

# Numbers 25 Commentary

PREVIOUS Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere ( <a href="#">Wilderness</a> )			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

**Numbers 25:1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab.**

Greek (Septuagint) kai katelusen (3SAAI: refresh oneself, lodge Lu 9:12; Ge 24:23 travelers loosening their own burdens when they stayed at a house on a journey) Israel en Sattin kai ebebelothe (3SAPI: bebeloo: cause to become unclean, profane, or ritually unacceptable - defile, profane.'disregarding what is to be kept sacred or holy: Mt12:5) ho laos ekporneusai (AAN: ekporneuo: indulged in flagrant immorality: see Jude 1:7) eis tas thugateras (daughters: Mt9:18) Moab

Amplified ISRAEL SETTLED down and remained in Shittim, and the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab,

BGT Numbers 25:1 κα κατ λυσεν Ισραηλ ν Σαττιν κα βεβηλθη λα ς κπορνε σαι ε ς τ ς θυγατ ρας Μωαβ

NET Numbers 25:1 When Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab.

NLT Numbers 25:1 While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women.

ESV Numbers 25:1 While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.

NIV Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,

KJV Numbers 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the

daughters of Moab.

YLT Numbers 25:1 And Israel dwelleth in Shittim, and the people begin to go a-whoring unto daughters of Moab,

LXE Numbers 25:1 And Israel sojourned in Sattin, and the people profaned itself by going a-whoring after the daughters of Moab.

ASV Numbers 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim; and the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab:

CSB Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying in the Acacia Grove, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab.

NKJ Numbers 25:1 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

NRS Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab.

NAB Numbers 25:1 While Israel was living at Shittim, the people degraded themselves by having illicit relations with the Moabite women.

NJB Numbers 25:1 Israel settled at Shittim. The people gave themselves over to prostitution with Moabite women.

GWN Numbers 25:1 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the men began to have sex with Moabite women

- **Shittim:** Nu 33:49 Jos 2:1 3:1 Mic 6:5
- **the people:** Nu 31:15,16 Ec 7:26 1Co 10:8
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passage - Strong warning from God against "playing the harlot"....**

Numbers 33:50+ Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 51 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; 53 and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. 54 'You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give more inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. 55' **But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you** then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live. 56 'And as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you.'"

#### **A C Gaebelein's outline of Numbers 25**

1. The Transgression and the Anger of Jehovah. Nu 25:1–5.
2. Phinehas' Action. Nu 25:6–9.
3. Phinehas and His Reward. Nu 25:10–15.
4. The Midianites to be Smitten. Nu 25:16–18.

#### **ISRAEL CAMPED AT SHITTIM**

#### **Gaebelein summary of Numbers 25 -**

The sin of Israel was the result of Balaam's work. He could not turn Jehovah from Israel (no enemy can), but he could turn Israel from God. While we do not read here that the fornication and idolatry into which Israel fell was Balaam's work, elsewhere this information is given. See Numbers 31:16 and Rev. 2:14. The stumbling block, which this instrument of Satan put into the way of Israel, by which they committed fornication and idolatry, were the daughters of Moab. Pergamos in the second chapter of Revelation is prophetically that period of the church which began with Constantine the Great. Then the church left the ground of separation and was wedded to the world. Spiritual fornication was committed and idolatry followed in its train. This was Satan's work as much as Balaam's act was. And to-day we see Christendom in the sad condition of Israel at

Shittim. Separation is given up completely. Judgment will be visited ere long upon apostate, adulterous Christendom as it fell upon Israel. In the plague 24,000 died. In 1 Cor. 10:8, we read, "Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." The record in Numbers speaks of a previous punishment when the heads of the transgressors were hung up before the Lord against the sun. Traditions among the Jews states that the number of those who were thus punished was a thousand, so that only 23,000 perished in the plague. In verse 9 this thousand is reckoned in, while in Corinthians they are left out. Then followed an outrageous act of defiance (verse 6). The name of the Midianitish woman was Cozbi (my lie). By the zeal of Phinehas the people were saved from further judgment and Jehovah was glorified. He was zealous for His God and made an atonement for the children of Israel. He received for reward an everlasting priesthood. It is another type of Christ in His righteousness and holy zeal for God.

## **ISRAEL TARRIES AND IS SEDUCED**

**Irving Jensen** introduces this chapter - The ways of Satan, the archenemy of the soul, are devious and subtle. When one strategy fails, he is quick to engage another. This is vividly illustrated in the story of Israel in these chapters. First came the plot to destroy Israel by way of a curse. It was a clear-cut case of opposition from without. The deliverer of Israel was not Balaam, though his lips uttered words of blessing, but God, whose zeal to bless remained undiminished. When the story ended, Balaam departed to go to "his place." Though God used his lips as His mouthpiece, Balaam's heart was far from right. Forfeiture of high honor and prizes must have made him boil with fury. Now he conceived how he might cause Israel to fall by another device, the common heathen admixture of licentiousness and idolatry. Balaam's name does not appear in the record of chapter 25, because the sin of the people is the point of attention. But 31:16 identifies him as the one who gave the counsel that caused Israel to sin against God at this time. The strategy of opposition from without had failed; now the strategy was that of opposition originating from without but working from within: let the Israelites themselves cause their own downfall, through the lust of the flesh. The Moabites and Midianites, allied nations, were coinstigators of Israel's sin (25:1, 17, 18; 31:16), and therefore appear interchangeably in the account of Numbers. (EvBC-Nu)

The previous chapter ends with Balaam apparently heading home - **Numbers 24:25 Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.** However it is clear from other passages, Balaam did not leave immediately for Pethor. One reason is that we know he gave counsel to Moab as to how to seduce Israel (Nu 31:16) and secondly he was killed along with the Midianites (Nu 31:8).

**While Israel remained at Shittim** - See map above. The [Septuagint](#) translates this verse "And Israel sojourned in Sattin, and the people profaned itself by going a-whoring after the daughters of Moab." The verb for to **profane** is bebeloo (see word study of [bebelos](#)) which means to be defiled, to desecrate, to cause something (the men of Israel) highly revered to become identified with the commonplace.

**Henry Morris** comments that "What Balak and Balaam had failed to accomplish through sorcery, they almost accomplished through the seduction of Canaanite fertility worship (Nu 31:16). Many men of Israel accepted a Moabite invitation to the festivities at Peor (perhaps the center of Baal worship in Moab -- cf. Nu 23:28), and became involved with Moabite and Midianite (see the later in Nu 25:17) women and with the abominable worship of Baal (cf. Ps. 106:28-31-note). The event ranks in seriousness with the gold calf incident in Ex. 32:1-10 and called for similar drastic measures. It also was a foretaste (a bad taste for sure!) of future apostasies in Israel (cf. Jdg. 2:11-13, 19; 3:7; 1 Kin. 11:1-8; 16:29-34; 18:40; 2 Ki 10:25-29; 11:18; 23:4-20).

None can prevail against God's people  
if they are not overcome by their inbred lusts;  
nor can any enchantment hurt them  
-- Matthew Henry

**Matthew Henry** - The **friendship** of the wicked is more dangerous than their **enmity**; for none can prevail against God's people if they are not overcome by their inbred lusts; nor can any enchantment hurt them, but the enticements of worldly interests and pleasures. Here is the sin of Israel, to which they are enticed by the daughters of Moab and Midian. Those are our worst enemies who draw us to sin, for that is the greatest mischief any man can do us. Israel's sin did that which all Balaam's enchantments could not do; it set God against them. Diseases are the fruits of God's anger, and the just punishments of prevailing sins; one infection follows the other. Ringleaders in sin ought to be made examples of justice.

**Remained** ([03427](#))(**yashab**) which means to dwell, remain, sit/sit down, abide, to stay, to have one's abode. **Yashab** is even translated married (6 times) in the OT which gives us a sense of the meaning of **yashab** and the danger in which Israel had placed itself! As discussed below this verb is not the same verb as to "**camp**"

which is what they should have been doing!

The verb **camped** (02583) (**chanah**) is used repeatedly of Israel setting up camp in their wilderness journey, but the Holy Spirit does not use that word in this passage which their last stop before crossing into the Promised Land! Instead He choose **yashab** and not the verb **chanah** which means to pitch a tent, which is quite different than abiding or tarrying as implicit in **yashab**! Israel should have "**camped**" in Nu 25:1 instead of **remaining** or **tarrying**!

**THOUGHT** - Beloved of God (1Th 1:4+), during our relatively short time of stay on this earth (1 Pe 1:17+) we are aliens and strangers and while we now "**camp**" like sojourners, we are not to " **dwell**" as if we were permanent residents (Php 3:20-21+). Peter picks up on this metaphor writing "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain ([apechomai](#) in present tense) from fleshly lusts ([epithumia](#)) which wage war ([strateuomai](#) in present tense) against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11+) The point is that we need to remember our **privileged position** is that we are **temporary sojourners** and enabled by the Holy Spirit (Php 2:13NLT+, Eph 5:18+, Gal 5:16+) and guided by the Holy Word, we must **diligently practice our position** ("work out our salvation" Php 2:12+) by continually making the choice to abstain, to create some space, to push away from, to separate from those strong, enticing, ensnaring fleshly lusts which continually bombard our hearts and minds and continually wage a strategic struggle against our souls.

Hosea 9:10 comments on this deadly detour at **Shittim**...

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But they came to Baal-peor and **devoted** (Hebrew [nazar](#) = devoted, consecrated, separated cp Nazarite) themselves to shame, **and they became as detestable** (Heb = [shiqquqs](#); Lxx = [bdelusso](#) from bdéo = stink or reek = to become abominable) as that which **they loved**.

**Comment** - Note the verb "**loved**" which is translated in the Septuagint with [agapao](#) which speaks especially of love as based on evaluation and choice, a matter of will and action! Furthermore, [agapao](#) is in the [perfect tense](#) which speaks of past completed action with ongoing results and so speaks of the abiding nature of their love! Woe! Deliver us O Lord from this seductive snare. Amen. (Read and memorize the warning command in 1 John 2:15-17+)

**At Shittim** - Shittim (SEE MAP ABOVE) was immediately east of the Jordan River adjacent to Jericho and was where Israel camped before crossing the river. This was the last stop before Israel crossed the Jordan (Joshua 2:1). [See map which shows the Plains of Moab next to Shittim.](#)

**THOUGHT** - So close but yet so far! As I ponder Israel's fatal departure from the Holy One to yoke themselves instead to the unholy "god" Baal of Peor (see 1 Cor 10:20-21 for who is behind Baal of Peor = DEMONS!), it reminds me of how we must NEVER let our guard down as followers of Jesus. Here they were about to receive the bountiful blessings of God in the promised land and instead, they turned to the fetid fertility rites (probably) of the debased Midianites. ALL OF US are but one step away from "**taking a detour at Shittim!**" These OT stories were recorded to edify, equip and warn us even as Paul used this story to warn the saints at Corinth...

Nevertheless, with most of them (speaking of Israel wandering for 40 years in the desert) God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. 7 And do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day (NOTE 24,000 IN NUMBERS DOES NOT SAY "ONE DAY"). (1 Cor 10:5-8)

The psalmist records this story in Ps 106:28+:

They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.<sup>29</sup> Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them. 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed; And so the plague was stayed. 31 And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, To all generations forever.

**Spurgeon** - **They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor.** Ritualism led on to the adoration of false gods. If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god. This abomination of the Moabites was an idol in whose worship women gave up their bodies to the most shameless lust. Think of the people of a holy God coming down to this. **And ate the sacrifices of the dead** ([What does the Bible say about necromancy?](#)). In the orgies with which the Baalites celebrated

their detestable worship Israel joined, partaking even in their sacrifices as earnest inner court worshippers, though the gods were but dead idols. Perhaps they assisted in necromantic rites which were intended to open a correspondence with departed spirits, thus endeavouring to break the seal of God's providence, and burst into the secret chambers which God has shut up. Those who are weary of seeking the living God have often shown a hankering after dark sciences, and have sought after fellowship with demons and spirits. To what strong delusions those are often given up who cast off the fear of God! This remark is as much needed now as in days gone by.

**John Kitto** - "bound themselves with his badge": for it was the custom in ancient times, as it is now, in all Pagan countries, for every idol to have some specific badge, or ensign, by which his votaries are known.

**Wiersbe** writes that "Moab was related to Israel through Abraham's nephew Lot, and the Midianites were the allies of Moab, so there was no reason why the Jews shouldn't be "neighborly." What Balaam couldn't do by appealing to the demons, he accomplished by appealing to the flesh and inviting the Jews to "enjoy themselves" at Baal Peor. This is the first recorded occasion in Scripture of Israel worshiping Baal, but it certainly isn't the last. Baal was the chief of the Canaanite gods and was especially responsible for rain and fertility. Until they went off to Babylon, the Israelites were an agricultural people; and whenever there was a drought, they often turned to Baal for help instead of to the Lord. The Canaanite fertility rites involved both male and female temple prostitutes and encouraged all kinds of sexual immorality. Both the idolatry and the immorality were forbidden by God's law (Ex. 20:1-5, 14)." (Be Counted)

**The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab** Why did Israel join themselves to foreign women - While this chapter does not tell us, when we read Nu 31:8, 16+, we learn that the the "brains" behind this great sin was none other than **Balaam** son of Beor. He could not curse them but he could seduce them (through these foreign women)!

#### **PLAYED THE HARLOT ([zanah](#)) SADLY BECAME A WATCHWORD FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL...**

**Play the harlot** - 19x in 18v - Exod. 34:15; Exod. 34:16; Lev. 17:7; Lev. 20:5; Lev. 20:6; Num. 25:1; Deut. 31:16; 2 Chr. 21:11; 2 Chr. 21:13; Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 16:17; Ezek. 20:30; Hos. 3:3; Hos. 4:10; Hos. 4:13; Hos. 4:14; Hos. 4:15; Hos. 4:18

**Played the hartot** - 24x in 22v - Gen. 38:24; Num. 15:39; Jdg. 2:17; Jdg. 8:27; Jdg. 8:33; Jdg. 19:2; 1 Chr. 5:25; 2 Chr. 21:13; Ps. 106:39; Ezek. 6:9; Ezek. 16:15; Ezek. 16:16; Ezek. 16:26; Ezek. 16:28; Ezek. 23:3; Ezek. 23:5; Ezek. 23:19; Ezek. 23:30; Hos. 2:5; Hos. 4:12; Hos. 5:3; Hos. 9:1

This action resulted in immediate capital punishment for all who were ensnared by this trap **Balaam** himself was later slain because of this counsel (Nu 31:8,16).

(Nu 31:8) And they killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed **Balaam** the son of Beor with the sword.

(Nu 31:16) "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the **counsel of Balaam**, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Balaam could not curse them with curses, but cursed them with counsel!

**Balaam** could not curse Israel whom God had blessed. But he had an alternative nefarious plan to teach "Balak to put a stumbling block ([skandalizo](#)) before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality." (Rev 2:14). Here we learn that although he could not curse Israel, he could teach Balak how to **place a trap** for them that would make them stumble and incur God's judgment thus reducing their ranks. So what was the "**skandalon**"? The trap was to use Moabite women to seduce Israeli men. The Israeli men committed immorality (**played the harlot** - Septuagint translates with [ekporneuo](#) = to commit gross immorality!), they start worshiping their gods and eating things sacrificed to idols, then God will have to judge them. In other words, **Balaam** showed Balak how to get in the back door. In (2 Pe 2:1+) we learn that **false prophets** in Israel came in among the nation and secretly introduced **destructive heresies** just as **Balaam** did. Read more of their character in (2 Pe 2:2-3+). Remember these are men who look like true prophets, true teachers, but they are not. In (2 Pe 2:13,14+) we learn these men are sensual and greedy and out for money. And so **Balaam** was overcome by his lust for money as Peter emphasized = "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, **having followed the way of Balaam**, the son of Beor, who **loved the wages of unrighteousness**." (2 Pe 2:15+). And in Jude who describes certain persons who have crept in unnoticed (Jude 1:4+) and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of **Balaam** (Jude 1:11+). :

Dt 4:3 "Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who

followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.<sup>4</sup> "But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.

Hos 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame, And they became as detestable as that which they loved.

"Brethren, beware. See how a man may be going on uttering fine words, orthodox truths, and yet be rotten at the heart."

