who appeared to Moses in the bush, and sent him to Pharaoh to demand the dismissal of the children of Israel; and who, by him, wrought the wonders in Egypt, and brought Israel from thence, and went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire:

and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border; not that they were properly in the city, but near it, for they dwelt in tents in the wilderness; nor would that, or anyone city, hold so large a number as they consisted of.

Ver. 17. *Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country*, etc.] That being the nearest and shortest way to the land of Canaan, from the place where they now were:

we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards; to harm them, and injure any man in his private property, by gathering the fruit of them, if the season of the year for it, or by trampling them down:

neither will we drink of the water of the wells; which private persons had dug, for the watering of their fields and vineyards, and for other uses, at least without paying for it; or only of the waters of the rivers, common to all passengers; from hence it appears, that the country of Edom was not then such a barren country as in later times, and as travellers^{f289} now report it is; (see Gill on “^{<300B>}Malachi 1:3”)

we will go by the king's highway; not the way in which the king used to walk, or which he should order them to walk in, as Aben Ezra; but the public roads, common to all his subjects, and travellers to walk in by his allowance; and such roads are now called by us the king's highway:

we will not turn to the right hand, or to the left; to do any injury to any person's property, but go straight forward:

until we have passed thy borders; from one to another, and got quite through the country.

Ver. 18. *And Edom said unto him*, etc.] The king of Edom replied to Israel, represented by the messengers sent in their name:

thou shall not pass by me; through my country:

lest I come out against thee with the sword; or with those that use the sword, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; that is, with an army of soldiers with their drawn swords in their hands, to slay them as enemies.

Ver. 19. *And the children of Israel said unto him*, etc.] The messengers sent by the children of Israel made answer to the king of Edom:

we will go by the highway; we desire no other favour but that of the public road; we propose not to go through any part of the country that is enclosed and cultivated, to do any damage to it:

if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it; as it was usual, and still is, to buy water in those countries near the Red sea, where it is

scarce. We are told ^{f290}, that at Suess, a city on the extremity of the Red sea, there is no water nearer than six or seven hours journey towards the north east, which is brought from thence on camels; and a small vessel of it is sold for three or four medinas, and a larger vessel for eight or ten, according to the demand for it; a medina is an Egyptian piece of money, worth about three halfpence of our English money:

I will only (without doing anything else) go through on my feet; as fast as I can, without saying anything to the inhabitants to terrify and distress them, and without doing them any injury. Some render it, I will only go “with my footmen” ^{f291}; foot soldiers, an army on foot, as Israel were.

Ver. 20. *And he said, thou shall not go through*, etc.] Which is an absolute and peremptory denial:

and Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand; the king raised the militia of his country, and came at the head of a powerful army to hinder their passing into it; being fearful and jealous, lest such a large body as they were should seize on his country, or spoil it, not relying on their promises; and this might arise also from the old grudge of Esau against Jacob, and which continued in his posterity, and might now be revived upon their going to Canaan to possess the earthly blessing conferred on Jacob and his seed: however, it seems, though the Edomites would not let Israel pass through their country, yet they furnished them with food and drink for their money, (^{<828>}Deuteronomy 2:28,29).

Ver. 21 *Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his country*, etc.] Notwithstanding their near relation to each other, and the fair promises Israel made:

wherefore Israel turned away from him: patiently bearing the refusal, and not resenting it; being ordered, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, by the Word of heaven, not to make war with them, because the time was not yet come to take vengeance on Edom by their hands; and to the same purpose the Targum of Jerusalem.

Ver. 22. *And the children of Israel, [even] the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh*, etc.] Not directly, but after they had continued there some time, and had furnished themselves with provisions for their journey, which they bought of the Edomites, (see ^{<8117>}Judges 11:17), “the whole congregation” is observed to Journey from hence, not one of them

being lost by the king of Edom's coming out against them; these went out complete and perfect, safe and sound:

and came unto Mount Hor; which, according to Bunting^{f292}, was forty eight miles from Kadesh; this had not its name from the Horim or Horites, nor they from that, their name being written with a different letter, but from Harar, a mountain, for the word itself signifies a mountain; wherefore it may be rendered, "a mountain of the mountain", which Jarchi interprets a mountain on the top of a mountain. Josephus^{f293} says, that here stood a city, formerly called Arce, since Petra, surrounded with an high mountain, where Aaron went and died; and Pliny says^{f294} of Petra, that it is encompassed with inaccessible mountains.

