

Part 8 – Provoked Unto Anger

In part 7 we learned how the children of Israel despised (spurned) the Promise Land because they believed the evil report (slander) that ten of the (twelve) spies so wickedly spread around the *entire* camp. Though they confessed the land was indeed a good land full of ‘milk and honey’, they didn’t think they conquer the giants living in the land - *despite* what God had promises them and despite what the two good spies (Caleb and Joshua) testified to. As such, the people (yet again) murmured against Moses and Aaron (which means they ultimately were murmuring against our Heavenly Father) and even accused them (i.e. God) of only bringing them into the wilderness to die! Worse yet, they spoke of appointing a *new* leader, to lead them *back into Egypt*, where they were *slaves*! And God’s initial reaction to this was to wipe them all out. Yet, because Moses intervened (again), the Lord only smote the slanderous spies with a plague. However, it was at this time that God condemned that generation of Israelites (who were twenty years and older) to die in the wilderness. He promised they would not be allowed to inherit the Promise Land (because of their consistent lack of faith and rebelliousness) and, instead, they would have to wander around in the wilderness for forty more years (forty years for the forty days the spies searched out the land), until all of that faithless generation died off.

And we also saw the Psalmist compare Israel’s *continual* lack of faith, rebelliousness and murmurings (against the Lord, YHVH) during their time in the wilderness, to the promise that Israel would be cast out of the Promise Land, and scattered amongst the nations, **if** they did as their forefathers (in the wilderness) did (disobeying God, rebelling, murmuring, etc.). And, sadly, this did come to pass. But, our Heavenly Father also promised to *re-gather* Israel, which He *did* during the Christian Era. So, the last study (again) showed us Israel’s terrible faithlessness, and rebelliousness, towards our Heavenly Father, when they were in the wilderness... despite the fact that He freed them from Egyptian bondage! However, it also showed us (again) the extent of God’s *great* mercy, and grace, in not killing them all off *and* in fulfilling His promises to Abraham, Issac and Jacob/Israel. Yet, the Psalmist is still not done giving us a history lesson...

Psalm 106

28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

Now the Psalmist is jumping *forward* in time, from the past history he’s spoken of recently (in this Psalm 106). So, Israel was *still* in the wilderness, but this was *years after* Korah’s rebellion. And, when this event happened, Israel had already moved (at the instruction of God) closer to the Promise Land, because the forty years was getting closer to being accomplished, i.e. they were *much closer*, in time, to entering the Promise Land. This event is recorded in Numbers 25, and verse 1 tells us they were dwelling in Shittim when this happened. Thus, they were dwelling not too far away from the Moabites, who dwelt on the east side of the Salt (Dead) Sea. So, while the

exact location of Shittim is still debated (thus, not known for sure), Israel was likely *north* of the Moabites but still *east* of the River Jordan. Now, the word ‘**joined**’ here means *to link*, i.e. *gird* and, figuratively, it can also mean *to serve* or (mentally) *to contrive* (#6775). And the word ‘**Baal-peor**’ means **Baal of Peor**, which was *a Moabitish deity* (#1187). And the words ‘**provoked him to anger**’ mean *to trouble* and, by implication, can also mean *to grieve, rage* or *be indignant* (#3707) while the word ‘**inventions**’ means *an act, good or bad* (#4611). The *Companion Bible* renders this word as ‘*doings*’, so it refers to the sins Israel committed. And the word ‘**plague**’ simply means *a pestilence* (#4046) while the words ‘**break in upon them**’ simply means *to break out* (#6555). Now, let’s take a look at what Numbers 25 says about this incident...

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

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

*3 And **Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor**: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.*

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.

5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

Num 25:1-5

In Numbers 25, the *Companion Bible* has a note (on verse 1) explaining that the ‘daughters of Moab’ - who the Israelite men committed whoredom with - were *religious prostitutes*. And that’s important to understand because, it reveals the fact that the Moabites were *intentionally* seducing the Israelite men to participate in worshipping their false gods; and they did so with a snare that’s been used throughout all time: sexual seduction. So, not only were these men sleeping with ‘professional’ whores (who probably had *many* diseases) but they also partook of (ate) sacrifices to their false god (Baal-peor) and even *bowed down* to it. And verse 4 reveals that the Moabites *specifically* targeted the ‘heads’ (chief rulers) in Israel. Further, in Numbers 31:15, and Rev 2:14, we learn that it was *Balaam* who counseled the Moabites to do this *because* God would not let him curse Israel (Num 23-24). Apparently, Balaam knew the *only* way the Moabites (who felt threatened by Israel, even though God didn’t allow Israel to invade their land) could win in war against Israel was if they were disobedient to their God, YHWH. Quite a scoundrel he was. So, the Moabites sent their whores out and seduced many of the Israelite men, even their leaders - not only sexually but *spiritually* too, which is why these men ended up *worshipping* Baal-peor. The *Companion Bible* also has a note (on Ps 106:28) on the ‘sacrifices of the dead’ explaining that this pertains to *necromancy* (trying to communicate with *evil* spirits, i.e. daemons), which God *specifically* outlawed (Deut 18:11).

