

# BOOK OF NUMBERS

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Lesson 12: The Plains of Moab  
(Chapters 25, 31)

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## Keep in Perspective

**We are standing with Joshua and Caleb. We were the adult generation who came out of Egypt. We are leaving the first generation's world and entering a new, novel world with Israel's next generation.** This generation has grown up insulated by the wilderness life.

- We remember the oppression, but it has been 40 years now since we have been under the thumb of a foreign master. This generation may have been too young to understand or remember it.
- We remember the idolatry, but it has been 40 years now since idolatry has been seen in Israel.
  - Their parents should have been teaching them the Law for the last 40 years. They have heard about idolatry, and been warned against it.
  - This encounter with the Moabite women is the first time they have come face to face with idolatry in a real life situation.
  - The challenge is to see if they recognize idolatry as a counterfeit worship and whether they will remain faithful to the Lord or choose to follow the counterfeit path it is taking them down.
- We have been through 40 lean years since we left Egypt and its “variety.” This generation hasn’t known anything but manna and water. We are coming into fruitful land and foreign pleasures. The enemy is going to make full use of this opportunity tempt us away from God’s glorious living.

## Keep in Perspective

### We think we know our enemies.

- We took King Sihon's land. We took King Og's land. We have battled giants and won.
- It never occurred to us that Moab would be our enemy. In as much as it depended on us, we are living at peace with Moab.
- It never occurred to us that Midian would deal with us treacherously.

## The Battle: a Bad Beginning

### Read Numbers 25:1-3.

*"The people began to [chalal] commit harlotry with the women of Moab."*

**Chalal** is a Hebrew word used to indicate when people have begun down the path to profaning themselves or being profaned.

**Chalal** indicates a throwing off of **restraint**, abandoning self-control, and giving way to desires. There needs only be an opportunity – an **opening** – for the corruption to begin.

**Chalal**: To begin, in the sense of opening a way for corruption; make a hole in something and thus ruin the perfection or health of the entirety; to be wounded or pierced and thus violated, profaned or polluted.

- In the way an infection begins in an open wound and defiles the body
- Applies to being either sexually or ritually profaned.

**Chalal (figuratively)**: To play the flute for

## Recognizing the Counterfeit

הלל

**Halal**, to praise or glorify

The words sound nearly the same.

At first glance, one even looks a lot like the other.

חלל

**Chalal**, to profane or violate

A joining of the leg and suddenly something that should be an act of worship to our God sends us down the path to profaning ourselves.

What the Moabite women tell us about their god sounds a lot like what we understand of our God.

***Israel: Our God is like to a husband to us.***

*Moabite women: Our god is a husband-god as well. (Ba'al means husband and master)*

***Israel: We offer sacrifices to our God.***

*Moabite women: We offer sacrifices as well.*

***Israel: We treat our bodies as holy vessels in service to our God.***

*Moabite women: We offer our bodies in service to our husband-god as well. Let's worship our gods together!*

They offer us the invitation (v2). Join with us!

## Recognizing the Counterfeit

- The Moabite women came to us in the wake of our victories, when we were still flush with triumph over battling giants. Our guard was down and we had become complaisant.
- The women come to us almost like a **reward**. There is an **expectation** of the glorious living we will come into when we enter the land, and the arrival of the Moabite women coincides with our taking of the land. The Enemy's timing is impeccable.
- The women came to us with the offering of pleasure and **glorious** living - outside the camp.
- The women played the flute for us, and some of us allowed ourselves to be led away.
  - Some of us have been led away from worship of God and into the worship of Ba'al of Peor. They have ceased to praise and glorify the one true God who would be husband to us, and have gone after another husband-god.
  - Some of us have let our hair down and thrown off our restraints like **unfaithful** wives.
- A little joining of the leg with the women of Moab, and now some of us are neck deep in idolatry. God's holy people have joined themselves to a profane priesthood.

