

Numbers 20:14-21 **Edom Refuses Passage**

Message to King of Edom

¹⁴ Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. "Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us, ¹⁵ how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. ¹⁶ When we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. ¹⁷ Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.' "

Reply from King of Edom

¹⁸ Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword."

Israel's Terms of Peace

¹⁹ So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more."

Edom's Response

²⁰ Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. ²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

- ✧ Edom (Esau) was the twin brother of Israel (Jacob). [[Genesis 25:24-26, 30, 36:1, 8, 32:28](#)]
- ✧ The land of Edom is the area around Mount Seir east of the Salt Sea where Esau went to dwell when he left the land of Canaan. [[Genesis 32:3, 36:1-8](#)]
- ✧ Kadesh is the wilderness south of the Promised Land where Israel spent most of the 40 years after failing to enter the Promised Land when God first brought them there and from where they sent out 12 spies to spy out the land. [[Numbers 13:1-26, 20:1](#)]
- ✧ Miriam died at Kadesh. [[Numbers 20:1](#)]
- ✧ To go from Kadesh to enter the Promised Land from a location across the Jordan River east of Jericho, the shortest rout would be along the east side of the Dead Sea through the land of Edom.
- ✧ Moses therefore requested peaceful passage through the land of Edom on their way to the entry spot across from Jericho.
- ✧ The descendants of Edom were familiar with the history of Israel and their experiences in Egypt. They also knew about how God had delivered them from the Egyptian enslavement, and their travels that brought them to Kadesh.
- ✧ Moses request included terms that would prevent the Israelites from being any kind of burden to the people of Edom, but like tourists, it would prove to be profitable for the people of Edom.
- ✧ The King of Edom refused to grant them passage through his territory with the threat of war.
- ✧ Moses sent a second message assuring the Edomites of a profitable outcome.
- ✧ Edom responded by coming out against Israel with their army.

✧ Rather than making war against their relatives, Israel turned away and traveled around the land of Edom.