--F.W. Robertson:

**Brian Bell** - After 4 failed attempts to curse Israel, Balaam, a.k.a. Prophet for hire, gives up...or so it seemed. His new plan "If you can't beat em join em!" What the armies of other nations couldn't do, a smile & wink from the madam's of Moab & Midian could! It probably started with neighborliness; lets join their feast; hey these girls are cute; isn't there sacrifice just a glorified BBQ? It's just an idol we know they're not real; then, full blown rebellion against God. Explain: Baal was a fertility god who was thought to "make farmers prosperous, kings strong, & woman fertile." To worship Him a person had to offer sacrifices, eat special festival meals, & engage in sexual acts (Sacred prostitution). If Satan does not succeed as the devouring lion; he will come as the deceiving serpent! Idolatry is worshipping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that ought to be worshipped. Augustine

**Ronald Allen on daughters of Moab** - The phrase "Moabite women" is the connecting link that ties this chapter to the preceding ones (22–24). What the fathers of Moab could not do, their daughters were able to accomplish, to bring Israel to its knees—sexually, morally, in false worship, and in great judgment. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Israel, those who should have been set apart to Jehovah ("consecrate" in Lev 11:44+ means to "set apart") made a choice to set themselves apart or to consecrate themselves to SHAME. They were CALLED, CHOSEN, HOLY PEOPLE, not to be their own but to be HOLY TO THE LORD (to be His vessels, His conduit for grace and the message of forgiveness to the eternally lost pagans around them) and were to CONSECRATE themselves TO GOD. Consecration is personal choice. Well in one sense there is a ONCE FOR ALL CONSECRATION, there is also a DAILY PRESENTING OF ONE'S HEART, MIND, SOUL & SPIRIT [which involves numerous decisions daily to deny self & submit to the Lord] as a LIVING SACRIFICE to God (Ro 12:1±, Lev 11:44+) Israel instead separated themselves to IDOLATRY and IMMORALITY. Nothing new under the sun. AND GOD WAS ANGRY. (Ec 12:13,14) He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow [Heb 13:8+, Heb 10:31, 12:29]

**Played the harlot** (02181)(**zanah**) is a verb meaning to fornicate, to prostitute and refers to marital infidelity or unfaithfulness. It was word used elsewhere in the OT to describe prostitution (Lev 21:7, Pr 7:10). Many of the uses of **zanah** are figurative describing Israel 's (Jehovah's "wife") commission of "spiritual prostitution" by having "intercourse" so to speak with other gods (cp 1 Co 6:16). Indeed, idolatry is looked upon as prostitution (Isa 50:1, 2, 3; 54:6, 7, 8; Jer 2:1, 2, 3; 3:1ff; Hos 2:1ff; Jas 4:4-note; Rev 2:4-note). In addition **zanah** describes Israel's improper relationships with other nations (Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 23:30; Nah. 3:4). "The thought seems to be of having relations with these nations for the sake of political and monetary benefit, although in the case of Nineveh the added element of alluring, deceitful tactics leading on to oppressive dominance is implied." (TWOT) "A third figurative meaning is found in Isa 1:21, where the Israelites' departure from God's approved moral standards is called harlotry." (TWOT)

In Exodus 34 God warns Israel using **zanah** as a metaphor describing Israel's breach of the Lord's covenant relationship ("make a covenant...play the harlot" in Ex 34:16) -

"But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim 14—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— 15 lest you **make a covenant** with the inhabitants of the land and they **play the harlot with** their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and someone invite you to eat of his sacrifice; 16 and you take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters **play the harlot with** their gods, and cause your sons also to **play the harlot with** their gods. (Ex 34:13-16)

**Zanah** is most often used for women and only rarely (twice) in reference to men (Nu 25:1<sup>note</sup>) Ronald Allen quips that here in Nu 25:1 the Israelite men "went "whoring" after the women priestesses of the Canaanite religion of Baal. It is a defect of our language that we have numerous words for **loose women** but few really suitable terms for **loose men**." Woe!

The **Septuagint** frequently translates **zanah** with the Greek verb **ekporneuo** used once in **Jude 1:7** "**Indulged in gross immorality**."

BGT Numbers 25:2 κα κλεσαν ατο ς π τα ς θυσ αι ς τ ν ε δ λων α τ ν κα φαγεν λα ς τ ν θυσι ν α τ ν κα προσε κ νησαν το ς ε δ λοι ς α τ ν

Greek (Septuagint) - kai ekalesan (3PAAI) autous epi tais thusiais ton eidolon auton kai ephagen (3SAAI) o laos ton thusion auton kai prosekunesan (3PAAI) tois eidolois auton

NET Numbers 25:2 These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

NLT Numbers 25:2 These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the gods of Moab.

ESV Numbers 25:2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

NIV Numbers 25:2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods.

KJV Numbers 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

YLT Numbers 25:2 and they call for the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people eat, and bow themselves to their gods,

LXE Numbers 25:2 And they called them to the sacrifices of their idols; and the people ate of their sacrifices, and worshipped their idols.

ASV Numbers 25:2 for they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

CSB Numbers 25:2 The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods.

NKJ Numbers 25:2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

NRS Numbers 25:2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

NAB Numbers 25:2 These then invited the people to the sacrifices of their god, and the people ate of the sacrifices and worshiped their god.

NJB Numbers 25:2 These invited them to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down before their gods.

GWN Numbers 25:2 who invited the people to the sacrifices offered to their gods. The people ate the meat from the sacrifices and worshiped these gods.

- **they called:** Ex 34:15,16 Jos 22:17 1Ki 11:1-8 Ps 106:28 Ho 9:10 1Co 10:20 1Co 10:27,28 2Co 6:16,17 Rev 2:14
- **bowed:** Ex 20:5 23:24 Jos 23:7,16 1Ki 19:18
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **A DEADLY PROGRESSION: INVITATION, SACRIFICE, WORSHIP!**

**For** - Term of explanation. What a sad explanation, but also a most "seductive" one!

**For they invited the people:** The verb invited is FEMININE...so the Moabite women invited the Israelites to the sacrifices.

**To the sacrifices of their gods:** From Ps 106:28 They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead (possible referring to "dead idols")!!! Human sacrifice was made to Chemosh 2 Ki 3:27 The Moabites did not fight with the Israelites (and in fact did not do so for 300 years according to Jdg 11:25,26.

Moabite god [Chemosh](#) - Bordering Israel in the region east of the Dead Sea was the nation Moab, whose

national god was Chemosh. In times of religious corruption, Israel copied Moabite religious practices (Judges 10:6; 1 Kings 11:7; 1 Kings 11:33), and in times of reformation got rid of them (2 Kings 23:13). The Moabites looked for help from Chemosh through offering child sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27; cf. Judges 10:6; Judges 11:30-31; Judges 11:39), but Chemosh was powerless to save them from the judgment of God (Jeremiah 48:7; Jeremiah 48:13; Jeremiah 48:46)

Chemosh - 8v - Num. 21:29; Jdg. 11:24; 1 Ki. 11:7; 1 Ki. 11:33; 2 Ki. 23:13; Jer. 48:7; Jer. 48:13; Jer. 48:46

**Walter Kaiser** writes that "The Moabites worshiped the war god **Chemosh**, but they must have also indulged in the fertility religion of **Baal**. This cult was marked by some of the most depraved religious practices in Canaan. In lurid and orgiastic rites, the worshipers would emulate the sacred prostitution of their gods and goddesses, often also participating in a ceremonial meal. In the case of **Baal of Peor**, we suspect that the cult also involved veneration for the dead. Peor may be the Hebrew and Phoenician spelling for the Luwian Pahura. This word in Hittite means "fire" and may derive from some form of the root that underlies the Greek pyr, "fire." (Hard Sayings of the Bible)

**The sacrifices of their gods** - Israel was familiar with sacrifice to the Living God and when they began to "backslide" it was easy for them to compromise and sacrifice to pagan gods!

The parallel passage in Ps 106:28 says "**They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.**" Most writers interpret "**to the dead**" as a description of the "lifeless gods" of the pagans, which would be a direct affront to the **Living God** (Dt 5:26, Josh 3:10, 1 Sa 17:26, 36)..

Sacrifices to pagan gods was a repeated topic in the OT - Ex 34:15; Deut 32:38; Jdg 16:23; 2 Kings 10:19; Isa 57:7; Ezek 20:28; Hos 4:19.

**Of their gods:** The Hebrew word is **Elohiym** which was not the true god but **Eidolon!!!**

## **BOWING DOWN IN WORSHIP TO GODS THAT ARE NOT GODS!**

Notice that Israel's sin was progressive -- it did not stop with illicit behavior with foreign idol worshipping women! They bowed down in worship to dead gods, rather than bowing only to the One True Living God! Isn't this the nature of sin? We seldom sin in a vacuum so to speak. That is to say, one sin is self-replicating, often giving rise to a second (or more) sin. Have you noticed that in your experience? That is why we need to confess quickly, keeping short accounts, before that single sin can give birth to other "little sins."

**Bowed down** (prostrated, worshiped) ([07812](#))(**shachah**) means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) or to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6).

**Ronald Allen** has a note on the Hebrew tense of "bowed down" which "speaks of "causing oneself to bow down" (the Hishtaphel is causative-reflexive). This is the principal term in the MT for acts of worship, used of the worship of the Lord (see Ps 29:2; cf. Eph 3:14) as well as of pagan gods (as here). It is fitting that the biblical term for worship is physical in nature."

**EXCURSUS ON BOWING DOWN** - The Septuagint translates shachah with the verb [proskuneo](#) which gives a vivid word picture of what the Israelites were doing. Proskuneo is from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore and thus means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshiped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. The word [proskuneo](#) literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb [proskuneo](#) .

Jesus has a commentary on Numbers 25 in His discourse to the church in Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17-[note](#))

Rev 2:14-[note](#) But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching



([didasko](#)) of [Balaam](#), who kept teaching Balak to put a **stumbling block** (see discussion below) before ( in essence right in front of their eyes!!! cp "lust of the eyes" 1 Jn 2:16-[note](#)) the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to **idols**, and to commit acts of **immorality** ([porneuo](#)).

**Comment - Stumbling block** is the Greek word [skandalon](#) was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Outside the Bible it is not used metaphorically, though its derivative skandalethron (e.g. a trap set through questions) is so used. The English word **scandal** is derived from the noun via the Lat. **scandalum**. Thus [skandalon](#) was literally, that movable part of a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched caused the trap to abruptly close on its prey. **Skandalon** thus came to mean any entanglement of the foot. Figuratively, as used most often in Scripture, [skandalon](#) refers to any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or sin. That's a picture of sin. It looks alluring (like the Midianite women), but when touched, it captures its unsuspecting prey. James warned about this noting that "each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (James 1:14, 15-[note](#)). Notice the fruit of sin is death, and that proved literally true for 24,000 Israelites because of their sin at Shittim!

Skandalon always denotes an enticement to conduct which could ruin the person in question (see Lev 19:14, Josh 23:13, 1 Sa 18:21). In the NT skandalon is used figuratively in a moral sense. It is concerned mainly with the fact that it produces certain behavior which can lead to ruin.

Notice in Rev 2:14 we have the close association of **idolatry** with **immorality**, a pattern which is found throughout the Bible (here at the beginning in Numbers 25 and at the end in the Revelation). Mark it down - one cause of immorality is idolatry. And what is the antidote for idolatry or worship of of dead gods? It is the worship of the true and living God. We see this pattern in 1 Thes 4:3-4, 5-[note](#) noting especially the phrase "do not know God." Why do the Gentiles gravitate to "lustful passion?" Because they do not "know God," so one solution for immorality in one's life is to "know God," to "fix your eyes on Jesus" and then the things of this (passing) world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace! Sounds like the words to a Hymn ([Turn Your Eyes on Jesus](#))!

### Numbers 25:3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

BGT Numbers 25:3 κα̅ τε̅λ σθη̅ Ισραηλ̅ τ̅ Βεε̅λφεγωρ̅ κα̅ ργ̅ σθη̅ θυμ̅ κ̅ ριος̅ τ̅ Ισραηλ̅

Greek (Septuagint) - kai etelesthe (3SAPI:teleo: completing someth. bring to an end, conclude, complete Mt 7.28; fulfill, perform Lu 2.39) Israel to Beelphegor kai orgisthe (3SAPI: Mt 5:22) thumo kurios to Israel

NET Numbers 25:3 When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, the anger of the LORD flared up against Israel.

NLT Numbers 25:3 In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD's anger to blaze against his people.

ESV Numbers 25:3 So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

NIV Numbers 25:3 So Israel joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.

KJV Numbers 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

YLT Numbers 25:3 and Israel is joined to Baal-Peor, and the anger of Jehovah burneth against Israel.

LXE Numbers 25:3 And Israel consecrated themselves to Beel-phegor; and the Lord was very angry with Israel.

ASV Numbers 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel.

CSB Numbers 25:3 So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger burned against Israel.

NKJ Numbers 25:3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

NRS Numbers 25:3 Thus Israel yoked itself to the Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel.

NAB Numbers 25:3 When Israel thus submitted to the rites of Baal of Peor, the LORD'S anger flared up against Israel,

NJB Numbers 25:3 With Israel thus committed to the Baal of Peor, Yahweh's anger was aroused against them.

GWN Numbers 25:3 Since the Israelites joined in worshiping the god Baal of Peor, the LORD became angry with Israel.

- **joined:** Nu 25:5 De 4:3,4 Jos 22:17 Ps 106:28,29 Ho 9:10
- **the anger:** Jos 22:17 Jud 2:14,20 Ps 90:11 Jer 17:4
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **ISRAEL, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO BAAL WORSHIP!**

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em (or better get them to join you)!

**So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor,** Notice how Brenton translates the Greek ([Lxx](#)) - " And Israel **consecrated** themselves!" Israel was to have been consecrated only and wholly to the Holy One of Israel Who Himself declaring

'For I am the LORD your God. **Consecrate** yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. (Lev 11:44)

**Comment:** Consecrate is qadash = to be set apart and is translated in the Septuagint with hagiazo = to be set apart, to be holy. Instead of setting themselves apart from the Moabite women, Israel had profaned and defiled themselves with their gross immorality and abominable idolatry. If you don't believe in the utter depravity of man, then you need to study Numbers 25!

This is the second mention of Israel joining themselves to Baal of Peor (cp Nu 25:1, 5) but this time is coupled with consequences.

**Ronald Allen** points out that the Hebrew verb **joined** ([tsamad](#)) "speaks of adapting to the worship patterns of a foreign people, an abhorrent concept, such as the false yokings from which Israel was prohibited (see Dt 22:10; cf. 2 Cor 6:14). This passage is the first encounter of Israel with Baal, and it forms the death rattle of the first generation."

**Joined** refers to two animals yoked together -- Oxen yoked for plowing -- The people sacrificed to their gods, ate, worshiped, and participated in cult prostitution. The entire activity is powerfully described as yoking oneself to Baal of Peor. This verb connotes how flagrantly obstinate their rebellion against Yahweh was. (cp believers today = 2 Co 6:14, Israel = Ex 29:45 Lev 26:12)

**Kaiser** quips that "While God had saved Israel from the curses of [Balaam](#), the Israelites could not save themselves from sinning against God." Well, now, God could have, but many times He lets us have our own way (we've all been there before!). They were allowed to choose their sin but would have no control over the fatal consequences.

**Guzik** adds that "What an enemy could never accomplish against Israel, Israel did to itself through disobedience. The same principle works among the people of God today. The mightiest attack of Satan against us can never do as much damage as our own sin and rebellion against the LORD."...."The Moabites being now neighbours to the Israelites, and finding themselves unable to effect their design against Israel by war and witchcraft, they now fell another way to work." (Poole) In the same way, Satan's violence and sorcery can have no lasting influence on the believer; but if he can lead us into sin, we can be destroyed."

**Rabbi Hirsch** - "The sword of no stranger, the curse of no stranger had the power to damage Israel. Only it itself could bring misfortune, by seceding from God and his Law."

Israel was breaking the Mosaic covenant, especially the first commandment

"You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. "You shall not worship them (Nu 25:2 "bowed down!") or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (Exodus 20:3-5)

Related Resources:

- [Who is Baal? - Gotquestions](#)
- [Who was Balak in the Bible?](#)
- [Who was Balaam?](#)
- [What was the doctrine of Balaam?](#)

**Joined** (06775)(**tsamad**) means coupled, paired, yoked, referring to two animals yoked together. Like a beast of burden they were yoked with idolatry in their worship of foreign gods, behind which are the **demons!** (cp 1 Cor 10:20-21 - Morris comments "Even though the physical images worshiped by idolaters are nothing but vanity, they do represent a dangerous reality, for demons actually lurk in and around such idols. These demonic spirits are able in certain limited ways to cause temporal blessings or troubles to visit their adherents, thereby impressing them with the validity of their false religion, and binding them ever more securely in the spirit's grasp.)

The [Septuagint](#) uses a surprising verb to translate **tsamad** in Nu 25:3, 5, Ps 106:28, the verb [teleo](#), which means to bring to an end or to [consummation](#). Brenton translates it as "consecrated to" to Baal of Peor! The use of the [perfect tense](#) (Nu 25:3,5) speaks of an abiding consecration. In short, the joining of the Israelites to the pagan deity was not a momentary lapse of ethical standards! The **NET Note** on **tsamad** says this "word is unusual, and may suggest the physical, ritual participation described below. It certainly shows that they acknowledge the reality of the local god. The evidence indicates that [Moab](#) was part of the very corrupt Canaanite world, a world that was given over to the fertility ritual of the times."

**Tsamad** - 5v in OT - fastened(1), frames(1), joined(3).

Numbers 25:3 So Israel **joined** themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have **joined** themselves to Baal of Peor."

2 Samuel 20:8 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath **fastened** at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out.

Psalms 50:19 "You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue **frames** deceit.

Psalms 106:28 They **joined** themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

They returned to the very thing God had done in delivering Israel from the YOKE of EGYPTIAN bondage, (Lev 26:13). Don't be too quick to condemn Israel for we must always remember that Israel is a picture of our old flesh nature that flees from God & His righteousness & seeks to be pampered w/ passing pleasures of sin. This action resulted in immediate capital punishment for all who became involved in this way. [Balaam](#) himself was later slain because of this counsel (Nu 31:7, 8,16).