Ver. 23. *And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor*, etc.] When they were at the foot of that mountain, in the valley adjoining to it:

by the coast of the land of Edom; which they were still upon the borders of, and were going round it, not being permitted to go through it:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 24. *Aaron shall be gathered unto his people*, etc.] That is, shall die, for this phrase is a periphrasis of death, and is used in common both of good and bad men, and designs death in general, without regard to persons and places men go to at death:

for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel; the land of Canaan; and Aaron the priest, and so Moses the lawgiver, not being suffered to enter into that land, show the weakness and imperfection of the law, and of the Levitical priesthood, and the insufficiency of them, and of obedience to them to bring men to, and give them an entrance into the heavenly glory; that is done by another person, the antitype of Joshua, even Jesus:

because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah; that is, you Moses and Aaron; their unbelief is called a rebelling against the word of the Lord, for which it was threatened them, that they should not bring the people of Israel into the land of Canaan, and now the threatening begins to take place, (see ⁴⁰¹¹²Numbers 20:12).

Ver. 25. *Take Aaron and Eleazar his son*, etc.] His eldest son, who was to succeed him in the priesthood, and did:

and bring them up unto Mount Hor; to the top of it, they being now at the foot of it, where the people of Israel lay encamped.

Ver. 26. *And strip Aaron of his garments*, etc.] His priestly garments, as the Targum of Jonathan, and so Jarchi:

and put them upon Eleazar his son; thereby declaring him to be high priest in his father's stead:

and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there; the phrase of gathering to his people is here explained of his dying.

Ver. 27. *And Moses did as the Lord commanded*, etc.] Though it must be very cutting, distressing, and afflicting to him, to part with a brother so dear to him, and who had been so many years a companion of him, and a partner with him in the care and government of the people of Israel; but it being the Lord's will, he submits unto it, and faithfully and readily obeyed his orders, as he always did:

and they went up into Mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation; that is, Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar, and perhaps there might be some others that went with them as servants, to attend them and assist them in some things to be done, particularly in the burial of Aaron; they all saw Aaron go up, but he came down no more, and so it was ordered in this public manner, that they might be witnesses of the translation of the priesthood from Aaron to Eleazar, who, after this affair was over, came down with Moses.

Ver. 28. *And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments*, etc.] His priestly garments, which, very probably, were put on at the foot of the mountain, on purpose for the transaction of this affair, since they were not in common worn, but only when in service; the same hands that clothed Aaron with them at first, stripped him of them, and both were done at the command of God; as the stripping of those garments was a divesting Aaron of his office, so it was a figure of the disannulling of his priesthood, when the Messiah should come, a priest after another order:

and put them upon Eleazar his son; which was an investing him with the office of high priest in his father's room; and which, as it must give Aaron pleasure and satisfaction to see his son put into his office before he died, so it signified the continuance of it in succession in his posterity, and was a confirmation of it; and it must be pleasing to Moses and the people of

Israel to observe the care and faithfulness of God in providing for the succession of the priesthood:

and Aaron died there in the top of the mount; quietly, comfortably, and contentedly, without the least murmuring or repining: this was on the first day of the fifth month, as appears from (^{<0838>}Numbers 33:38), that is, of the month Ab, as the Targum of Jonathan here says; and in this the Jewish writers ^{f295} agree in general, which month answers to part of July and part of August; and in this same place where he died he was buried, as is evident from (^{<0506>}Deuteronomy 10:6), wherefore no credit is to be given to the Arabs, who show a stone not far from Mount Sinai, about two feet high from the ground, on which are seen some unknown characters, which, they say, were engraven by Jeremiah the prophet, in honour of Moses and Aaron, who were buried there ^{f296}:

and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount; after Aaron was dead and buried.

Ver. 29. *And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead*, etc.] Not that they saw his dead body, but they perceived by the relation of Moses, and by various circumstances, as not seeing Aaron come down, whom they saw go up, and seeing Eleazar with Aaron's garments on him, and perhaps by tokens of mourning in Moses and Eleazar; so the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem say, they saw them come down from the top of the mountain, with their garments rent, and ashes on their heads, weeping and lamenting:

they mourned for Aaron thirty days; the whole month out; so long public mourning with the Jews lasted, as Josephus ^{f297} relates:

[even] all the house of Israel; men and women, as the Targum of Jonathan, and so Jarchi: no doubt it was for the amiable virtues and abundant grace that were in him, and the many services he had done for them, both before and since he was invested with the priestly office; and oftentimes the memory of such things is revived after the death of a good man, which are not so much taken notice of in his life, nor he be thanked for them, or have honour and respect shown him on account of them; but when dead, he, and what he has done, are spoken well of, and his loss lamented.