## Unfaithful Wives, Jealous Husbands

**God is ANGRY. Read Numbers 25: 4-5.**

- The first people on the firing line are the **leadership**.
- The **judges** are the leaders of 10s, 50s, 100s. They are called to execute the judgment on the people in their accountability groups. The offenders are to be killed and hung out in the sun.

This is part of the responsibility of being judges of one another. We are all accountable for helping each other maintain our holiness and purity in this journey.

If a brother in our accountability group commits a deliberate, presumptuous sin, then it falls to the rest of us to carry out the Lord's sentence on him.

Imagine the horror when Moses hands us the sword and the rope and says "Go kill your brother."

The judges are arming themselves to execute judgment.

The conflict in camp has escalated to the brink of warfare – brother turned against brother.

A plague has begun and people are falling sick.

All of Israel is congregated at the door of the Tabernacle, weeping and in mourning.

The camp is falling apart.

And yet the Enemy is not satisfied.

# Enemy Strategy

## Goal: Destroy Israel, capture their wealth and land

- Our enemy wants to **chala** the camp – penetrate it and create that opening so the corruption enters into the camp and it begins to self-destruct from the inside out.
  - So far the women have led some of Israel outside the camp and gotten them to defile themselves, and now the wrath of the Lord has come upon His own people.
  - The Lord is cleaning camp, but the camp is still intact. The people have gone out to the Moabites but so far the enemy has not penetrated the camp.
- The quickest and most effective way to destroy a people is to take down **leadership**. If Moses can be taken down, then the whole camp will fall apart. Strike the shepherd and the flock will scatter. To get to Moses, the enemy needs access to that inner circle.

## The Enemy is looking for his man.

- He is looking for the weak link – a man sufficiently motivated by his own **desires** and with enough arrogance and hubris to perform an act of treachery against his own leadership.
- He is going to arm that man with a particularly sharp tool that will hit right at the heart of Moses.

## Traitor in the Camp

Read Numbers 26:6, 14-15

The Enemy's man – Zimri, son of Salu

He is son of a leader of the tribe of Simeon.

**Zimri** means “**my music**”, a song of praise, but he has been enticed away by the music of another god.

**Salu**, means to be weighed, to be found wanting by comparison, and then rejected contemptuously. To be tossed aside or tread down underfoot as something despised or contemptible.

It means to **flout** – openly disregard, mock or scorn.

If names are any reflection of character, then the character of the father is modeled in the son.

This son who should have been brought up for the glory and praise of God is rebellious and unabashed in pursuit of his lusts. He is going to flout Moses.

The Enemy's tool – Cozbi

Daughter of King Zur of Midian

She has joined herself with the cause of Moab and the worshippers of Ba'al to defile and destroy Israel.

Her name means “**my lie.**”

- Cozbi is a false wife using her body in the worship of a false god. This is an act of **harlotry**.
- She represents the full picture of **sensual**, “glorious” living.
- She is a tool of **war** masquerading as an act of love.
- She is the Lie – the embodiment of Midian's **treachery** against the God and Israel.



## The Scene

- It is a moment of high tension. We are watching Moses try to deal with a camp crisis.
- He has a furious God commanding him to put the offenders to death – priority one. The men are taking up arms to kill.
- The conflict in camp has escalated to the brink of warfare – brother against brother.
- Death is beginning to sweep thru camp.
- All of Israel is congregated at the door of the Tabernacle, weeping and in mourning.
- In this moment, the son of one of the leadership decides to get up in Moses' face with an outrageous act of rebellion.

Into the camp walks Zimri with Cozbi in tow.

- He is unfazed by the judgment being handed down or by the mourning in the camp.
- He flaunts this woman before everyone's eyes deliberately and with tremendous arrogance.
- He presents her almost as if she was a bride.
- Then he takes her into the tent and proceeds to get in bed with "the lie."
- In this, Zimri delivers Moses a Judas kiss. What should have been an act of love reveals an act of treachery.