**Baal of Peor: BAAL** = lord, owner, possessor, husband (Baal is derived from a primitive root meaning to marry or to rule over!). It is a proper noun referring to the supreme "god" of the Canaanites. Balaam prophesied from the **high places of Baal** (Nu 22:41 - see discussion of **High places** - [bamah](#) which were an "Achilles heel to Israel), possibly from the same place Israel sinned (Baal of Peor). Tragically Israel played the harlot yoking themselves with the wrong master or lord and committing spiritual adultery. In short, they **forgot** and **forsook** God their Husband (Jer 31:32, Isa 54:5).

Jeremiah 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although **I was a husband to them,**" declares the LORD.

Isaiah 54:5 "For **your husband is your Maker**, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

This refers to the local pagan god Baal worshiped at Peor. Ryrie says that Baal of Peor was "The local, heathen god Baal that was worshiped at Peor. Prostitution (cf. Nu 25:1) was part of that worship." In short, Israel's **spiritual** harlotry led to **physical** harlotry (cf. Nu 25:1) as part of their perverted worship of Baal at Peor! Beloved, what we **BELIEVE** will determine/influence how we **BEHAVE**. They did not believe God. They had clearly lost a healthy (reverential) fear of God when they camped at Peor. Peter gives us all an excellent commandment (especially in view of the rising tide of overt wickedness and godlessness that is flooding American culture!)...

1 Peter 1:17-[note](#) And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, **conduct** ([aorist imperative](#) - Do this now! Do it with a sense of urgency! But beloved, do not try to obey this command in your natural strength or you will fail and be frustrated, not to mention that you are subtly placing

yourself under the law ["do this", "don't do this"]. We need to jettison self dependence and depend wholly on the Holy Spirit Who Alone can give us the desire and the power to conduct ourselves in fear! cp Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)) yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;

NO one knows the exact nature of the idolatry involving Baal of Peor (Nu 25:3). However, it may have been a fertility cult (cf. Deut. 23:17–18; 1 Kings 14:22–24) as Baal was known as the male god of fertility. Canaanite religion in general involved rites intended to persuade the gods to help women reproduce and make lands fertile. Prostitution played a major role in the worship

It is interesting that women were used to entice the Hebrews to attend Baal worship and engage in “harlotry” or sexual immorality (Nu 25:1,2; 31:15,16). Consequently Moses ordered the execution of all women in Midian “who had known (been intimate with) a man intimately” (Nu 31:17).

**Henry Morris** suggests that the events in Numbers 25 mark “the introduction of Baal worship into Israel, a practice which plagued them off and on until the Babylonians carried them into exile over a thousand years later. Baal-peor was evidently the shrine to Baal on the mountain of Peor (Numbers 23:28). When Balaam was not allowed by God to curse Israel directly, he counseled Balak to infiltrate the armies of Israel through seduction by the Moabite women to join with them in the immoral worship of Baal. This action resulted in immediate capital punishment for all who became involved in this way. Balaam himself was later slain because of this counsel (Numbers 31:8,16).

**The LORD was angry against Israel** - Young's Literal reads “the anger of Jehovah burneth against Israel” but it can be rendered even more literally as “the nostrils of Yahweh blazed up against Israel!” Now if that doesn't get our attention, I don't know what will! The Greek is also quite vivid (“*kai orgisthe thumo kurios to Israel!*”) it uses not one but two words to convey the Lord's “serious displeasure.” The verb [orgizo](#) means to become angry, enraged or in some contexts, furious, while the associated noun [thumos](#) (from verb *thuo* = move violently or rush along) which BDAG says is “a state of intense displeasure!” (cp Rev 14:10 “the wine of the wrath of God”). Do we get the picture?

**Ronald Allen** has a cogent comment on God's wrath - “The wrath of the Lord is a “reddening of his nose” (lit. Heb.), a flashing of his rage. These [anthropomorphisms](#) (better, [anthropopathisms](#)) are vivid ways to describe what is unimaginable: to be on the receiving end of the wrath of Deity. The point of the Torah is not to show how often God rages or how violent are his judgments. The texts regularly assert how slow he is in coming to rage. But God has his flash point; his rage has a trigger. The rage of the Lord should have been expended against Moab and Balaam because of their effrontery; but here it is directed against Israel. They have deflected his rage from others to themselves by their obdurate folly.” (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

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### **F B Meyer - Numbers 25:3 Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor.**

The margin of the Revised Version gives the alternative, yoked. The people were attracted by the charms of the women of Moab; but what they entered for pleasure, became clasped on them as a yoke. “Every one that committeth (present tense - habitually) sin is (present tense - continually) the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34, R.V.).

**Sin is slavery.** — The drunkard loathes his chains, vows not to yield again; but sinks deeper into the mire with every ineffectual struggle. The libertine is bound with passions, his heart is a dungeon, his conscience a scourge. We are promised pleasure and gratification; but when once the [syrens](#) have prevailed and got us in their power, they cast off their disguise, and work their horrid will.

**The only deliverance is through the anointed priest** — Phinehas interposed, and he was Aaron's grandson, on whom the anointing oil rested. And this illustrates a remarkable expression in Isaiah 10:27, “The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.” Is not that the anointing of the Holy Ghost? It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be made free with the freedom of the Son of God. Where He is there is liberty. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” (Gal 5:16-17+).

**We must die to the sin that enchained us.** — There could be no half-measures. Phinehas took a spear. Whatever the cursed thing is which has crept in to enslave, it must be slain before the Lord. Is there some secret evil in your soul, eating out its strength? Ask the Faithful High Priest to deal with it, that your soul may cast off its bondage, and rise into the liberty of the sons of God.

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A number of parallels exist between what happened at Mount Sinai and what happened here on the plains of Moab.

### **COMPARISON OF EXODUS 32 AND NUMBERS 25 Parallels between Mount Sinai and the Plains of Moab**

**SIMILARITY**

**MOUNT SINAI**

**PLAINS OF MOAB**

Revelation followed by rebellion	Ex 20-31/Ex 32	Numbers 23-24/Numbers 25
Worship of false god	Golden calf, Ex 32:8	Baal of Peor, Numbers 25:3
God's anger stopped by an immediate execution of those guilty	Ex 32:26-28	Numbers 25:7-8
Response resulting in priesthood	Tribe of Levi, Ex 32:29	Phinehas, Numbers 25:11-13
Census	Ex 30:12	Numbers 26:2-4
Laws regarding sacrifice	Ex 34:25	Numbers 28:1-8
Laws regarding festivals	Ex 34:18-24	Numbers 28:11-31
Inheritance	Ex 32:13	Numbers 27:1-11
Joshua	Ex 32:17	Numbers 27:18-23
Sabbath	Ex 35:1-3	Numbers 28:9-10

Source: Moody Bible Commentary

## CANAANITE ABOMINATIONS

### Lev 18:24-30

Recent years have seen an increase in occult practices and Satanic rituals. But these things are nothing new. Somewhat similar rites were taking place in Canaan at the time when Israel left Egypt. God referred to the Canaanite practices as “abominations” for which “the land vomits out its inhabitants” (Lev 18:25,26). The historical context of Lev 18 shows that God’s concern had to do with religious as well as sexual purity. The chapter opens and closes with warnings to avoid the ways of the Canaanites (Lev 18:3, 30). The practices mentioned—incest, adultery, fornication, intercourse during a woman’s menstrual flow, child sacrifice, sodomy, bestiality—were all acts committed as part of the Canaanite religion. That religion was essentially a fertility cult. Worshipers appealed to their gods to help their women reproduce and to make their lands fertile. Thus sexual intercourse played a major role in the worship. There were other “abominations” involved, such as idolatry and the use of mediums and witchcraft. For all of these things, the Lord promised to VOMIT the Canaanites out of the land. In their place He planned to install His people living according to His ways and worshipping according to His holy practices. The Canaanites worshiped more than seventy deities.

#### Related Resource:

- See list of the principal demonic gods PAGAN DEITIES

**Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."**

BGT Numbers 25:4 κα ε πεν κ ριος τ Μωυσ λαβ π ντας το ς ρχηγο ς το λαο κα παραδειγμ πισον α το ς κυρ π ναντι το λ ου κα ποστραφ σεται ργ θυμο κυρ ου π Ισραηλ

**Greek** (Septuagint) kai eipen kurios to Mouse labe (2SAAM) pantas tous archevous tou laou kai paradeigmatison (2SAAM: make an example of one: Heb6:6) autous kurio apenanti (opposite, against) tou heliou (sun) kai apostraphesetai (3SFPI: apostrepho: ) orge thumou kuriou apo Israel

NET Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Arrest all the leaders of the people, and hang them up before the LORD in broad daylight, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel."

NLT Numbers 25:4 The LORD issued the following command to Moses: "Seize all the ringleaders and execute

them before the LORD in broad daylight, so his fierce anger will turn away from the people of Israel."

ESV Numbers 25:4 And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

NIV Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn away from Israel."

KJV Numbers 25:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

YLT Numbers 25:4 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them before Jehovah -- over-against the sun; and the fierceness of the anger of Jehovah doth turn back from Israel.'

LXE Numbers 25:4 And the Lord said to Moses, Take all the princes of the people, and make them examples of judgment for the Lord in the face of the sun, and the anger of the Lord shall be turned away from Israel.

ASV Numbers 25:4 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up unto Jehovah before the sun, that the fierce anger of Jehovah may turn away from Israel.

CSB Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD so that His burning anger may turn away from Israel."

NKJ Numbers 25:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

NRS Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people, and impale them in the sun before the LORD, in order that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

NAB Numbers 25:4 and he said to Moses, "Gather all the leaders of the people, and hold a public execution of the guilty ones before the LORD, that his blazing wrath may be turned away from Israel."

NJB Numbers 25:4 Yahweh said to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people. Impale them facing the sun, for Yahweh, to deflect his burning anger from Israel.'

GWN Numbers 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people, and execute them in broad daylight in the LORD's presence. This will turn the LORD's anger away from Israel."

- **all the heads:** Nu 25:14,15,18 Ex 18:25 De 4:3 Jos 22:17 23:2
- **and hang:** Deut 13:6-9,13,15 21:23 2Sa 21:6,9 Es 7:9,10
- **that the fierce:** Nu 25:11 De 13:17 Jos 7:25,26 Ps 85:3,4 Jon 3:9
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## OPEN SIN DEALT WITH OPENLY!

**The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD - In broad daylight** is literally "before the sun." (cp 2 Sa 12:12) This speaks of public execution in the sight of all Israel so as to be a warning to all the people not to do the same!

So serious was this breach of covenant, especially when Israel was on the threshold of the land of promise, that the Lord commanded Moses to take serious action—all the guilty individuals involved must die. Furthermore their death was to be public so that all would see and fear God. Beloved, there is a place for public censure of church leaders if the crime is so heinous (see 1 Cor 5:1-6 after which Paul commanded "**Clean out** [command - Don't delay!] the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened."). If the leadership chooses instead to discipline a public figure (leader) in private, they lose the fear producing effect.

Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?  
-- 1 Corinthians 5:6

**So that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel!** - "The execution of the leaders was designed to divert his anger from the populace as a whole. The expression *harôn 'ap* ("fierce anger") is used elsewhere of the anger of the Lord (32:14; Exod 32:19, 22; Deut 13:17; Josh 7:26; 1 Sam 28:18; 2 Kings 23:26; 2 Chronicles 28:11; Zeph 2:2; 3:8 et al.); but this anger may be averted, be turned back, once it flashes against its target...**Chapter 25 is the nadir of the Book of Numbers. It is worse even than the sins of chapters 12–14. Here is the great sin at the end of the road.** This may be one of the most indelicate texts of

Scripture, where Israel's judges are commanded to kill their own people who are engaged in the worship of Baal (v.5). We have trouble at times coming to grips with the commands of Scripture for Israel to kill her enemies. This chapter is harder for us to face; it is the command to kill some of their own people. **But these rebellious persons are like a cancer in the body.** If they are not excised, they will soon ruin the whole. So the call is to kill, to execute, and to do it quickly. In chapter 15 was the story of the public execution of one person, a blasphemer. Now the whole populace is in danger. (Allen - EBC)

## Numbers 25:5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor."

BGT Numbers 25:5 κα ε πεν Μωυς ς τας φυλας Ισραηλ ποκτη νατε καστος τ ν ο κε ον α το τ ν τετελεσμ νον τ Βεελφεγωρ

NET Numbers 25:5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you must execute those of his men<sup>10</sup> who were joined to Baal-peor."

NLT Numbers 25:5 So Moses ordered Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death the men under your authority who have joined in worshipping Baal of Peor."

ESV Numbers 25:5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor."

NIV Numbers 25:5 So Moses said to Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death those of your men who have joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor."b

KJV Numbers 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

YLT Numbers 25:5 And Moses saith unto the judges of Israel, 'Slay ye each his men who are joined to Baal-Peor.'

LXE Numbers 25:5 And Moses said to the tribes of Israel, Slay ye every one his friend that is consecrated to Beel-phegor.

ASV Numbers 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that have joined themselves unto Baal-peor.

CSB Numbers 25:5 So Moses told Israel's judges, "Kill each of the men who aligned themselves with Baal of Peor."

NKJ Numbers 25:5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

NRS Numbers 25:5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you shall kill any of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."

NAB Numbers 25:5 So Moses told the Israelite judges, "Each of you shall kill those of his men who have submitted to the rites of Baal of Peor."

NJB Numbers 25:5 Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Each of you will put to death those of his people who have committed themselves to the Baal of Peor.'

GWN Numbers 25:5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you must kill the men who have joined in worshipping the god Baal of Peor."

- **judges:** Ex 18:21,25,26
- **Slay ye:** Ex 22:20 32:27,28 De 13:6,9,13,15 17:3-5 1Ki 18:40
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF COMPROMISE

**So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor."** - Now Moses is not interceding to withhold judgement, but is seeking to enforce it. The danger of this sin was so great that this "cancer" had to be

removed by radical surgery before it "metastasized" to the entire congregation.

**Constable** explains that "To stop the plague God ordered the **making of atonement** by sacrificing the leaders within Israel. Since the whole nation had sinned God executed punishment on its leaders who stood for the people and should have restrained their apostasy. Israel's judges carried out this order (v. 5).

**Guzik** makes an excellent point - When sin such as this is tolerated or even approved in a culture, it is a sure sign of decay, and Moses wouldn't accept that decay. He commanded the community to bring the offenders to be judged, to show they would not accept this kind of sin in their midst.

**Allen** suggests that "As the animals and birds had been cut in half in the covenant ceremony at the beginnings of Israel's history (Ge 15:10), so the bodies of these rebels were to be dismembered and displayed in an awful symbol of divine judgment....Chapter 25 is the nadir of the Book of Numbers. It is worse even than the sins of chapters 12–14. Here is the great sin at the end of the road."

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**Question:** [What was Baal Peor in the Bible?](#)

**Answer:** Baal Peor, or the Baal of Peor, was a local deity worshiped by the Moabites. When the Israelites, following Moses to the Promised Land, were in the vicinity of Peor, some of them fell into idolatry and worshiped Baal Peor. As a result of their sin, the men of Israel were judged by God.

The story of Baal Peor starts when [Balaak](#), the king of the Moabites, hired [Balaam](#), a prophet-for-hire, to curse Israel. Balaak had seen the progress and might of Israel and was trying to do something that would stop them. Balaam took the money but was unable to curse Israel because the Lord would not allow him to do so. Balaam then met with the king of Moab and went through the motions of receiving a word from God; each time (seven times total) he ended up blessing Israel instead of cursing them (Numbers 23–24). At the time of the third oracle, Balaam and Balak were observing the Israelite camp from a place called Peor (Numbers 23:28). By the end of the seventh try, Balaak finally got the message that Balaam would not curse Israel for him.

In Numbers 25, we find that the women of Midian began to seduce the men of Israel to [sexual sin](#) and to sacrifice to their gods. Since the gods of the pagans were often fertility gods, the "worship" often involved sexual acts. The incident is recorded in Numbers 25:1–3:

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Midianite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them."

As a judgment against the Israelites' sin, God sent a plague among the people (verse 9).

According to Numbers 31:16, the women did this on the advice of Balaam. It appears that, since he could not curse Israel, he found another way to fulfill the wishes of Balaak, who was paying him. **Balaam knew that, if the Israelite men could be seduced into idol worship, that God Himself would curse them.**

The word *peor* simply means "opening" and is the name of the place (a mountain or a spot on a mountain) from which Balak and Balaam observed the camp of Israel. The meaning of the word may or may not be significant to the naming of the place. (Perhaps there was a cave opening there or some kind of mountain pass, or perhaps the place was called Peor for some other reason.)

The word *baal* is simply the word for "lord," "master," or "ruler." [Baal](#) became a technical or semi-technical name for the gods of the Canaanites. There was not just one god named Baal, but there were many Baals (many Canaanite "lords"). That is why Numbers 25:3 in the NIV does not use "Baal Peor" as if it were a proper name for a god but uses the term more as a description: "the Baal of Peor," which could also be translated "the Lord of Peor" or "Lord of the Opening." *Peor* might refer to the mountain top from which Balaam and Balak observed Israel, or it could have something to do with the literal meaning of the word *peor* (opening), which, in the context of Canaanite worship (and the context of Numbers 25), could have a sexual or scatological connotation. Perhaps the top of the mountain was called Peor because that is where the sexual rites took place.