So again, the Moabites (through sexual seduction) were trying to *spiritually* seduce the Israelites (especially their leaders) into worshipping their false gods *specifically so* their God (YHWH) would not defend them; and thus, the Moabites hoped to overcome Israel in war. So, this is why a plague (pestilence, #4046) broke out upon the children of Israel. Num 25:9 documents that there were 24,000 of them that died from this plague *but*, that includes the 1000 leaders that Moses commanded have their heads cut off and hung up ‘before the Lord’ (Num 25:4). So, the real number was 23,000, as 1 Cor 10:8 points out.

Psalms 106

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

These verses explain what Numbers 25:6-13 document...

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.

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;

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.

9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

*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.***

*12 Wherefore say, **Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:***

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.

Num 25:6-13

Notice how verse 6 says that one of the children (men) of Israel brought a Midianitish woman into the camp and took her into his tent (to sleep with her) *in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of Israel who were weeping* (in repentance and pleading for help) *in front of the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation* (God’s Tabernacle)? So, this man was *openly* defying Moses (i.e. the Lord, YHWH) and, therefore, was setting forth an example of being openly defiant (rebellious) to *all* the others in Israel! *That’s* why Phinehas (a Levitical priest, Aaron’s grandson) grabbed a javelin, barged right into the tent, and *killed both of them* with one thrust that pierced *clear through* the woman’s belly; this mean he was *executing judgment* in the

‘midst of the act’! What this boils down to is that Phinehas would not allow that man to *openly* rebel against the Lord (YHVH) and, without asking for permission from anyone, went and put an end to it! And, the Lord (YHVH) was *so pleased* with him that He gave Phinehas a wonderful promise of a ‘covenant of peace’, i.e. *the covenant of an everlasting priesthood*. And, that means the Lord promised the priesthood would go on *through his lineage*. And, while it’s not specifically written *what* lineage Mary’s mother’s mother came through, we know she was a Levite because Elizabeth (a full blood Levite, Lk 1:5) was Mary’s cousin (Lk 1:36). Since Mary’s father was of the tribe of Judah, Elizabeth had to of been Mary’s mother’s sister. Thus, Mary’s mother had to of been a Levite, and it is *quite likely* she came from this Phinehas, whom the Lord promised *the covenant of an everlasting priesthood*. And we know that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of God (YHVH) *forever* (Heb 3-10).

Psalms 106

32 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Now the Psalmist is stepping back in time a bit to an even recorded in Numbers 20. It was when the children of Israel came to the desert of Zin and abode in Kadesh (where Miriam died, vs 1). And, they couldn’t find any water there... do you want to guess what they did? Yes, you guessed right: they *again* chided with Moses and *again* accused him of bringing them into the wilderness to die (Num 20:2-5)! Remember, they had this same problem only a short while after they came out of Egypt and acted just as badly. But the Lord (YHVH) graciously gave them water, so much so that it *flowed as rivers* out of a rock (which God commanded Moses to strike with his rod). And it provided so much water that all of Israel (and there were millions of them) *and* their flocks had water for a *long time*. So, they *should have known* the Lord (YHVH) *could* provide for them. However, they (yet again) faithlessly (and rebelliously) accused Moses (and thus accused God) of bringing them out into the wilderness simply to die. Yet, the Lord (YHVH) still graciously provided water for them. However, this time He told Moses to show this miracle to all of Israel (not just the leaders, as the first time) and (importantly) He said for Moses simply to ‘speak’ to the rock (not strike it, like the first time) (Num 20:8). However, Mose was *so fed up* with Israel’s constant rebelliousness (and complaining) that...