## Enemy Tactics: False Guilt

- This harlot isn't one of the Moabites. She is Midianite.
- Zimri has brought this woman into camp and made this great display of making her appear as a bride.
- What is Moses going to say about it? After all, he himself has a Midianite wife.
- Moses' wife, Zipporah, was the daughter of a Midianite priest. This woman is the daughter of a Midianite king. In terms of social status, the daughter of a king outranks the daughter of a priest.
- If Moses can take the daughter of a Midianite priest to wife, why shouldn't Zimri take the daughter of a Midianite king?

The Enemy chose a Midianite woman as his tool to be a corrupt mimic of **Zipporah**.

There was nothing sinful in Moses' marriage to Zipporah, but Zimri's actions at this moment throw a taint over Moses' Midianite marriage and cause Moses to lose face.

The Enemy is trying to make Moses feel **self-conscious**, even guilty, of his own marriage example, and to cause him to stutter and stumble when he should be dealing with the situation firmly.

A false sense of **guilt** can rise up in us and derail us from what God wants us to do in that moment. Being compared with something embarrassing or sinful can render us powerless.

*Have you ever had someone use something out of your past to make you feel guilty? Did they fling it in your face as a way of justifying something they are doing wrong?*

**Lift your head! This is an enemy tactic.**

## Enemy Tactics: Exploiting Old Loyalties

The Midianites are supposed to be allies. Moses had treated them as family. He had wanted them to join him on this journey, to be his guide and mentor. Moses now finds out that they are aligned with Moab in this attack on Israel.

**Why didn't he foresee this?**

**He missed a warning sign.**

Back in Chapter 10, when Moses suggested his Midianite brother-in-law come with us, there was resistance. His Midianite relatives gave the appearance of being helpful and supportive, but they never once were willing to enter into the journey with us.

They worshiped their own god. They never once wanted that relationship with our God.

At heart, they were not friends at all but enemies. The loyalty Moses felt toward them turned out to be one-sided.

- Old loyalties can be a weak spot in our hearts and a blind spot in our **judgment**.
- Old loyalties can **compromise** us.
- They can become a tool that the enemy uses to strike at us.

**It will always be this way with this world.**

James 4:4 warns us that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God.

**Do not let old loyalties keep you from taking a stand in moments of spiritual crisis.**

## Traitor in the Camp

### Who steps up this time to deal with the sin? (v7-9)

Phineas, son of the High Priest

Some men of Israel has chalal-ed themselves.

They have given the enemy the way and means of penetrating the camp, wounding us, violating us.

The Midianite woman was the spearhead driven into the camp, aimed at Moses.

Phineas is going to retaliate with a spearhead thrust of his own. He takes a javelin and he runs them both through.

Eye for an eye. Piercing for piercing.

### Parallels to the Korah Rebellion:

- All the corruption of the camp is laid to the account of Zimri. (One man being representative of sin, as Korah was.)
- With his death, the corruption is cut off and the plague ends for all.
- Through one man sin entered the camp, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men in the camp.
- By one man's righteous act, many were saved. This time it is not the High Priest that make intercession for the people (as Aaron did in the Korah rebellion). It is the son of the High Priest. There is a mingling of pictures here.

# Phineas, son of the High Priest

## Read Numbers 25:10-13

The word, zealous, is interchangeable with the word, jealous.

Phineas, son of the high priest, identified himself with the person and character of God. He feels **jealous** in the way God feels jealous.

Phineas made atonement for Israel. He made a covering for the **wound** the enemy made in Israel, to cut off the flow of corruption.

He separated the nation from sin and made Israel **whole** again, a holy people.

His action brought honor and glory to the Lord.

The Lord honors him with a covenant of **peace** (shalom, wholeness, well-being).

He shall be a priest forever.