In any case, Baal Peor is really *the* Baal of Peor or simply the Lord of Peor, which distinguishes this Baal from all the others. This particular god is referred to again in Numbers 25:5. Then Numbers 25:18 speaks of "the Peor incident," which sounds like Peor is being used as a place name rather than something based on the meaning of the word.

Deuteronomy 4:3 uses Baal Peor as a place name to refer to the incident recorded in Numbers 25 and in the same verse as a designation for the pagan god. "You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor." Joshua 22:17 speaks of the "sin of Peor," and Hosea 9:10 uses Baal Peor to refer to the place where this incident happened: "When they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol



and became as vile as the thing they loved.” Psalm 106:28 also refers to the Baal of Peor: “They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods.”

So it seems that Peor and Baal Peor are both used as place names to refer to the place where Israel sinned in sexual immorality and in worship of a particular Baal. The Baal in question is referred to as Baal Peor. Perhaps he was already referred to by this name, as he was seen to be in charge of this particular location, or perhaps this is the name that the Israelites gave him after the fact.

In any case, this incident at Baal Peor stands out as the first of many times that Israel fell into immorality and idolatry, and it also serves as a warning to Christians. The Corinthians would have been particularly susceptible to this kind of temptation, as the [city of Corinth](#) was filled with idolatry and sexual immorality. The question of eating at idol temples was debated within the congregation. Although he does not mention Baal Peor by name, Paul refers to that incident in 1 Corinthians 10:8: “We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.” In verses 11–14, Paul goes on to say, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.”

Many things have changed since Israel’s sin at Baal Peor, but the basic temptations have not. Sexual temptation is ever present in modern societies, and the idols of money, pleasure, fame, and “the good life” also vie to take the place of the One True God in the hearts of many people. Even today, Christians must guard against the sin of Baal Peor. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 25:6 Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting.**

BGT Numbers 25:6 καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἔθῃ προσγαγεῖν τὴν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν Μαδιαντίναν τὴν Μωϋσῆ καὶ ἀντιπύσης συναγωγῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ αὐτοῦ ὁ κλαίων παρὰ τὴν θύραν τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου

NET Numbers 25:6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the plain view of Moses and of the whole community of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

NLT Numbers 25:6 Just then one of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman into his tent, right before the eyes of Moses and all the people, as everyone was weeping at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

ESV Numbers 25:6 And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

NIV Numbers 25:6 Then an Israelite man brought to his family a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

KJV Numbers 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

YLT Numbers 25:6 And lo, a man of the sons of Israel hath come, and bringeth in unto his brethren the Midianitess, before the eyes of Moses, and before the eyes of all the company of the sons of Israel, who are weeping at the opening of the tent of meeting;

LXE Numbers 25:6 And, behold, a man of the children of Israel came and brought his brother to a Midianitish woman before Moses, and before all the congregation of the children of Israel; and they were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of witness.

ASV Numbers 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting.

CSB Numbers 25:6 An Israelite man came bringing a Midianite woman to his relatives in the sight of Moses

and the whole Israelite community while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

NKJ Numbers 25:6 And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

NRS Numbers 25:6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

NAB Numbers 25:6 Yet a certain Israelite came and brought in a Midianite woman to his clansmen in the view of Moses and of the whole Israelite community, while they were weeping at the entrance of the meeting tent.

NJB Numbers 25:6 One of the Israelites came along, bringing the Midianite woman into his family, under the very eyes of Moses and the whole community of Israelites as they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

GWN Numbers 25:6 One of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman to his brothers. He did this right in front of Moses and the whole community of Israel while they were crying at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

- a Midianitish: Nu 25:14,15 22:4 31:2,9-16
- in the sight of Moses: Nu 15:30,31 De 29:19-21 Jer 3:3 8:12 36:23 42:15-18 43:4-7 Jer 44:16,17 2Pe 2:13-15 Jude 1:13
- weeping: Jdg 2:4 Ezr 9:1-4 10:6-9 Isa 22:12 Eze 9:4-6 Joe 2:17
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FLAGRANT FLAUNTING OF SIN

**Behold** (also in Nu 25:6) ([02009](#)) ([hinneh](#)) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) Hinnah generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention!

**The tent of meeting** - The Tabernacle. Why were they weeping? Some think they were mourning over and confessing their sins. This could be as it appears the plague had already broken out and people were dying that might cause some weeping!

**One of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel** - So this Israelite Zimri not only attended the pagan ritual but even brought home a pagan "prize!" Thus this man did not even try to hide his sin, so deceived and ensnared was his heart. The NIV picks up a sense of the shock of such flagrant flaunting of sin translated it "**right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly!**" The NLT says "**the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman into his tent, right before the eyes of Moses and all the people.**"

Allen adds that "His sin is a deliberate provocateur of the wrath of the Lord, flaunting and taunting holiness in an almost unbelievable crudity." This man was brazenly committing sin in broad daylight! And as the next verse shows, their "in your face sin" (even with the background noise of the entire assembly weeping!) stirred the priest Phinehas to action!

The name of the slain man was Zimri and the woman was Cozbe (Nu 25:14, 15). So while Israel was in the land of Moab and the women in Nu 25:1 were Moabite woman, Cozbi the woman brought back by Zimri was a [Midianite](#). Wiersbe conjectures that "Zimri was a prince in Israel and Cozbi was the daughter of a prince, so perhaps they thought their social status gave them the privilege of sinning."

**While they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting**- Why were they weeping? Weeping is usually associated with mourning over something as when someone dies. Certainly people were dying in the sight of all the people. Some commentators feel the Israelites were weeping over their sins and they were confessing their sins. That is certainly possible but it is difficult to prove that definitively from the text.

**Ronald Allen** raises the thought that the **tent** into which they went was not the family home but the **Tent of Meeting!** He paraphrases Nu 25:6 "Then a certain Israelite man brought the Midianite woman to the Tent [of God] right before the eyes of Moses and the eyes of all the congregation of Israel; and they were sporting at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." He adds "It is most shocking that the tent may be the Tent of Meeting!....It was the brazenness of the acts of these two that made them not just sinners but an abomination to the Lord. Here is a frontal assault on the true, high, and pure worship of the Lord that the priestly interests in the Book of Numbers stress repeatedly. Only an act of equal force to the nature of the affront will suffice. That powerful act came in the person of Phinehas." (Ibid)

**George Bush** - Behold, one of the children of Israel came, and brought unto his brethren, etc. Heb. "Brought near to his brethren;" i. e. brought near in the sight of his brethren. This is the only sense in which she was brought to them, implying a peculiarly open, public, and shameless proceeding on the part of the offenders. It was done not only in the sight of the brethren of the culprit, but of Moses also, and of a large portion of the congregation who were at that time collected at the door of the Tabernacle weeping and mourning over the fearful transgression. It is not improbable, in fact, that the judgment had even then begun, and what must have been the enormity of introducing a paramour, in these circumstances, into an Israelitish tent, in open defiance of every restraint of decency and religion!

**Merrill** - At that moment, one of the guilty men strutted "right before the eyes of Moses and all the people" (Nu 25:6). Commentators give three suggestions for identifying the offense: (1) illicit sex (Keil 1869:205), (2) foreign marriage (Baentsch 1903:624–625; Binns 1927:178; Budd 1984:280; Noordtzi 1983:241; Noth 1968:198; Sturdy 1976:184), or (3) cultic offense (Cross 1973:201–203; Levine 2000:280; Milgrom 1989:212, 214, 476–480; de Vaulx 1972:299; G. J. Wenham 1981:187). Ashley concludes, "All three factors seem to apply" (Ashley 1993:520). (CBC-Nu)

**Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand,**

BGT Numbers 25:7 καὶ ὁ υἱὸς Φινεᾶς υἱὸς Ἐλεάζαρ υἱοῦ Ἀαρὼν τοῦ ἐρωσῆσαν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ λαβὼν σπέρμα ἐν τῇ χειρὶ

NET Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up from among the assembly, took a javelin in his hand,

NLT Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest saw this, he jumped up and left the assembly. He took a spear

ESV Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand

NIV Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand

KJV Numbers 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

YLT Numbers 25:7 and Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, seeth, and riseth from the midst of the company, and taketh a javelin in his hand,

LXE Numbers 25:7 And Phinees the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, and rose out of the midst of the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand,

ASV Numbers 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand;

CSB Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he got up from the assembly, took a spear in his hand,

NKJ Numbers 25:7 Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand;

NRS Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up and left the congregation. Taking a spear in his hand,

NAB Numbers 25:7 When Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, and taking a lance in hand,

NJB Numbers 25:7 The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, on seeing this, stood up, left the assembly, seized a lance,

GWN Numbers 25:7 Phinehas, son of Eleazar and grandson of the priest Aaron, saw this. So he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand,

- a javelin: 1Sa 18:10,11 19:9
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Phinehas takes a spear - Nu 25:7,8

## PHINEHAS MAKES A POINT!

**When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand** - Wiersbe quips that "Aaron's grandson Phinehas left the prayer meeting and went after" Zimri and Cozbi!

Ashley - "This offense was the proverbial last straw. Phinehas is an Egyptian name (pi-nḥas) meaning "the dark-skinned one." His priestly lineage is traced back to Aaron to make it clear who he was (he is previously mentioned only in the genealogy of Exod. 6:25)." (NICOT-Nu)

**Walter Kaiser** has an interesting comment on Phinehas' action - Phinehas was no vigilante. He was heir apparent to the priesthood; thus he, no doubt, was one of the appointed judges whom Moses had ordered to slay all known offenders. This story does not justify the actions of private persons who, under the guise of zeal for expediting God's purposes, take matters into their own hands when they see wrongdoing rather than contacting the appropriate authorities. Because of the Israelites' apostasy and sin, **atonement** was required before divine forgiveness could be proffered. The atonement that Phinehas offered was that of two human offenders. Normally in the Old Testament, atonement is mentioned in connection with sacrifices, such as the sin offering. But in twenty-two passages, atonement was effected by means other than ceremonial offerings (for example, Ex 32:30–32; Deut 21:1–9; 2 Sam 21:3–9). Therefore, just as the life of the animal was a substitute, the means of ransoming the life of the guilty party, so the holiness of God was defended in this case through the substitution of the lives of the sinning couple. With atonement made, God could pardon his people and halt the spread of the plague. (Hard Sayings of the Bible)

**ISBE** entry on **Phinehas** - (1) Son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron (Exodus 6:25 ; compare 1 Chronicles 6:4 ; Ezra 7:5 , where he is seen to be an ancestor of Ezra). He took a leading part in cleansing Israel from whoredom at Shittim. He there punished the brazen licentiousness of Zimri, prince of Sirecon, by slaying both him and the Midianite woman he had brought into camp (Numbers 25:6-18 ). This incident is referred to in Psalm 106:30 , Psalm 106:31 (compare 1 Macc 2:26, 54; Sirach 45:23, 24). As priest he accompanied the expedition sent by Moses against Midjan ( Numbers 31:6 ). He was chief of the Korahite Levites (1 Chronicles 9:20 ), and succeeded his father as high priest. While he was in that office the civil war with Benjamin occurred, and it was he who delivered the oracle's decision to fight Benjamin (Judges 20:28 ff). His faithful services secured to his house the succession of the priesthood ( Numbers 25:11-13 ). He was sent as ambassador to inquire into the reported idolatry of Reuben, Gad and part of Manasseh (Joshua 22:13 ff, 30-32). According to Septuagint he was buried with his father in Ephraim on the hill Gibeah Phinehas (see Joshua 24:33 ). His character was marked with strong moral indignation and fine integrity.

**Larry Richards** - Years later, after the Israelites had conquered Canaan, Phinehas filled a different role. The Hebrew tribes who settled east of the Jordan River had constructed an altar at the riverside (Josh. 22:13–34). The leaders in Canaan were concerned. God had commanded that sacrifices be offered only on the altar that stood before the tabernacle. In fact, the leaders were ready to go to war with their brothers over the altar if indeed it was intended to be used for illicit sacrifices. But first they organized a fact-finding mission. Who better to send on a fact-finding mission than Phinehas, who had proven his zeal for God? Phinehas discovered that the Trans-Jordan tribes had been afraid that as the years passed some in Canaan might deny their right to share in the worship of God. So the Trans-Jordan tribes had constructed the altar, following the rules laid out in Moses' writings, as a witness that they, too, were God's people. Phinehas accepted their explanation, and civil war was avoided. On occasions, commitment to the Lord calls for what might seem like harsh discipline in the church. At such times, we need our Phinehases. But we also need Phinehases who are willing to listen and eager to keep peace when misunderstandings come between brothers. Phinehas was one of those unusual men who was harsh only when harshness was appropriate and compassionate when it was fitting to listen and make peace. (Every Man in the Bible)

**Brian Bell** on **Phinehas' zeal** - A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently **a man of one thing**. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is **to please God**. Whether he lives, or whether he dies - whether he has health, or whether he has sickness - whether he is rich, or whether he is poor - whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offense - whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish - whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise - whether he get honor, or whether he gets shame - for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. **He burns for one thing**; and that one thing is to **please God**, & to **advance God's glory**. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it-he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Several years ago a man named **Eugene Ormandy** dislocated a shoulder while directing the Philadelphia Orchestra.

### **F F Bruce - 25:7–13 Why Was Phinehas Praised?**

Several questions are generally raised in connection with this most unusual story of Phinehas. The first involves the action of Cozbi and Zimri. What were they doing that so stirred the holy indignation of Phinehas that he impaled both of them with one thrust of his spear?

We will need to understand what was involved in the worship of Baal of Peor (Num 25:1–5). And was Israel's lapse into this sin in any way connected with the advice or at the instigation of Balaam, the son of Beor?

Finally, we wish to know how the death of the couple, Zimri and Cozbi, could effect an atonement and assuage the wrath of God. All of these questions arise from one of the most bizarre episodes in Israel's long wilderness wanderings.

At this point, Israel was encamped at Shittim, or Acacia. It was a site east of the Jordan and six miles north of the Dead Sea, if this name is to be connected with modern Tel el-Kefrein.

It appears that the Israelite men began to have sexual relations with the Moabite and Midianite women (Num 25:1, 6). How such liaisons began we can only guess, but they seem to be connected with the bad advice given to the Moabites by the prophet Balaam, son of Beor. Prior to this event, the king of Moab had hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel; because of the strong hand of God on his life, however, Balaam had only been able to bless them. Apparently still bent on helping the Moabite king, Balaam had stayed on in the land of Moab and Midian. Numbers 31:16 informs us that "[the Midianite women] were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people." (Apparently the Midianites were in Moab giving military advice to the Moabites at this time.)

The Moabites worshiped the war god Chemosh, but they must have also indulged in the fertility religion of Baal. This cult was marked by some of the most depraved religious practices in Canaan. In lurid and orgiastic rites, the worshipers would emulate the sacred prostitution of their gods and goddesses, often also participating in a ceremonial meal. (ED: "DEBAUCHERY ON STEROIDS!") In the case of Baal of Peor, we suspect that the cult also involved veneration for the dead. Peor may be the Hebrew and Phoenician spelling for the Luwian Pahura. This word in Hittite means "fire" and may derive from some form of the root that underlies the Greek pyr, "fire."

Among the Israelites, then, the Midianite and Moabite women continued to prostrate themselves in Baal worship, imitating fertility rituals. And one day, as all the Israelites were gathered in front of the tabernacle confessing their sin, the son of one of the leaders in the tribe of Simeon paraded before them with a Moabite woman, headed for his tent.

Reading the situation clearly, Phinehas swung into action. By the time he reached them in the back (bedroom) part of the tent, the couple were already involved in sexual intercourse. With a single thrust, Phinehas speared both of them. His action stopped the plague that had broken out among the Israelites.

Israel's wholesale embracing of the immorality and idolatry of pagan ritualistic sex had aroused the anger of God. While God had saved Israel from the curses of Balaam, the Israelites could not save themselves from sinning against God.

Phinehas was no vigilante. He was heir apparent to the priesthood; thus he, no doubt, was one of the appointed judges whom Moses had ordered to slay all known offenders. This story does not justify the actions of private persons who, under the guise of zeal for expediting God's purposes, take matters into their own hands when they see wrongdoing rather than contacting the appropriate authorities.

Because of the Israelites' apostasy and sin, atonement was required before divine forgiveness could be proffered. The atonement that Phinehas offered was that of two human offenders. Normally in the Old Testament, atonement is mentioned in connection with sacrifices, such as the sin offering. But in twenty-two passages, atonement was effected by means other than ceremonial offerings (for example, Ex 32:30–32; Deut 21:1–9; 2 Sam 21:3–9). Therefore, just as the life of the animal was a substitute, the means of ransoming the life of the guilty party, so the holiness of God was defended in this case through the substitution of the lives of the sinning couple. With atonement made, God could pardon his people and halt the spread of the plague.

The reward given to Phinehas was that his descendants would enjoy eternal possession of the priesthood. That priesthood continued, except for the interval of the priesthood of Eli, without interruption until the collapse of the nation in 586 B.C. ([Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)).