*10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, **Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?***

*11 And Moses lifted up his hand, **and with his rod he smote the rock twice**; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.*

*12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, **Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.***

Num 20:10-12

So, when verse 32 (in Ps 106) said that ‘it went ill’ with Moses ‘for their sakes’ it’s referring to how God punished Moses (and Aaron) for *not* ‘speaking’ to the rock but, instead, striking it... not just once, but *twice*, in the heat of his anger. The word ‘ill’ means *to be broken up* (with any violent action) (#3415) and the word ‘provoked’ means *to be* (or, *make*) *bitter* (or *unpleasant*) and can even mean (figuratively) *to rebel* (or resist; causatively, to provoke) (#4784). Thus, years of Israel’s chiding (complaining, falsely accusing, etc.) finally ‘got to’ poor Moses and he was *very bitter* against the way they’d treated him for so long. And that’s what caused him to rebel against God, in that he *didn’t obey the Lord* (YHVH) and *struck* the rock (twice, in the heat of his anger) *instead of* simply *speaking* to it. In other words, Moses’ emotions (bitterness and extreme anger) caused him to disobey God’s commands. And Moses also spoke ‘unadvisedly’ with his lips when he said that ‘we’ (i.e. he and Aaron) were going to give Israel water (Num 20:10). The word ‘unadvisedly’ here means *to babble* or, to *vociferate angrily* (#981).

And that’s why God said that Moses (and Aaron, who apparently was of the same mindset and allowed Moses to strike the rock) didn’t ‘sanctify’ Him in the eyes (sight) of the children of Israel (Num 20:12), which boils down to *unbelief*. Said another way, Moses’ anger caused him to think he and Aaron were going to give Israel the water, when there’s truly *no way they* could make it happen. The only reason the Lord allowed the water to pour forth was to prove to Israel (again) He *could* do it (Num 20:13, He was ‘sanctified’ in their sight). So, this is yet another example that teaches us *why* we should strive *hard not* to let our carnal mind (our emotions, lusts, pride, greed, etc.) control us (Rom 8:5-8). For even though Moses was one of the best servants to the Lord (YHVH) *there ever was* (which is why he was a type for Jesus Christ), he still messed up. Why? Because he let his emotions control him! And truly, that happens to all of us occasionally (1 Cor 10:13). But, Moses gives us a good example of *why* we should strive, *ever so hard*, not to let that happen.

Now, lest God’s judgment to Moses (and Aaron) seem unfair to you, consider the gravity of the situation. Moses and Aaron were the *top two leaders* of Israel; they were the ones Israel could literally see *with their own eyes*. Yet, their actions (in this case) didn’t give God the glory He deserves; striking the rock (especially *twice*) made it seem like it was **they** who gave Israel the water. Also recall how Moses said ‘*must we fetch you water*’ (Num 20:19). So, he was *taking the credit instead of* giving the glory to the Lord (YHVH), who truly was the only one who could cause water to flow (in the desert) out of a rock! In verse 24 (of Num 20) the Lord called what Moses (and Aaron) did *rebellious against His Word* (for they didn’t obey Him); and (as we’ve learned from this Psalms 106) ***all rebellion against God stems from lack of faith***, which is why God said, *ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel* (Num 20:12). Further, the fact that the Lord (YHVH) *also* punished Moses (and Aaron), when they disobeyed Him, showed that He truly is ‘no respecter of persons’ (Deut 1:17, Acts 10:34, Rom 2:11, 1 Pt 1:17, John 12:46-48, Col 3:24-25), for we are all held accountable to His Word (John 12:48).

However, this doesn't mean the Lord (YHVH) didn't forgive Moses and Aaron; He surely did forgive them, *but* forgiveness doesn't always mean we won't still be chastised for our sins (Heb 12). That's why God's judgment upon them *remained*. However, shortly before Moses' death the Lord (YHVH) did allow Moses to go up to the top of a high mountain and see the Promise Land (Deut 34:1-4). Further, so precious was Moses to the Lord (YHVH) that He wouldn't allow *anyone else* to 'bury' him (Deut 34:6).

So, we've seen yet another example of Israel's faithlessness, and even an example (the one and only) of Moses' disobedience (unbelief). And from that we've also seen how fair our Heavenly Father is (not a respecter of person) for He wouldn't allow even His most favored servant (Moses) to get away with sinning. [And Hebrews 12 reminds us that He chastises those who He loves, and does so for our benefit]. Yet, we've also seen the Lord's *unfailing* mercy, and grace, in that He (yet again) only chastised Israel (and Moses), even though Israel truly deserved much worse. *And* the Lord (YHVH) *still* provided Israel with water in the wilderness (a second time), which sustained them so their children (and grandchildren) would be able to make it into the Promise Land. And these examples (1 Cor 10:11) remind us just *how critical* it is to keep our faith (in God's Word) *strong*, so we can *faithfully* obey Him *no matter* how hard times get *or* what happens to us. For, so long as we don't forsake the Lord (YHVH), He'll never forsake us...

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, *which hath great recompence of reward.*

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but **of them that believe to the saving of the soul.**

Heb 10:35-39

We'll pick this up in part 9...

AMEN.