## Comparing Pictures of Sons of the High Priest

**Chapter 19: Eleazar** has gone outside the camp to offer the Red Heifer sacrifice.

**Chapter 25: Phineas** has come with a sword to execute judgment on God's enemies.

### Two different pictures of Christ.

- The first in His "Eleazar" persona, at His first coming, to officiate the sacrifice for sin.
- The next in His "Phineas" persona, at His second coming, with the sword to execute judgment.

## Vengeance on Midian

Read Numbers 25:16-18 and Numbers 31:1-24.

Moses recruits 1,000 from each tribe – 12,000 total

- Men of war from the **second** census
- Men who have not been defiled by the **women of Moab**
- Men not associated with the harlot princess of Midian – the Lie.

Moses sends them out to battle with **Phineas**. (31:6)

- Phineas has already struck the initial blow and now the rest will engage the battle.
- Phineas takes the holy articles and the trumpets with them.

Five kings of Midian are killed (31:8).

**Note:** There are 7 Midianite kings mentioned in Scripture. Five kings fall in battle with Phineas. The last two are put down by Gideon in the time of the judges. Then Midian is dissolved as a sovereign nation.

Zipporah's family is going to survive this battle because they splinter off from the main body of Midian and associate themselves with other people. They show up again later in the Old Testament.

Balaam, the false prophet, is also killed by the sword in this battle.

Israel did everything right except one thing...They spared the **women** of Midian

## Shadows of End Times: Revelation 17-18

### The Harlot of Babylon...

- Woman sitting on the scarlet beast which was full of blasphemy. It had 7 heads and 10 horns. (17:3) The seven heads are seven kings associated with her. Five have fallen, one is and one has not yet come. (17:9-10)
- The woman is queen-like, arrayed in scarlet and purple and precious gems. (17:4)
- She holds in her hand the cup of abominations and filthiness of her fornications. (17:4)
- She is drunk with the blood of the saints. She revels in the death that comes upon God's people. (17:6) The people are called out of her, so that her plague will not come upon them.
- Her end is to be made desolate and naked. (17:16) Her end comes in one day (18:4-8)

### Cozbi is a type of Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots.

- She is a princess, associated with the kings of Midian. Five are fallen under Phineas, two are yet to come.
- She embodies sensual, corrupt living, and commits fornication with a prince of Israel. He himself is a type of a son of perdition who sets himself up as a prince to challenge God's anointed leader.
- Together they are a mimic and mockery of God's bride and anointed king.
- They come out of a generation who have given themselves over to "the Lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)
- She and Zimri revel together in fornication as death sweeps through the camp of Israel. A plague comes upon the children of Israel with her entrance into camp.
- Her end comes suddenly, in one day, and she are left naked and desolate.

# Shadows of End Times: Revelation 14

## Numbers 31

- Phineas comes out in battle against Midian with 12,000 (1,000 from each tribe)
- Phineas' army are men who have not been defiled by the women nor given themselves over to "the Lie".
- The false prophet, Balaam, who instigates the confrontation also dies.
- This battle is the last event in the book of Numbers. After this, the rest of the chapters give instructions for dividing the land and setting up government in the kingdom.

## Revelation 14

- Christ comes out in battle against the beast with the 144,000 (12,000 from each tribe)
- The 144,000 are men who have not been defiled by women and are without deceit (Rev 14:4-5)
- The false prophet who instigated the conflict also dies. (Rev 19:20)
- The battle in the book of Revelation is followed by the setting up of Christ's kingdom.