**Numbers 25:8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the**

BGT Numbers 25:8 ε σ λθεν π σω το νθρ που το Ισραηλ του ε ς τ ν κ μινον κα π εκ ντησεν μφοτ ρους τ ν τε νθρωπον τ ν Ισραηλ την κα τ ν γυνα κα δι τ ς μ τρας α τ ς κα πα σατο π ληγ π υ ν Ισραηλ

NET Numbers 25:8 and went after the Israelite man into the tent and thrust through the Israelite man and into the woman's abdomen. So the plague was stopped from the Israelites.

NLT Numbers 25:8 and rushed after the man into his tent. Phinehas thrust the spear all the way through the man's body and into the woman's stomach. So the plague against the Israelites was stopped,

ESV Numbers 25:8 and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped.

NIV Numbers 25:8 and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear through both of them--through the Israelite and into the woman's body. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped;

KJV Numbers 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

YLT Numbers 25:8 and goeth in after the man of Israel unto the hollow place, and pierceth them both, the man of Israel and the woman -- unto her belly, and the plague is restrained from the sons of Israel;

LXE Numbers 25:8 and went in after the Israelitish man into the chamber, and pierced them both through, both the Israelitish man, and the woman through her womb; and the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

ASV Numbers 25:8 and he went after the man of Israel into the pavilion, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

CSB Numbers 25:8 followed the Israelite man into the tent, and drove it through both the Israelite man and the woman-- through her belly. Then the plague on the Israelites was stopped,

NKJ Numbers 25:8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.

NRS Numbers 25:8 he went after the Israelite man into the tent, and pierced the two of them, the Israelite and the woman, through the belly. So the plague was stopped among the people of Israel.

NAB Numbers 25:8 followed the Israelite into his retreat where he pierced the pair of them, the Israelite and the woman. Thus the slaughter of Israelites was checked;

NJB Numbers 25:8 followed the Israelite into the alcove, and there ran them both through, the Israelite and the woman, through the stomach. Thus the plague which had struck the Israelites was arrested.

GWN Numbers 25:8 and went into the tent after the Israelite man. He drove the spear through the man and into the woman's body. Because of this, the plague that the Israelites were experiencing stopped.

- thrust: Nu 25:5,11 Ps 106:29-31
- So the plague: Nu 16:46-48 2Sa 24:25 1Ch 21:22
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ONE WAY TO PAUSE A PLAGUE!

**Into the tent** - It does not take much imagination to understand what was transpiring in **the tent** which enabled Phinehas to pierce **both of them through** with a single spear **through the body!** The NLT paraphrase is vivid - Phinehas "rushed after the man into his tent. (and he)...thrust the spear all the way through the man's body and into the woman's stomach. So the plague against the Israelites was stopped."

The word for **tent** is **qubbah** which is used only here in the OT and means a large, vaulted tent. The Greek Septuagint picks a strange word *kaminos* to translate *qubbah*, for this Greek noun literally means an oven or furnace and was used figuratively by Jesus to describe hell as "the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:42)! Could there be some association? Go figure!

**NET NOTE** says "**qubbah** seems to refer to the innermost part of the family tent. Some suggest it was in the tabernacle area, but that is unlikely. S. C. Reif argues for a private tent shrine.

**NET NOTE on pierced both of them...** (Hebrew = "and he thrust the two of them the Israelite man and the woman to her belly [lower abdomen].") Reif notes the similarity of the word with the previous "inner tent," and suggests that it means Phinehas stabbed her in her shrine tent, where she was being set up as some sort of priestess or cult leader. Phinehas put a quick end to their sexual immorality while they were in the act. ([Click here to read some interesting thoughts on the possible significance of this tent](#))

**So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked-** God had sent the plague and now He stopped the plague in response to the action of Phinehas.

### Numbers 25:9 Those who died by the plague were 24,000.

BGT Numbers 25:9 καὶ γινόντο οὐ τεθνηκότες ἐν τῇ πληγῇ τῶν σαφρῶν καὶ ἑκοσὶ χίλι οὗρες

NET Numbers 25:9 Those that died in the plague were 24,000.

NLT Numbers 25:9 but not before 24,000 people had died.

ESV Numbers 25:9 Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

NIV Numbers 25:9 but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

KJV Numbers 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

YLT Numbers 25:9 and the dead by the plague are four and twenty thousand.

LXE Numbers 25:9 And those that died in the plague were four and twenty thousand.

ASV Numbers 25:9 And those that died by the plague were twenty and four thousand.

CSB Numbers 25:9 but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

NKJ Numbers 25:9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

NRS Numbers 25:9 Nevertheless those that died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

NAB Numbers 25:9 but only after twenty-four thousand had died.

NJB Numbers 25:9 In the plague twenty-four thousand of them had died.

GWN Numbers 25:9 However, 24,000 people died from that plague.

- Nu 25:4,5 16:49,50 Dt 4:3,4 1Co 10:8
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In a passage many see as a NT parallel description, Paul writes "And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY. (quoting Ex 32:8) Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day." (1 Co 10:7, 8)

Some like **John MacArthur** interpret 1 Cor 10:8 as a different event - "This is to be differentiated from the plague over the golden calf where 23,000 died (cf. Ex 32:1-14, 28; 1 Co 10:8)." Dr MacArthur may in fact be correct as there are parallels between Israel's sin in Exodus 32 and Numbers 25. Notice also that in context verse 7 clearly is an allusion to the sin of the golden calf. Then follows the mention of 23,000 in one day. Here in Nu 25:9 the number is 24,000 but it is not stated this occurred in one day. The problem with the Exodus 32 explanation is that the text says 3000 men fell in one day (Ex 32:28).

So while MacArthur may not be correct, it is still interesting to compare Israel's two episodes of national sin against God in Exodus 32 and Numbers 25. In regard to the sinful episode in Exodus 32, it was clearly accompanied by idolatry (Ex 32:8, cp 1 Cor 10:7) and in the opinion of a number of writers also included immorality. They interpret the following passage as indicative of immoral behavior Moses recording that Israel "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Walter Kaiser says the word **to play** (*tsachaq*) in this context means "drunken immoral orgies and sexual play" (Expositor's Bible Commentary 2:478). While this is an assumption several recent English translations seem to agree. For example the NCV has "got up and sinned sexually"; and the TEV has "an orgy of drinking and sex". I would add that the same Hebrew word translated "play" (*tsachaq*) is used in Ge 26:8 of Isaac "caressing (*tsachaq*) his wife Rebekah." One of the definitions of *tsachaq* is "to play amorously with." In sum, it appears very likely that the Israelites were mixing immorality with idolatry, a "duet" that plays out from Genesis to Revelation. So what is the take home point? "Little children, **guard** (*phulasso*) yourselves from idols!" (1 John 5:21-[note](#)) **Guard** is in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for a sense of urgency. Do this now. Don't delay. Beloved the only way you or I can obey this command is by casting off self-reliance

and self-effort and yielding to the filling of the Spirit, Who alone can enable us to successfully guard ourselves from idols (cp the role of the Spirit in Ro 8:13-[note](#)).

**Henry Morris** - 1 Corinthians 10:8 states 23,000 fell "in one day." Evidently another thousand died a day or so later. (Defender's Study Bible)

**Charles Ryrie** - Twenty-three thousand was the number killed in one day. Num. 25:9 indicates that there were additional deaths afterward. (Ryrie Study Bible)

**Donald Campbell** - 1 Corinthians 10:8 says 23,000 people died in this incident, whereas Numbers 25:9 has 24,000. This apparent discrepancy can be explained by Paul's mention of "one day," with the understanding that another 1,000 may have died on another day or days. Or 24,000 may have included the leaders, whereas 23,000 did not. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

This verse reminds me of a saying most of you have probably heard, but it certainly seems apropos in Numbers 25

**SIN WILL ALWAYS TAKE YOU FARTHER THAN YOU WANTED TO GO**

**SIN WILL ALWAYS KEEP YOU LONGER THAN YOU WANTED TO STAY**

**SIN WILL ALWAYS COST YOU MORE THAN YOU INTENDED TO PAY**

**Walter Kaiser** addresses the apparent "discrepancy" of accounting in Numbers and First Corinthians...

In the warning of 1 Corinthians 10:8 ("23,000 fell in one day") we notice that the main point is that Christians should not commit immorality. Yet the number surprises us when we look at Numbers 25:9: "But those who died in the plague numbered 24,000." Which text is correct? Why did Paul use one number if the book of Numbers has another?

In some situations of this type the solution is easy: the New Testament is citing the Greek version of the Old Testament, while the Hebrew version, the basis of English Bibles, reads differently. In this case that is not the solution. All of the various versions of the Old Testament and all known Jewish traditions agree that 24,000 is the correct number. How could Paul have gotten a different number?

Some apologists have resorted to speculation. One theory says that while the total number who died was 24,000, the number that died "in one day" was only 23,000. Another theory argues that the true number was 23,500, and while Numbers rounded it up, Paul rounded it down. The truth is that both of these ideas are pure speculation. No Jewish tradition contains either of these ideas, nor does Paul give any explanation in this verse that would lead us to believe that he is doing one of these things. While either of these theories could be true, only special divine revelation could have revealed them as truth to Paul, and Paul does not claim such special revelation in this passage.

It is difficult to explain exactly what happened. The one place where 23,000 appears in the Old Testament is Numbers 26:62 (the number of the male Levites a month old or more). It is possible that Paul, citing the Old Testament from memory as he wrote to the Corinthians, referred to the incident in Numbers 25:9, but his mind slipped a chapter later in picking up the number. Paul dictated his letters, and if he had written copies of the Old Testament to check, which he often did not, they would have been scrolls and thus awkward to use. It is unlikely that he would unroll one to check a number in a passage. It is certainly not because 23,000 was meaningful that Paul chose it, for it is 24,000 that is a multiple of 12 and which appears in other places in the Old Testament (for example, multiple times in 1 Chron 27). Of course we cannot rule out the possibility that there was some reference to 23 or 23,000 in his local environment as he was writing and that caused a slip in his mind, although given that he was thinking about the Old Testament the explanation from Numbers 26:62 is the more likely.

What does this mean? In this passage in Corinthians Paul was not attempting to instruct people on Old Testament history and certainly not on the details of Old Testament history. What Paul is doing is using a known Old Testament text as an illustration. He assumes that his readers know the Old Testament text and will recognize the incident. Their knowledge that the Old Testament incident happened should then warn them that God might do something like it again, if they behave like Israel did. In regard to the point that Paul is making, there is no difference whether 10 individuals or 1,000 or 20,000 or 24,000 died. The point is that they committed immorality and they died, as the Corinthians may also die if they commit immorality.

(**Ed comment:** The following sentence is a bit speculative and must be taken with a "grain of salt" as the saying goes!) Thus here we have a case in which Paul apparently makes a slip of the mind for some reason (unless he has special revelation he does not inform us about), but the mental error does not affect the



teaching. How often have we heard preachers with written Bibles before them make similar errors of detail that in no way affected their message? If we notice it (and few usually do), we (hopefully) simply smile and focus on the real point being made. As noted above, Paul probably did not have a written Bible to check (although at times he apparently had access to scrolls of the Old Testament), but in the full swing of dictation he cited an example from memory and got a detail wrong. Since he is not writing an Old Testament commentary, the issue is not that he slipped, but whether or not we will take warning from his teaching and not presume on our baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper to save us from judgment should we fall into immorality like the ancient Israelites did. The issue is not the missing 1,000 from the Old Testament, but whether we will be counted among those judged by God in the New. (Hard Sayings of the Bible)

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### Norman Geisler - NUMBERS 25:9—Why does this verse say that 24,000 died when 1 Corinthians 10:8 offers a different number?

**PROBLEM:** The incident at Baal-Peor resulted in God's judgment upon Israel, and, according to Numbers 25:9, 24,000 died in the plague of judgment. However, according to 1 Corinthians 10:8, only 23,000 died. Which is the correct number?

**SOLUTION:** There are two possible explanations here. First, some have suggested that the difference is due to the fact that 1 Corinthians 10:8 is speaking only about those who died "in one day" (23,000), whereas Numbers 25:9 is referring to the complete number (24,000) that died in the plague.

Others believe two different events are in view here. They note that 1 Corinthians 10:7 is a quote of Exodus 32:6 and indicates that the 1 Corinthians passage is actually referring to the judgment of God after the idolatrous worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32). The Exodus passage does not state the number of people that died as a result of the judgment of God, and the actual number is not revealed until 1 Corinthians 10:8. According to 1 Corinthians 10:8, 23,000 died as a result of the judgment of God for their worship of the golden calf. According to Numbers 25:9, 24,000 died as a result of the judgment of God for Israel's worship of Baal at Baal-Peor. (When Critics Ask)

### Numbers 25:10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

BGT Numbers 25:10 καὶ ἠλάσεν κριὸς πρὸς Μωϋσὲν λέγων

NET Numbers 25:10 The LORD spoke to Moses:

NLT Numbers 25:10 Then the LORD said to Moses,

ESV Numbers 25:10 And the LORD said to Moses,

NIV Numbers 25:10 The LORD said to Moses,

KJV Numbers 25:10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

YLT Numbers 25:10 And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

LXE Numbers 25:10 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

ASV Numbers 25:10 And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying,

CSB Numbers 25:10 The LORD spoke to Moses,

NKJ Numbers 25:10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

NRS Numbers 25:10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

NAB Numbers 25:10 Then the LORD said to Moses,

NJB Numbers 25:10 Yahweh then spoke and said,

GWN Numbers 25:10 Then the LORD said to Moses,

- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The LORD spoke to Moses** - This exact phrase occurs 93x in the NAS - Exod. 6:10, 13, 28f; 7:8; 13:1; 14:1; 16:11; 19:21; 25:1; 30:17, 22; 31:1, 12; 32:7; 33:1; 40:1; Lev. 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 19, 24; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 27:1; Num. 1:1; 2:1; 3:5, 11, 14, 44; 4:1, 17, 21; 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 22; 7:4; 8:1, 5, 23; 9:1,

9; 13:1; 14:26; 15:1, 17; 16:20, 23, 36, 44; 17:1; 18:25; 19:1; 20:7, 23; 25:10, 16; 26:1, 52; 27:6; 28:1; 31:1, 25; 33:50; 34:1, 16; 35:1, 9; Deut. 32:48; Jos. 14:6

**Allen** - Verse 10 introduces an oracle of the Lord, attached directly to the preceding dramatic narrative. The focus of the oracle is on Phinehas who has acted with the zeal of the Lord.

**Numbers 25:11** "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.

Amplified Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my wrath away from the Israelites, in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in My jealousy.

BGT Numbers 25:11 Φινεεσ υ ς Ελεαζαρ υ ο Ααρων το ερ ως κατ παυσεν τ ν θυμ ν μου π υ ν Ισραηλ ν τ ζηλ σα μου τ ν ζ λον ν α τ ο ς κ α ο κ ξαν λωσα τ ο ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ ν τ ζ λ μου

NET Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites, when he manifested such zeal for my sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in my zeal.

NLT Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest has turned my anger away from the Israelites by being as zealous among them as I was. So I stopped destroying all Israel as I had intended to do in my zealous anger.

ESV Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.

NIV Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them.

KJV Numbers 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

YLT Numbers 25:11 'Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, hath turned back My fury from the sons of Israel, by his being zealous with My zeal in their midst, and I have not consumed the sons of Israel in My zeal.

LXE Numbers 25:11 Phinees the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest has caused my wrath to cease from the children of Israel, when I was exceedingly jealous among them, and I did not consume the children of Israel in my jealousy.

ASV Numbers 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

CSB Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites because he was zealous among them with My zeal, so that I did not destroy the Israelites in My zeal.

NKJ Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

NRS Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them on my behalf that in my jealousy I did not consume the Israelites.

NAB Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger from the Israelites by his zeal for my honor among them; that is why I did not put an end to the Israelites for the offense to my honor.

NJB Numbers 25:11 'The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron has deflected my wrath from the

Israelites, he being the only one of them to have the same zeal as I have; for which reason, I did not make an end of the Israelites in my zeal.

GWN Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas, son of Eleazar and grandson of the priest Aaron, turned my fury away from the Israelites. Since he stood up for me, I didn't have to stand up for myself and destroy them.

- **turned my:** Jos 7:25,26 2Sa 21:14 Ps 106:23 Joh 3:36
- **for my sake:** Heb. with my zeal, 2Co 11:2
- **that I:** Ex 22:5 Ex 34:14 De 4:24 Dt 29:20 Dt 32:16,21 Jos 24:19 1Ki 14:22 Ps 78:58 Eze 16:38 Na 1:2 Zep 1:18 3:8 1Co 10:22
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHINEHAS' ZEAL TURNS AWAY GOD'S WRATH

**Turned away My wrath** - The priest Phinehas in turning away the temporal wrath of God is in a sense a shadow of our Great High Priest Who turns away eternal wrath for all who believe in Him.

We see other examples of turning away the wrath of God

The most poignant of course is the radical redemption wrought by our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. John writes

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God abides on him.**" (John 3:36)

**Comment** - This is the only time **wrath** ([orge](#)) is used in John's Gospel.

**Merrill Tenney** comments on God's **wrath** - It is the settled displeasure of God against sin. It is the divine allergy to moral evil, the reaction of righteousness to unrighteousness. God is neither easily angered nor vindictive. But by his very nature he is unalterably committed to opposing and judging all disobedience. The moral laws of the universe are as unvarying and unchangeable as its physical laws, and God cannot set aside either without violating his own nature. The rejection of his Son can be followed only by retribution. Acceptance of Christ is the personal appropriation of God's truth—an appropriation that might be compared to the practice of endorsing a check to cash it. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

In Joshua the stoning of Achan resulted in the turning away of the Lord's wrath...

And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and **the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger.** Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of [Achor](#) to this day. (Joshua 7:25,26)

**Comment** - **All Israel** refers to representatives from the whole nation. They were acting in accord with their promise to Joshua in 1:18.

In Ex 32:11–14 Moses made atonement for the people (cp Dt 9:25) when they committed the sin of the Golden Calf:

Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people. 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

**Walter Kaiser** - In his role as divinely raised-up mediator, Moses appealed to the Lord (Ex 32:11). First, he reminded the Lord of his special covenantal relationship with his people, which he manifested in the Exodus. Then, he appealed to God's need to keep his name holy and trustworthy (Ex 32:12). Finally, he referred to the great patriarchal promises (Ex 32:13)(**Ed:** The [Abrahamic Covenant](#), an everlasting, unconditional covenant).As Moses championed the Lord's cause, "the LORD relented" (Ex 32:14). In only two of the thirty-eight instances in the OT is this word used of men repenting. God's repentance or "relenting" is an anthropomorphism (a description of God in human forms) that aims at showing us that he can and does

change in his actions and emotions to men when given proper grounds for doing so, and thereby he does not change in his basic integrity or character (cf. Ps 99:6; 106:45; Jer 18:8; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:10; James 5:16). The grounds for the Lord's repenting are three: (1) intercession (cf. Amos 7:1–6); (2) repentance of the people (Jer 18:3–11; Jonah 3:9–10); and (3) compassion (Deut 32:36; Judg 2:18; 2 Sam 24:16). (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

The psalmist records the turning away God's wrath in the life of Moses. The psalmist records

Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one **stood in the breach** before Him, **To turn away His wrath from destroying them.** (Ps 106:23)

**Willem A. VanGemeren** - The metaphor "stood in the breach" derives from military language, signifying the bravery of a soldier who stands in the breach of the wall, willing to give his life in warding off the enemy (cf. Ezek 22:30). So Moses stood bravely in the presence of Almighty God on behalf of Israel. Moses' position was unique, being God's "chosen one" (a synonym of "servant"; cf. Ps 89:3). The Lord responded to Moses' intercession by not destroying the people. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**In that he was jealous with My jealousy** ("he was zealous with My zeal.") - While Phinehas' actions do not do not justify believers being vigilantes, clearly his actions were "synchronizes" with the will of God for he was motivated jealousy for God's great Name.

**NET NOTE** on **jealousy** (zeal) - The repetition of forms for "zeal" in the line stresses the passion of Phinehas. The word **zeal** means a passionate intensity to protect or preserve divine or social institutions. The word for "zeal" now occurs a third time. While some English versions translate this word here as "jealousy" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV), it carries the force of God's passionate determination to defend his rights and what is right about the covenant and the community and parallels the "zeal" that Phinehas had just demonstrated.

**Bush** - The meaning is, that in thus vindicating the divine honor he showed that he could no more tolerate this forbidden connection of the chosen people with an idolatrous race than a man would suffer his wife to prostitute herself to strangers. In this sense the Lord himself is said to be "jealous," Ex. 20:5. The term conveys an allusion to the conjugal relation which the Lord sustained to his people.

Moses records "you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14)

In Dt 4:24 he writes "the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

Other passages on jealousy

Deuteronomy 29:20 "The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

Deuteronomy 32:16; 21 ) "They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger....'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

**Numbers 25:12 "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace;**

BGT Numbers 25:12 ο τω ς ε π ν δ ο γ δ δ ω μ ι α τ διαθ κ η ν ε ρ ν η ς

NET Numbers 25:12 Therefore, announce: 'I am going to give to him my covenant of peace.

NLT Numbers 25:12 Now tell him that I am making my special covenant of peace with him.

ESV Numbers 25:12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace,

NIV Numbers 25:12 Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.

KJV Numbers 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

YLT Numbers 25:12 'Therefore say, Lo, I am giving to him My covenant of peace,

LXE Numbers 25:12 Thus do thou say to him, Behold, I give him a covenant of peace:

ASV Numbers 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

CSB Numbers 25:12 Therefore declare: I grant him My covenant of peace.

NKJ Numbers 25:12 "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace;

NRS Numbers 25:12 Therefore say, 'I hereby grant him my covenant of peace.

NAB Numbers 25:12 Announce, therefore, that I hereby give him my pledge of friendship,

NJB Numbers 25:12 For this reason I say: To him I grant my covenant of peace.

GWN Numbers 25:12 So tell Phinehas that I'm making a promise of peace to him.

- Nu 13:29 Mal 2:4,5 3:1
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHINEHAS' REWARD OF GOD'S COVENANT OF PEACE

**Therefore say "Behold"** - **Behold** (also in Nu 25:6) ([02009](#)) ([hinneh](#)) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinneh** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention!

**I give him My covenant of peace**; To what does this "reward" refer? To be sure in context it refers to the Lord making a binding agreement that that the priesthood would be channeled through his line (Nu 25:13).

**Wiersbe** comments that "Like Abraham when he offered up Isaac (Gen. 22; James 2:21–24), Phinehas **proved his faith by his works**, and it was "accounted to him for righteousness (Ps. 106:28–31). Because of his zeal for the honor of the Lord, Phinehas was given the special reward of a lasting priesthood for himself and his descendants. Phinehas knew nothing about this reward before he acted, so his motive wasn't selfish. He was motivated by his zeal for the honor of God and the authority of His law. Phinehas went with Moses when Israel attacked the Midianites (Nu 31:5–6), so he wasn't afraid of a battle. He also was in charge of the gatekeepers at the tabernacle and had the presence of the Lord with him in his ministry (1 Chr. 9:20). Guarding God's sanctuary was a very responsible task, but Phinehas had the conviction and courage to do it well." (Be Counted)

Ps 106:30; 31+ Then Phinehas stood up and interposed (clearly an allusion to his spearing the guilty parties); And so the plague was stayed. And it was **reckoned to him for righteousness**, To all generations forever.

**Comment** - It is notable that the psalmist uses the exact phrase first found in Scripture in Genesis 15:6+ where Abraham "believed in the LORD; and He **reckoned it to him as righteousness**."

**Spurgeon - Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed** God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. This righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practised at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp javelin he transfixed the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. **Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.**

**And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore** Down to the moment when this psalm was penned the house of Phinehas was honoured in Israel. His faith had performed a valorous deed, and his righteousness was testified of the Lord, and honoured by the continuance of his family in the priesthood. He was impelled by motives that what would otherwise have been a deed of blood was justified in the sight of God; nay, more, was made the evidence that Phinehas was righteous. No personal ambition, or private revenge, or selfish passion, or even fanatical bigotry,

inspired the man of God, but zeal for God, indignation at open filthiness, and true patriotism urged him on. Once again we have cause to note the mercy of God that even when his warrant was out, and actual execution was proceeding, he stayed his hand at the suit of one man: finding, as it were, an apology for his grace when justice seemed to demand immediate vengeance.

Notice that in Psalms, there is no mention of the covenant of peace, but there is a declaration of righteousness. Reason with me. If Phinehas had **righteousness reckoned** or credited or imputed from the "account of Jesus" to his "spiritual bank account," then Phinehas was "justified" before God or "saved" as we might say today. Notice also how the description of this covenant as the **covenant of peace** correlates with the results of justification (being declared righteous) described by Paul in (Ro 5:1 [note](#))

"Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this passage Paul is referring to justification based on entrance by grace through faith into the New Covenant in His blood. The text in Ps 106 emphasizes Phinehas' actions associated with his being reckoned righteous, whereas Numbers focuses primarily on the perpetuation of the priesthood through Phinehas.

In summary, the "rewards" to Phinehas include (realizing that they are all manifestations of God's grace)

1. Plague was stopped - God's wrath turned away
2. Phinehas receives covenant of peace
3. Phinehas is lineage thru which there would be a perpetual priesthood
4. Phinehas' "sacrifice" accomplished atonement
5. Phinehas was reckoned righteous (See explanation in notes on Ps 106:31)

**John MacArthur** - Because of Phinehas' zeal for God's holiness, the Lord made "a covenant of a perpetual priesthood" with him so that through his family line would come all future, legitimate High-Priests (cf. Ps 106:30, 31). This promise will extend even into the millennial kingdom (cf. Eze 40:46; 44:10, 15; 48:11). (MacArthur Study Bible)

**Allen** - The Lord now institutes his **covenant** with the priests through Phinehas. We often speak of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. In all probability we should also speak of the Lord's covenant with Phinehas. He was priest by divine right, being descended from the right family in an immediate line. He showed himself to be the rightful priest by his interest in divine righteousness. He is now confirmed priest by the rite of the divine covenant.

**Henry Morris** - The "**covenant of peace**" was given to assure the everlasting priesthood of Phinehas and his descendants (cf. Ps. 106:30, 31; Mal. 2:4-7).

**Disciple's Study Bible** - People-Obedience results in more intimate fellowship with God. God established His covenant of peace with Phinehas because he desired to serve the Lord. God works through those who allow themselves to be used in His service.

The phrase **Covenant of peace** is found 4 times in Scripture:

Isaiah 54:10 "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My **covenant of peace** will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

**Comment:** This covenant will not be shaken because it is everlasting (Ezekiel 37:26-note). Indeed, this is in essence the everlasting New Covenant God promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-34-note, the same covenant Jesus referred to when He declared "this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:28)

Ezekiel 34:25 "And I will make a **covenant of peace** ([karath beriyth shalom](#)) with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

**Comment:** With whom will Jehovah cut this **covenant of peace**? In context "them" refers to the [remnant of Israel](#) who will all be saved (Ro 11:25-27-note) when the Lord Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-15, 16-note) to defeat the Antichrist and all His foes and to establish His 1000 year earthly kingdom in which He rules from Jerusalem (Rev 20:4-6-note, Zech 14:9, 16+). Notice that God says "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS" (Ro 11:27) and this also refers to the God's **covenant of peace**.

Ezekiel 37:26-note "And I will make a **covenant of peace** ([karath beriyth shalom](#)) with them; it will be an **everlasting covenant** with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.

**Comment:** This covenant is everlasting even as was His covenant with Abraham (Ge 17:7) and the New Covenant is in essence an "extension" of the Abrahamic Covenant, with the addition that in the New Covenant the Spirit will indwell us forever. As an aside the phrase everlasting covenant is found 16x in the NAS all in the OT (but cp "eternal covenant" in Hebrews 13:20) - Gen. 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19; Lev. 24:8; Num. 18:19; 2 Sam. 23:5; 1 Chr. 16:17; Ps. 105:10; Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26.

Malachi 2:5-note records a parallel passage

"My **covenant** with him (Levi - Mal 2:4) was one of life and **peace**, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me, and stood in awe of My name.

**Comment** - Some interpret this as an allusion to Numbers 25 and the covenant of peace with Phinehas but others (John MacArthur) see it as God's covenant with Levi.

**Peace** (07965) (**shalom** from **salam/salem/shalam** = to be safe, sound, healthy, perfect, complete [1Ki 7:51, Neh 6:18]) signifies a sense of well-being and harmony both within and without. It includes the ideas of completeness, wholeness, peace, health, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, fullness, rest, harmony; the absence of agitation or discord, a state of calm without anxiety or stress.

**G Campbell Morgan** on Numbers 25:12 - In the letter to the church at Pergamum we learn that "Balaam...taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). This chapter opens with the declaration that: "The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab; for they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." This, then, was the work of Balaam. When he could not utter a curse against Israel, he taught Balak how to seduce them from their loyalty. The action appeared to be one of pure neighborliness, but it was a corrupting of the covenant. The story of Phinehas is that of one man, loyal to God, and jealous for his honor, daring to violate these false conventionalities, and visiting with swift and terrible punishment one daring wrongdoer. That action stayed the plague, and saved Israel. Action like that of Phinehas is not easy. It brings the man who dare take it into the place of grave peril, especially when it is directed against some popular movement. Yet to that man is given God's covenant of peace. That is the only peace which is worthwhile for man or nation. The price of it may be to stern conflict, and a hazarding of all ease and quietness: but it is peace indeed, for it is right relationship with the principles of righteousness, and so with God. (Life Applications from Every Chapter)

#### **Joseph Parker - "My covenant of peace"—Num. 25:12**

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, was a type of Christ.—The covenant of grace is described in Isaiah 54:10, and in Malachi 2:5, as the covenant of peace.—Peace must be the result of harmony with God.—God is the God of peace.—He blesses his people with peace.—Speaking to his servant, he said, "My covenant was with him of life and peace."—The converse of this is true; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—Peace does not represent a grace so much as a virtue.—Great misunderstanding prevails as to the true meaning of peace.—True peace represents the highest energy, controlled and sanctified.—Never represent spiritual peace by death or the grave, or by anything that is inert, or passionless.—He only is at peace who in full possession of every faculty feels that there is no power in his soul that does not aspire towards God in loving obedience.—Peace of this kind does not exempt from daily trial and daily sorrow.—The presence of peace in the soul takes the right view of such discipline, and is sure to find stars in the darkness.—The peace that is spoken of is not a temporary arrangement; it is a matter of covenant signed and sealed.—The blessing of God is a covenant ordered in all things and sure.—Judge spiritual progress by the depth of spiritual peace.—"Perfect love casteth out fear."—The great gift of Christ to the Church is a gift of peace.—The apostle describes the peace of God as passing understanding,—an enjoyment beyond analysis, and beyond criticism: passing understanding as flying passes walking, as the light of the sun passes all the sparks man can kindle upon earth, as the ocean passes the little rills that trickle over the surface of the earth.

**Numbers 25:13 and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel."**

BGT Numbers 25:13 καὶ σταί αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ μετὰ τὴν διαθήκην ἐρατῆ ἀωνίου ἕλωσεν τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἐλάσατο περὶ τὸν υἱὸν Ἰσραὴλ

NET Numbers 25:13 So it will be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he has been zealous for his God, and has made atonement for the Israelites."

NLT Numbers 25:13 In this covenant, I give him and his descendants a permanent right to the priesthood, for in his zeal for me, his God, he purified the people of Israel, making them right with me. "

ESV Numbers 25:13 and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel."

NIV Numbers 25:13 He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

KJV Numbers 25:13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

YLT Numbers 25:13 and it hath been to him and to his seed after him a covenant of a priesthood age-during, because that he hath been zealous for his God, and doth make atonement for the sons of Israel.'

LXE Numbers 25:13 and he and his seed after him shall have a perpetual covenant of priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.

ASV Numbers 25:13 and it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.

CSB Numbers 25:13 It will be a covenant of perpetual priesthood for him and his future descendants, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

NKJ Numbers 25:13 `and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel."

NRS Numbers 25:13 It shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the Israelites."

NAB Numbers 25:13 which shall be for him and for his descendants after him the pledge of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous on behalf of his God and thus made amends for the Israelites."

NJB Numbers 25:13 To him and his descendants after him, this covenant will assure the priesthood for ever. In reward for his zeal for his God, he will have the right to perform the ritual of expiation for the Israelites.'

GWN Numbers 25:13 My promise is that he and his descendants will be priests permanently because he stood up for his God and he made peace with the LORD for the Israelites."

- his seed: 1Sa 2:30 1Ki 2:27 1Ch 6:4-15,50-53
- an everlasting: Ex 40:15 Isa 61:6 Jer 33:18,22 Heb 7:11,17,18 1Pe 2:5,9 Rev 1:6
- zealous: 1Ki 19:10,14 Ps 69:9 106:31 119:139 Joh 2:17 Ac 22:3-5 Ro 10:2-4
- atonement: Ex 32:30 Jos 7:12 2Sa 21:3 Heb 2:17 1Jn 2:2
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A COVENANT OF A PERPETUAL PRIESTHOOD

**And it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood** (Ps 106:31): Because of his hatred of sin (v7-8), Phinehas's family was promised the high priesthood in Israel, thus bypassing the other grandsons of Aaron.

**Steven Cole** applies the truth that Phinehas' obedience impacted generations of his line - As a result of Phinehas' bold action, the Lord told Moses that He was giving to Phinehas His covenant of peace, and then added, "and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God" (Nu 25:13). Phinehas' bold obedience resulted in blessing on his descendants for hundreds of years, right down to Ezra! (Cole is preaching a sermon on Ezra) The lesson for us who have godly parents is, we can either disobey the Lord and deprive our descendants of God's blessing, or we can be bold in obeying the Lord and bring His blessing on our descendants. But the point stands in Scripture, that God's blessing flows through family lines. We never obey or sin in isolation. That sobering thought should motivate us to follow the Lord.

**Because he was jealous for his God:** "zealous" in KJV, NIV & Lxx = [zeloo](#) (hotly desire 1 Co 12:31)

**He was jealous** (07065) (**qanah** from **qin'ah** = zeal, ardor - from color produced in face by deep emotion) means to be jealous, to be envious, to be zealous. The picture is that of intense fervor, passion, and emotion. Zeal is an eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something and implies energetic and unflagging pursuit



of an aim or devotion to a cause.

Jealousy can be righteous or unrighteous - e.g., Genesis 37:11 records that Joseph's "brothers were jealous of him" and here we see the mindset and emotion of their fleshly jealousy led to unrighteous deeds! Contrast Phinehas godly jealousy that motivated righteous deeds!