# Remember, Remember, Remember

- **Taberah: Taming the tongue**
- **Kibroth Hatta'avah**
  - Dealing with the mixed multitude
  - Five strategies the enemy uses
    1. They get us to identify with them as victims of God, to undermine our identity with God
    2. They get us focused on issues
    3. They present us a skewed comparison
    4. They focus us on our freedom of choice – asserting our right of choice, our entitlement
    5. They create a demand for their options (Abstinence isn't one of their options)
  - Dealing with cravings – how we ask amiss for things that are not aligned with God's purpose
  - Learning self-control
  - Lessons from leadership - dealing with expectations that are unrealistic or cross boundaries

# Remember, Remember, Remember

- **Hazereth: Putting off the (leprous) old man**
  - Dealing with “old man” attitudes toward others
  - Putting off the “old man” behaviors and value system
  - Being happy with your place in the camp – not challenging authority
- **Wilderness of Paran: Dealing with fear that causes us to retreat from a deeper relationship with God**
  - Learning to become others-focused
  - Learning to judge by God’s standards
  - Learning to become a royal priesthood
  - Being happy as a Kohathite – not challenging authority, maintain boundaries/accountability roles
- **Wilderness of Zin: Dealing with discouragement; having hope in the grinding bowl**
  - Remembering you are God’s representative in the eyes of others
  - Remembering to give God glory, even under severe provocation or discouragement
  - Victory at Hormah: learning how to ask correctly to receive

## **Remember, Remember, Remember**

- **Plains of Moab: Engaging the enemy**

- The snare of being complaisant and letting your hair down – getting caught off guard
- The snare of harlotry – being fooled by the counterfeit and getting in bed with the lie
- Chalaling yourself – giving the enemy an opening to enter your camp and destroy your relationship with God
- The enemy tactics of false guilt and old loyalties from your past

### **Remember, there is a price for unfaithfulness.**

- Remember the lean years when the Lord humbled you for your unfaithfulness.
- Remember the fruitless wandering that has been your life.
- Remember your failures and what you have overcome.
- Remember to keep yourself pure and undefiled from the world as God's special people.

## Three levels of achievement in this journey:

Parable of the Sower (Matt 13)	Wilderness Experience	Level
<p><b>Seed that falls on stony ground – No root.</b> Springs up quickly but dies quickly in the heat of the sun when trials begin.</p>	<p><b>Those unrooted in their identity with God.</b> These came out of Egypt with faith, but had no heart for the journey. They stumbled immediately, and died early in the first challenges of the journey.</p>	<p>Nominal relationship with God (Sabbath day level of relationship)</p>
<p><b>Seed that is choked by thorns - Rooted but bearing no fruit.</b> The cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches makes it fail to produce fruit.</p>	<p><b>Identify with God, but do not fulfill their purpose or bear fruit in their relationship with Him.</b> These go through most of the journey, reach a certain level of experience, but fall short of entering the land. They focus on external things, worry about having basic needs met, get lured into unfaithfulness by cravings. These complain about not having any fruit in their lives.</p>	<p>Intermediate relationship with God (Sabbath day level of relationship)</p>
<p><b>Seed that is rooted and fruitful in good earth.</b> Fruit is associated with good works and reward for carrying out God's purpose</p>	<p><b>Identify with God, fulfill their purpose, and go on to receive the reward.</b> These enter the land.</p>	<p>Mature relationship with God (Sabbath year level of relationship – the Rest is yet to come)</p>

## **Personal Reflection**

If you feel like you are not making progress:

- Maybe you are reacting to the situation in a way that is not glorifying to God.
- Maybe you are trying to remedy the situation by your own will or wisdom, instead of submitting to God's will or wisdom.
- Maybe you are trying to control the situation instead of letting God have control.
- Maybe you have retreated to that basic level of relationship with Him instead of stepping up to a greater level of trust and dependence.

## **What does a glorious God look like?**

- What do I know of God's power and glory?
- If I give my situation over to Him, do I believe He has the power to deal with it?
- If He has the power to deal with it, do I trust Him to deal with it?
- Do I trust Him enough to be at peace with His handling of the situation?

## **Am I giving glory to God or taking glory away from God?**

- Am I willing to let go of my own control, and give control to Him?
- Is the way I am handling the situation glorifying to God, or am I taking glory for myself?
- What would be glorifying to God in this moment?

## **Remember God's definition of glorious living**

- What ends am I really pursuing in this moment?