The Greek verb is [zeloo](#) from [zelos \[word study\]](#) = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; source of our English word "zeal") means to be fervent, to "boil" with envy, to be jealous. It can be used commendably to refer to a striving for something or showing zeal.

**Vine** - qana' (7065 ,קָנָה), "to be jealous; to be zealous." This verb, derived from the noun qin'ah, occurs 34 times in the Old Testament. The root appears in several Semitic languages with the meaning "to be zealous" (Aramaic and Ethiopic). In Ugaritic and Arabic the root occurs, but it is questionable if the root is related to the meaning "to be zealous"; the meaning in Ugaritic text is uncertain, and the meaning in Arabic, "became intensely red," is not to be explained etymologically. The verb qana' appears in rabbinic Hebrew.

At the interhuman level qana' has a strongly competitive sense. In its most positive sense the word means "to be filled with righteous zeal or jealousy." The law provides that a husband who suspects his wife of adultery can bring her to a priest, who will administer a test of adultery. Whether his accusation turns out to be grounded or not, the suspicious man has a legitimate means of ascertaining the truth. In his case a spirit of jealousy has come over him, as he "is jealous" of his wife (Num. 5:30). However, even in this context (Num. 5:12-31), the jealousy has arisen out of a spirit of rivalry which cannot be tolerated in a marriage relationship. The jealousy must be cleared by a means ordained by the law and administered by the priests. Qana', then, in its most basic sense is the act of advancing one's rights to the exclusion of the rights of others: "... Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim" (Isa. 11:13). Saul sought to murder the Gibeonite enclave "in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 21:2). Next, the word signifies the attitude of envy toward an opponent. Rachel in her barren state "envied her sister" (Gen. 30:1) and in the state of envy approached Jacob: "Give me children, or else I die." The Philistines envied Isaac because of the multitude of his flocks and herds (Gen. 26:14).

The Bible contains a strong warning against being envious of sinners, who might prosper and be powerful today, but will be no more tomorrow: "Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways" (Prov. 3:31, NIV; cf. Ps. 37:1).

In man's relation to God, the act of zeal is more positively viewed as the act of the advancement of God and His glory over against substitutes. The tribe of Levi received the right to service because "he was zealous for his God" (Num. 25:13). Elijah viewed himself as the only faithful servant left in Israel: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant ... And I, even I only, am left ..." (1 Kings 19:10). However, the sense of qana' is "to make jealous," that is, "to provoke to anger": "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger" (Deut. 32:16).

God is not tainted with the negative connotation of the verb. His holiness does not tolerate competitors or those who sin against Him. In no single passage in the whole Old Testament is God described as envious. Even in those texts where the adjective "jealous" is used, it might be more appropriate to understand it as "zealous." When God is the subject of the verb qana', the meaning is "be zealous," and the preposition le ("to, for") is used before the object: His holy name (Ezek. 39:25); His land (Joel 2:18); and His inheritance (Zech. 1:14). Cf. Zech. 8:2: "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her" (NIV), where we must interpret "jealous[y]" as "zealous" and "zeal."

In the Septuagint the word zelos ("zeal; ardor; jealousy") brings out the Hebrew usage. In the English versions similar translations are given: "to be jealous" or "to be zealous" (KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV) and to be envious (KJV and NIV) ([Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary](#))

**Brown-Driver-Briggs Expanded Definition** - [קָנָה verb denominative Pi`el be jealous, zealous (Gerber<sup>131</sup>); — *Perfect* 3 masculine singular קָנָה Numbers 25:13+; 1 singular קָנָה Zechariah 1:14 + etc.; *Imperfect* קָנָה! Isaiah 11:13; Proverbs 23:17, etc.; *Infinitive absolute* קָנָה Kings 19:10,14; *construct* suffix וקָנָה Numbers 25:11; 2 וקָנָה Samuel 21:2; *Participle* קָנָה Numbers 11:29; —

1 be jealous of, with accusative וקָנָה Numbers 5:14 (twice in verse); Numbers 5:30 (P); in rivalry Isaiah 11:13.

2 be envious of with ב person, Genesis 30:1 (E), Genesis 37:11 (J) Psalm 37:1; Psalm 73:3; Proverbs 3:31; Proverbs 23:17; Proverbs 24:1,19; with accusative of person Genesis 26:14 (J), Ezekiel 31:9;

with ל person Psalm 106:16.

**3** *be zealous* for:

**a. of Prayer of Manasseh** , with ל person Numbers 11:29 (J), 2 Samuel 21:2; for God Numbers 25:13 (P), 1 Kings 19:10,14; קנאה'ק Numbers 25:11(P).

**b. of God**, לְשֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ Ezekiel 39:25, לְאַרְצוֹ Joel 2:18, לְיְהוָה Zechariah 1:14, לְצִיּוֹן Zechariah 8:2 (twice in verse).

**4** *excite to jealous anger*, with בְּ instrumental Deuteronomy 32:21 a (dubious; probably בְּקִנְיָוִי; compare Deuteronomy 32:16.21 b), 1 Kings 14:22.

**Hiph'il** *provoke to jealous anger: Imperfect* 3 masculine plural suffix יְקַנְאוּ Deuteronomy 32:21; יְקַנְאוּהוּ Psalm 78:58 (יְקַנְאוּהוּ 1 singular יְקַנְאוּ Deuteronomy 32:21 b; *Participle* metaplastic יְקַנְאוּ Ezekiel 8:3 (Ges<sup>s</sup> 75q, del Co.).

**Gesenius Definition** - אָנָּה not used in Kal; Arab. كَانَّ **to become very red**. Hence

Piel אָנָּה

(1) to be jealous (from the redness with which the face is suffused); followed by an acc. of the wife, Numbers 5:14 followed by אֶת of a woman who is a rival, Genesis 30:1. Causat. i.q. Hiphil, to excite any one's jealousy and anger, followed by אֶת with anything, Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Kings 14:22.

(2) to envy any one, followed by אֶת of pers. Genesis 37:11; Psalms 37:1, 73:3 Proverbs 23:17, 24:1, 19 Proverbs 24:19 followed by an acc. Genesis 26:14; Isaiah 11:13 followed by לְ Psalms 106:16.

(3) to burn with zeal for any person or thing (ζηλόω).

(a) followed by לְ to be zealous for any one's cause (eifern für jem.), Numbers 25:11, 13 Numbers 25:13; 2 Samuel 21:2; 1 Kings 19:10.

(b) to envy any one; followed by אֶת Proverbs 3:31.

Hiphil, causat., to excite jealousy (see Piel No. 1), Deuteronomy 32:16, 21 Deuteronomy 32:21; Psalms 78:58.

Derivatives, אָנָּה, אָנָּה, אָנָּה.

**Qanah** - 29v - Usage: became envious(1), became jealous(1), been very zealous(2), envied(1), envious(4), envy(2), jealous(14), jealousy(1), made him jealous(1), made me jealous(1), provoked him to jealousy(1), provokes to jealousy(1), zeal(1), zealous(1). Gen. 26:14; Gen. 30:1; Gen. 37:11; Num. 5:14; Num. 5:30; Num. 11:29; Num. 25:11; Num. 25:13; Deut. 32:16; Deut. 32:21; 2 Sam. 21:2; 1 Ki. 14:22; 1 Ki. 19:10; 1 Ki. 19:14; Ps. 37:1; Ps. 73:3; Ps. 78:58; Ps. 106:16; Prov. 3:31; Prov. 23:17; Prov. 24:1; Prov. 24:19; Isa. 11:13; Ezek. 8:3; Ezek. 31:9; Ezek. 39:25; Joel 2:18; Zech. 1:14; Zech. 8:2

Genesis 26:14 for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines **envied** him.

Genesis 30:1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became **jealous** of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."

Genesis 37:11 His brothers were **jealous** of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

Numbers 5:14 if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is **jealous** of his wife when she has defiled herself, or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is **jealous** of his wife when she has not defiled herself,

30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is **jealous** of his wife, he shall then make the woman stand before the LORD, and the priest shall apply all this law to her.

Numbers 11:29 But Moses said to him, "Are you **jealous** for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

Numbers 25:11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he **was jealous** with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.

13 and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he **was jealous** for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel."

Deuteronomy 32:16 "They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

21 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I

will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,  
2 Samuel 21:2 So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah).

1 Kings 14:22 Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed.

1 Kings 19:10 He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

14 Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Psalm 37:1 A Psalm of David. Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers.

Psalm 73:3 For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psalm 78:58 For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.

Psalm 106:16 When they became envious of Moses in the camp, And of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD,

Proverbs 3:31 Do not envy a man of violence And do not choose any of his ways.

Proverbs 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the LORD always.

Proverbs 24:1 Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them;

19 Do not fret because of evildoers Or be envious of the wicked;

Isaiah 11:13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim.

Ezekiel 8:3 He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was located.

Ezekiel 31:9 'I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.

Ezekiel 39:25 ¶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.

Joel 2:18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people.

Zechariah 1:14 So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.

Zechariah 8:2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.'

## **ACTIONS OF PHINEHAS ACHIEVE ATONEMENT**

**and made atonement for the sons of Israel:** Phinehas' action covered over as it were (root meaning of *kapar*) the horrible sins of Israel at Shittim. NLT paraphrases it as "making them right with Me." The lives (blood) of Zimri and Cozbi although "defiled" were accepted by Yahweh as atonement so that His wrath was propitiated or satisfied for the wages of sin are death and they paid the "wages" so to speak.

**NET NOTE** - The **atonement** that he made in this passage refers to the killing of the two obviously blatant sinners. By doing this he dispensed with any animal sacrifice, for the sinners themselves died. In Leviticus it was the life of the substitutionary animal that was taken in place of the sinners that made **atonement**. The point is that sin was punished by death (cp Ro 6:23), and so God was free to end the plague and pardon the people. God's holiness and righteousness have always been every bit as important as God's mercy and compassion, for without righteousness and holiness mercy and compassion mean nothing.

**F F Bruce** explains **atonement** in this bizarre situation - Because of the Israelites' apostasy and sin, atonement was required before divine forgiveness could be proffered. The atonement that Phinehas offered was that of two human offenders. Normally in the Old Testament, atonement is mentioned in connection with sacrifices, such as the sin offering. But in twenty-two passages, atonement was effected by means other than ceremonial offerings (for example, Ex 32:30–32; Deut 21:1–9; 2 Sam 21:3–9). Therefore, just as the **life of the animal was a substitute**, the **means of ransoming the life of the guilty party**, so the holiness of God was defended in this case through the substitution of **the lives of the sinning couple**. With atonement made, God could pardon His people and halt the spread of the plague. (Ibid)

**Atonement was made** (03722)(*kapar*) conveys the primary sense of "to wipe [something off (or on)]" (see

especially the goal of the sin offering, Lev 4, "to purge" the tabernacle from impurities), but in some cases it refers metaphorically to "**wiping away**" anything that might stand in the way of good relations by bringing a gift (see, e.g., Ge 32:20, "*to appease; to pacify*" as an illustration of this - of Jacob seeking to appease Esau).

The usual way **atonement** was made was in the carrying out of Levitical sacrifices as in Lev 1:3-4 - 'If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. 'He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him **to make atonement** on his behalf.

**Stephen Renn** explains that "**kapar** refers to the process by which the barrier between Yahweh and his people may be removed, or appeasing God's wrath. For his wrath is the inevitable divine response to the violation of his law."

According to **W E Vine** "Most uses of **kapar** involve the theological meaning of "**covering over**," often with the blood of a sacrifice, in order to atone for some sin. It is not clear whether this means that the "**covering over**" hides the sin from God's sight or implies that the sin is **wiped away** in this process." Of course we know that these OT sins could never be completely removed until they were laid on the body of the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the perfect Sin Bearer Christ Jesus, Whose blood alone could bring about perfect and complete remission of sins. Jesus symbolized and foreshadow His fully atoning sacrifice on the Cross when He shared His last Passover with the disciples declaring "this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness ([aphesis](#)) of sins." (Mt 26:26) The noun aphasis means to repay or cancel a debt and through the shedding of His blood Christ took the sins of world upon Himself and carried them infinite distance away with no return possible (compare the foreshadowing of this in the goat in Lev 16:21-note). The writer of Hebrews adds that "now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:26-note) and "by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Heb 10:14-note).

## **ANOTHER PRIEST MAKES ATONEMENT**

In the **Rebellion of Korah** who was jealous of Moses, and led 250 princes in an insurrection, resulting in his being swallowed up in the earth (Nu 16:1-50+; Nu 26:9,10+; Dt 11:6 ; Ps 106:17; Jude 1:11+), we see another situation in which a priest (Aaron) made atonement (with a censer with incense) and checked a plague...

Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and **make atonement for them**, for wrath has gone forth from the LORD, the plague has begun!" Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly, for behold, the plague had begun among the people. So he put on **the incense and made atonement for the people**. He took his stand between the dead and the living, so that **the plague was checked**. But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah. Then Aaron returned to Moses at the doorway of the tent of meeting, for **the plague had been checked**. (Numbers 16:46-50+)

**Numbers 25:14** Now the name of the slain man of Israel who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's household among the Simeonites.

BGT Numbers 25:14 τ ὄνομα τοῦ ἄνθρωπου τοῦ Ἰσραηλ τοῦ τοῦ πεπληγμένου ἐκ τῆς Μιδιανίτιδος Ζαμβριὺς Σαλωρχῶν οὐκοῦ πατρὸς τῶν Σιμεων

NET Numbers 25:14 Now the name of the Israelite who was stabbed– the one who was stabbed with the Midianite woman– was Zimri son of Salu, a leader of a clan of the Simeonites.

NLT Numbers 25:14 The Israelite man killed with the Midianite woman was named Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a family from the tribe of Simeon.

ESV Numbers 25:14 The name of the slain man of Israel, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, chief of a father's house belonging to the Simeonites.

NIV Numbers 25:14 The name of the Israelite who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family.

KJV Numbers 25:14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

YLT Numbers 25:14 And the name of the man of Israel who is smitten, who hath been smitten with the Midianitess, is Zimri son of Salu, prince of the house of a father of the Simeonite;

LXE Numbers 25:14 Now the name of the smitten Israelitish man, who was smitten with the Madianitish woman, was Zambri son of Salmon, prince of a house of the tribe of Symeon.

ASV Numbers 25:14 Now the name of the man of Israel that was slain, who was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a fathers' house among the Simeonites.

CSB Numbers 25:14 The name of the slain Israelite man, who was struck dead with the Midianite woman, was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite ancestral house.

NKJ Numbers 25:14 Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites.

NRS Numbers 25:14 The name of the slain Israelite man, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri son of Salu, head of an ancestral house belonging to the Simeonites.

NAB Numbers 25:14 The Israelite slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu, prince of an ancestral house of the Simeonites.

NJB Numbers 25:14 The Israelite who had been killed (the one who was killed with the Midianite woman) was called Zimri son of Salu, leader of one of the Simeonite families.

GWN Numbers 25:14 The name of the Israelite man who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu. (Salu was the leader of a family from Simeon.)

- a prince: Nu 25:4,5 2Ch 19:7
- chief house: Heb. house of a father
- the Simeonites: Nu 1:23 26:14
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **ZIMRI A LEADER OF SIMEONITES PUBLICLY EXECUTED**

**Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's household among the Simeonites** - This fact helps even more to understand the zealous anger of Phinehas, for **Zimri** was not just anyone, but was a **leader** (Hebrew = Nasi = one lifted up, a chief, a prince). For a leader to commit overt sin in public was dangerous for others might see and follow his lead. However a spear made the point that this was not acceptable behavior before Jehovah, the holy God. Zimri's public behavior was the antithesis of holy which justified a radical remedy! God could have struck them with lightning or opened a hole in the earth to swallow them up, but instead He chose a man, the priest Phinehas, to carry out the just retribution and put the fear of the LORD back into the people's hearts! There is a practical application - when a church leader (pastor, teacher, elder, deacon, music minister, etc) commits heinous sin (and they seem to almost always be sins of immorality), public punishment is called for! God's people will have a holy fear placed in their hearts when they see public discipline of public sin by a prestigious pastor (etc). I am personally aware of several situations where leaders committed heinous evil and yet were not publicly censured for their acts. And guess what? In the subsequent years other leaders fell prey to similar sins (all immorality)! **PUBLIC SIN MUST BE PUBLICLY REBUKED** if the church is to stay pure (See Paul's similar exhortation in 1 Cor 5:1-13).

**Ronald Allen** - Zimri ("My Remembrance") had been named in praise of God. However, he has come to be forever remembered as the one who nearly destroyed his people in his flagrant, wanton attack on the pure worship of God. With his name turned on its head, he serves as a memorial to destruction. (Ibid)

**Ryrie's** comment on Nu 25:14-18 - The flagrant sin (Nu 25:6) of Zimri (a Simeonite) may indicate that many Simeonites were also involved and may account for the great decrease in the population of that tribe. See note on Nu 26:5-51. The Midianites were to be treated as enemies (Nu 31:1-24) because of Cozbi's sin and their involvement with Balak (Nu 22:4, 7). (Ibid)

**Campbell** makes an interesting point about the Simeonites - the Simeonite male population between the first census (59,300, Nu 1:23) and the one after this incident (22,200, Nu 26:14). If mainly Simeonites had been involved in the immorality and idolatry it would account for much of the difference in the totals. (Ibid)

**ISBE entry on Zimri** - A Simeonite prince (Numbers 25:14 ; 1 Macc 2:26), slain by Phinehas, Aaron's grandson. Numbers 25:1-5 records how the Israelites, while they were at Shittim, began to consort with Moabite women and "they (i.e. the Moabite women) called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods" (Numbers 25:2), i.e. as explained by Numbers 25:5 to take part in the immoral rites of the god Baal-peor. Moses is bidden to have the offenders punished. The next paragraph (Numbers 25:6-9 ) relates how the people engage in public mourning; but while they do this Zimri brings in among his brethren a Midianitess. Phinehas sees this and goes after Zimri into the *kubbāh* , where he slays the two together, and thus the plague is stayed (Numbers 25:6-9).

**Numbers 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was head of the people of a father's household in Midian.**

BGT Numbers 25:15 κα νομα τ γυναικ τ Μαδιαν πιδι τ πεπληγγυ Χασβι θυγ τηρ Σουρ ρχοντος θνους Ομμωθ ο κου πατρι ς σπιν τ ν Μαδιαν

NET Numbers 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur. He was a leader over the people of a clan of Midian.

NLT Numbers 25:15 The woman's name was Cozbi; she was the daughter of Zur, the leader of a Midianite clan.

ESV Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was the tribal head of a father's house in Midian.

NIV Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Midianite woman who was put to death was Cozbi daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

KJV Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

YLT Numbers 25:15 and the name of the woman who is smitten, the Midianitess, is Cozbi daughter of Zur, head of a people -- of the house of a father in Midian is he.

LXE Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Madianitish woman who was smitten, was Chasbi, daughter of Sur, a prince of the nation of Ommoth: it is a chief house among the people of Madiam.

ASV Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a fathers' house in Midian.

CSB Numbers 25:15 The name of the slain Midianite woman was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a tribal head of an ancestral house in Midian.

NKJ Numbers 25:15 And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

NRS Numbers 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur, who was the head of a clan, an ancestral house in Midian.

NAB Numbers 25:15 The slain Midianite woman was Cozbi, daughter of Zur, who was head of a clan, an ancestral house, in Midian.

NJB Numbers 25:15 The woman, the Midianite who was killed, was called Cozbi, daughter of Zur, chief of a clan, of a family, in Midian.

GWN Numbers 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi, daughter of Zur. (Zur was the head of a family from the Midianite tribes.)

- Zur: Nu 31:8 Jos 13:21
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MIDIANITE WOMAN OF STATURE SLAIN

**NET NOTE** on **Cozbi** - Cozbi's father, **Zur**, was one of five Midianite kings who eventually succumbed to Israel (Nu 31:8). When the text gives the name and family of a woman, it is asserting that she is important, at least for social reasons, among her people.

**Allen** - "[Cozbi](#)" means "My Lie" or "Deception." She stands forever memorialized as a prime example of the deception of the allure of pagan worship. Nu 25:18 speaks of her as one who was also from a noble house of her own people. Likely she was a priestess of her religion, a prototype of Jezebel who would later be instrumental in bringing Baal and Asherah worship into the center of the life of Israel.

### Numbers 25:16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

BGT Numbers 25:16 κα λ λησεν κ ριος πρ ς Μωυσ ν λ γων λ λησον το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ λ γων

NET Numbers 25:16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses:

NLT Numbers 25:16 Then the LORD said to Moses,

ESV Numbers 25:16 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NIV Numbers 25:16 The LORD said to Moses,

KJV Numbers 25:16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

YLT Numbers 25:16 And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

LXE Numbers 25:16 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying,

ASV Numbers 25:16 And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying,

CSB Numbers 25:16 The LORD told Moses:

NKJ Numbers 25:16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

NRS Numbers 25:16 The LORD said to Moses,

NAB Numbers 25:16 The LORD then said to Moses,

NJB Numbers 25:16 Yahweh then spoke to Moses and said,

GWN Numbers 25:16 The LORD said to Moses,

- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The LORD spoke to Moses** - This exact phrase occurs 93x in the NAS - Exod. 6:10, 13, 28f; 7:8; 13:1; 14:1; 16:11; 19:21; 25:1; 30:17, 22; 31:1, 12; 32:7; 33:1; 40:1; Lev. 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 19, 24; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 27:1; Num. 1:1; 2:1; 3:5, 11, 14, 44; 4:1, 17, 21; 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 22; 7:4; 8:1, 5, 23; 9:1, 9; 13:1; 14:26; 15:1, 17; 16:20, 23, 36, 44; 17:1; 18:25; 19:1; 20:7, 23; 25:10, 16; 26:1, 52; 27:6; 28:1; 31:1, 25; 33:50; 34:1, 16; 35:1, 9; Deut. 32:48; Jos. 14:6

**Matthew Henry** on Nu 25:16-18. We read not that any Midianites died of the plague; God punished them with the sword of an enemy, not with the rod of a father. We must set ourselves against whatever is an occasion of sin to us, Matthew 5:29,30. Whatever draws us to sin, should be a vexation to us, as a thorn in the flesh. And none will be more surely and severely punished than those who, after Satan's example, and with his subtlety, tempt others to sin.

### Numbers 25:17 "Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them;

BGT Numbers 25:17 χθρα νετε το ς Μαδιηνα οις κα πατ ξατε α το ς

NET Numbers 25:17 "Bring trouble to the Midianites, and destroy them,

NLT Numbers 25:17 "Attack the Midianites and destroy them,

ESV Numbers 25:17 "Harass the Midianites and strike them down,

NIV Numbers 25:17 "Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them,

KJV Numbers 25:17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

YLT Numbers 25:17 'Distress the Midianites, and ye have smitten them,  
LXE Numbers 25:17 Plague the Madianites as enemies, and smite them,  
ASV Numbers 25:17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them;  
CSB Numbers 25:17 "Attack the Midianites and strike them dead.  
NKJ Numbers 25:17 "Harass the Midianites, and attack them;  
NRS Numbers 25:17 "Harass the Midianites, and defeat them;  
NAB Numbers 25:17 "Treat the Midianites as enemies and crush them,  
NJB Numbers 25:17 'Harass the Midianites, strike them down,  
GWN Numbers 25:17 "Treat the Midianites as your enemies, and kill them

- Nu 31:2 Rev 18:6
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET NOTE** on "**be hostile**" ("bring trouble to") - The idea is that of causing trouble, harassing, vexing Midian. The verb is repeated as the active participle in the line, and so the punishment is [talionic](#).

The fulfillment of Yahweh's command to attack the Midianites was fulfilled in Nu 31:1-24, which also describes the slaughter of the instigator, Balaam.

**Be hostile** ((06887)([tsarar](#)) means to be (or to make) narrow, to be (to make) cramped or constricted, to be hemmed in. Figuratively **tsarar** means to oppress or harass and thus to be hostile or be an adversary or enemy, the best known use being Ps 23:5 "in the presence of my **enemies (tsarar)**." The [Lxx](#) translates tsarar with *ecthraino* which means to be at enmity with and is used only in the [Septuagint](#) (no uses in NT) (9 uses - Nu. 25:17, 18; Deut. 2:9, 19; Ps. 3:7; 35:19)

**Allen** - Because of their active participation in the seduction of the sons of Israel, the Midianites were put under the curse of God and were henceforth to be treated as enemies (v.17). The Midianites had been in league with Balak from the beginning of the confrontation (see Nu 22:4) and became the objects of a holy war of Israel to declare the glory of the name Yahweh (see ch. 31). (Ibid)

**Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them** - The commentary on this verse is found in Numbers 31:1-18:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people." 3 And Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute the LORD'S vengeance on Midian. 4 "A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war." 5 So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. 6 And Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. 7 So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. 8 And they killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. 9 And the sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods, they plundered. 10 Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their camps with fire. 11 And they took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of beast. 12 And they brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho. 13 And Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. 14 And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. 15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women? 16 "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD. 17 "Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. 18 "But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves.

**Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** - Balaam's counsel seems to have been first given to Balak, king of Moab; but probably the Midianish women, especially of the higher ranks, as Cozbi was, were the principal tempters; and the nation of Midian seems to



have come into the execrable measure more generally and heartily than that of Moab: they were therefore first selected to be made examples of, for a warning to the Moabites, who were spared at this time.

**Henry Morris** - The Midianites had perhaps been Balak's advisors from the beginning (Nu 22:4). The Midianite woman Cozbi (whose name, probably a deliberate corruption, means "my deception") was the daughter of a Midianite king (Nu 25:16; 31:8) and may have been a priestess of Baal. Some of the other women who lured the Israelites into debauchery were also Midianite (Nu 31:15, 16). For their involvement, Yahweh commanded war against the Midianites, which did not commence until Numbers 31.

**Numbers 25:18 for they have been hostile to you with their tricks, with which they have deceived you in the affair of Peor and in the affair of Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister who was slain on the day of the plague because of Peor."**

Amplified For they harass you with their wives with which they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and of Cozbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the matter of Peor.

BGT Numbers 25:18 τι χθρα νουσιν α το μ ν ν δολι πητι σα δολιο σιν μ ς δι Φογωρ κα δι Χασβι θυγατ ρα ρχοντος Μαδιαν δελφ ν α τ ν τ ν πεπληγυ αν ν τ μ ρ τ ς πληγ ς δι Φογωρ

NET Numbers 25:18 because they bring trouble to you by their treachery with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague that happened as a result of Peor."

NLT Numbers 25:18 because they assaulted you with deceit and tricked you into worshiping Baal of Peor, and because of Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, who was killed at the time of the plague because of what happened at Peor."

ESV Numbers 25:18 for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peor."

NIV Numbers 25:18 because they treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the affair of Peor and their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of Peor."

KJV Numbers 25:18 For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

YLT Numbers 25:18 for they are adversaries to you with their frauds, with which they have acted fraudulently to you, concerning the matter of Peor, and concerning the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who is smitten in the day of the plague for the matter of Peor.'

LXE Numbers 25:18 for they are enemies to you by the treachery wherein they ensnare you through Phogor, and through Chasbi their sister, daughter of a prince of Madiam, who was smitten in the day of the plague because of Phogor.

ASV Numbers 25:18 for they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the matter of Peor.

CSB Numbers 25:18 For they attacked you with the treachery that they used against you in the Peor incident. They did the same in the case involving their sister Cozbi, daughter of the Midianite leader who was killed the day the plague came at Peor."

NKJ Numbers 25:18 "for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."

NRS Numbers 25:18 for they have harassed you by the trickery with which they deceived you in the affair of Peor, and in the affair of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister; she was killed on the day of the plague that resulted from Peor."

NAB Numbers 25:18 for they have been your enemies by their wily dealings with you as regards Peor and as regards their kinswoman Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite prince, who was killed at the time of the slaughter because of Peor."

NJB Numbers 25:18 for harassing you with their guile in the Peor affair and in the affair of their sister Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, the woman who was killed the day the plague came on account of the business of Peor.'

GWN Numbers 25:18 because they treated you as enemies. They plotted to trick you in the incident that took place at Peor. They used their sister Cozbi, daughter of a Midianite leader, who was killed on the day of the plague caused by the incident at Peor."

- **vex you** (KJV): Nu 31:15,16 Ge 26:10 Ex 32:21,35 Rev 2:14
- **beguiled**: Ge 3:13 2Co 11:3 2Pe 2:14,15,18
- **which** (KJV): Nu 25:8
- Numbers 25 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAELITE MEN SEDUCED BY TRICKERY AND DECEPTION

**For** is a [term of explanation](#). When you encounter it you should always pause and ponder what is the writer explaining? In this context it is simple (some of Paul's uses are not quite so easy!). The writer is explaining why Israel is to show hostility toward the Midianites.

**Tricks** (treachery, wiles) ([05231](#))(**nekel** from **nakal** = to be crafty, deceitful - used in this verse) is only used in this verse in the OT. The [Septuagint](#) translates it with the noun *doliotēs* which means deceit or treachery (see root noun [dolos](#) and verb [doloo](#)).

**Deceived** ([05230](#))(**nakal**) (4x in OT - Ge 37:18; Nu 25:18; Ps 105:25; Mal 1:14) means to be crafty or deceitful. Sin by itself is deceitful (Heb 3:13-[note](#)) but in this context it is amplified by the seductive wiles of these treacherous pagan women! The only hope to fight off this sin is to flee immorality (1 Cor 6:18-[note](#)). The Israelite men tarried when they should have fled. The moment they gazed at the women the lust of their flesh kicked in carrying them away and enticing them and giving birth to immorality and death (James 1:14, 15-[note](#)).

**NET NOTE** on **Cozbi** - Cozbi's father, **Zur**, was one of five Midianite kings who eventually succumbed to Israel (Nu 31:8). When the text gives the name and family of a woman, it is asserting that she is important, at least for social reasons, among her people.

**Warren Wiersbe** reminds us that "Those who criticize the Lord and Scripture because of these national massacres fail to understand that God had been patient with these wicked nations for centuries (Gen. 15:16) and had given them ample opportunity to repent. He had revealed Himself to them in nature (Rom. 1:18ff; Ps. 19), and they had heard of the Lord's judgments against Egypt (Josh. 2:8–14). Their religious practices were abominably filthy, and the only way God could remove this cancer was to wipe out the entire civilization. Israel had an important task to perform for the Lord, and the presence of those wicked nations was only a temptation to the Jews to sin.

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**Question:** [Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Midianites in Numbers 31:17?](#)

**Answer:** Understanding and applying passages from the exodus and conquest of Canaan can be challenging. The passages about putting certain inhabitants to death are among the most difficult. Among those is Numbers 31.

God told Moses, "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites" (Numbers 31:1). The Israelites obediently armed themselves and attacked the Midianites, killing the men (verse 7). Also, "the Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder" (verse 9). When the troops returned to Moses, he was angry that they had not fully carried out the Lord's vengeance (verse 14; cf. verse 3). The Midianite women were those who had caused Israel to sin at Baal Peor (see Numbers 25). So Moses commanded that the women be killed, and also "kill all the boys" (Numbers 31:17).

When we look at the command to kill the male Midianite children, there are two perspectives we might take. One is the more understandably temporal. During the timeframe in question, tribal warfare was rampant. It was highly likely that the male Midianite children would grow up and seek revenge for their fathers and grandfathers against Israel. Avenging the death of one's father is a commonly accepted necessity in every culture and even in popular fiction—it's what motivates Hamlet in Shakespeare's classic play and what energizes Inigo Montoya in *The Princess Bride*.

Further, the utterly disgusting depravity in which these Midianite boys had been raised is well documented. Regular behaviors among the Midianites included child sacrifice, cult prostitution, and bestiality. The divine prohibition of these acts was codified, and the acts were known to the Israelites (Leviticus 18:21, 23–24). Male inhabitants carrying on the lineage of this culture would have been a perennial problem for Israel.

The other perspective we should consider is the divine. Now, we cannot know the mind of God or comprehend the depths of His wisdom (Isaiah 55:8–9). But we *can* know that, given the depravity of the Midianites, God’s command to kill the Midianite boys might have been an act of divine mercy. In His perfect knowledge—including His knowledge of what would happen in the lives of those young Midianites, had they lived—it’s possible that God brought them to Himself before they had the opportunity of choosing to reject Him. It is highly possible that, had these males grown to maturity, they would have embraced the wanton rebellion and idolatry of their fathers. From God’s perspective, it may have been better for them to die at a young age than to endure a life of depravity and the attending temporal (and eternal) consequences.

In all this, we must remember that God’s goodness. He is not simply a good moral agent like humans are commanded to be; He is not beholden to or measured by a standard outside of Himself. We cannot look at God’s actions as being in any moral category like human actions. God is not a man (Numbers 23:19). The very nature of God is such that He cannot do evil. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways” (Psalm 145:17). This is the point by which we must reconcile passages such as Numbers 31:17 with the likes of John 3:16.

Moreover, a major mistake we sometimes make is to think that our lives are our own. We are creatures, not the Creator. We could not exist for one moment without God’s willing our existence (Hebrews 1:3; Acts 17:28). We should not think that God owes us anything, be it a long life, a life free of suffering, or anything else. God desires our ultimate good, which is everlasting union with Him (2 Peter 3:8–10). Our ultimate good may not be realized in a long life or one devoid of pain and suffering. As strange as it may sound, the ultimate good of the Midianite males may not have come about without their being killed by the Israelites in warfare. This is “brass tacks” and gets to the root of whether one thinks that man was made in the image of God or whether one makes a god in the image of man.

It is difficult to discuss these topics rationally because emotions often take over, and proclamations of “the innocence of children” grow loud. We sometimes hear things like “I could never believe in a God like that.” We are correct in the visceral reaction to children suffering and dying. At the same time, we must differentiate the cause and circumstance of the young Midianites’ deaths from current situations. Suffering today is not brought about by God’s people taking possession of their promised land against a morally depraved and militant people group.

Also, we are profoundly incorrect when we start embracing notions like “if I were God, I certainly would not have done that.” God does not see human events as we do; He sees them as only God can. Thus, we have no basis by which to say that God would not have a humanly understandable, morally sufficient reason for commanding the death of children during the conquest of Canaan. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the significance of Midian in the Bible?](#)