

# Numbers 25 - The Idolatry of Israel

## II. Failure of the first generation (Num 11:1—25:18)

### (5) Failure at Moab (Num 22:1—25:18)

#### (C) Moab seduces Israel at Baal Peor (25:1-18)

- (a) Israel's sin (25:1-3)
- (b) Command to execute the sinners (25:4-5)
- (c) Phineas' heroism (25:6-8)
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- (f) Slay the Midianites (25:14-18)

## Numbers 25

### (C) Moab seduces Israel at Baal Peor (25:1-18)

#### (a) Israel's sin (25:1-3)

1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to commit infidelity with the daughters of Moab.

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

1 While Israel remained encamped in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality with Moabite women,

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

2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

2 who also invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods. So the people ate what they had sacrificed and then worshipped their gods.

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

3 So Israel became followers of Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry with Israel.

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

3 The people joined the Baal-peor cult. As a result, the anger of the LORD flared up against Israel,

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

- When Israel was in Shittim (a verdant meadow, so called from a grove of acacia trees which lined the eastern side of the Jordan) where they camped before crossing the river (Joshua 2:1), Israelite men engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women

- This was an integral part of the Canaanite fertility rites (Cf. Deut 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:22-24)

(b) Command to execute the sinners (25:4-5)

4 And 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."

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."

4 so the LORD told Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight for the LORD, so the LORD's burning anger may be withdrawn from 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 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you kill his men who have become followers of Baal of Peor."

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

5 Then Moses ordered the judges of Israel, "Each one of you is to execute the men in his own tribe who joined the Baal-peor cult."

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

- 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.

(c) Phineas' heroism (25:6-8)

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 the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

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.

6 That very moment, one of the Israelis arrived, bringing to his brothers one of the Midianite women, right in front of Moses and the entire community of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting!

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.  
- While Moses was delivering this verdict, an Israelite man (Zimri, v14) was brazen enough to bring a Midianite cult prostitute (Cozbi, v15) right into the camp

7 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,

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,

7 When Eleazar's son Phinehas, grandson of Aaron the priest saw this, he jumped up from the middle of the community, grabbed a javelin in his hand,

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;

- Phinehas son of Eleazar, a priest, was so incensed at this bold and open sin that he took a spear and followed the Israelite into his tent, and impaled both the man and his partner with it

8 and he went after the man of Israel into the inner room of the tent and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through the abdomen. So the plague on the sons of Israel was brought to a halt.

8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked.

8 followed the Israeli man inside his tent, and impaled the two of them—the Israeli man and the woman—right through both of them and into her abdomen. Then the plague infecting the Israelis was brought to a halt. Nevertheless,

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.

(d) Resulting plague (25:9)

- 9 But those who died from the plague were twenty-four thousand *in number*.
- 9 Those who died by the plague were 24,000.
- 9 24,000 people died because of the plague.
- 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.
- This action by Phinehas stopped the plague, evidently implied in the statement about God's anger (v3), but not before 24,000 people died
  - 1 Cor 10:8 says 23,000 people died by the plague; whereas Num 25:9 includes those executed by the judges (v5)

(e) Phineas' covenant (25:10-13)

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

10 The LORD told Moses,

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has averted 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.

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.

11 "Eleazar's son Phinehas, grandson of Aaron the priest, has turned my wrath away from Israel. Because his zealousness reflected my own zeal for them, I didn't consume Israel in my jealousy.

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 Therefore say, 'Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace;

12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace;

12 Therefore, I'm certainly going to be giving him my covenant of peace,

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

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

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.'"

13 for him and for his descendants after him, too, a covenant of perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the Israelis."

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.

- This is defined as a lasting priesthood

- Such a promise had been made to Aaron and his sons (Ex 29:9) but not specifically at that time to Aaron's grandson Phinehas

- This suggests that the office of priest would now be channeled through Phinehas and not any other grandson of Aaron (Cf. 1 Chr 6:4-15)

(f) Slay the Midianites (25:14-18)

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

**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.

**14** Now the name of the Israeli man who was slain, along with the Midianite woman, was Salu's son Zimri, a leader from the tribe of Simeon.

**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.

15 And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was head of the people of a father's household in Midian.

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.

15 The woman who was slain, that is, the Midianite woman, was named Cozbi. She was the daughter of Zur, a leader of one of the ancestral houses of Midian.

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.

- The names of the Israelite and Midianite culprits, Zimri (a Simeonite) and Cozbi, emphasize that the matter was public and investigated

- This may explain the great reduction in the Simeonite male population between the first census (59,300, 1:23) and the one after this incident (22,200, 26:14)

- If mainly Simeonites had been involved in the immorality and idolatry it would account for much of the difference in the totals

**16** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,  
16 Later, the LORD ordered Moses,  
16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

17 "Be hostile to the Midianites and attack them;  
17 "Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them;  
17 "Attack the Midianites and execute them,  
17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

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

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."

18 because they've acted deceitfully, bringing trouble to you in this incident at Peor with Cozbi, daughter of a prince from Midian, who was killed during the plague that came about because of the incident at Peor."

18 For they vex you with their wiles, 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.

- The identity of the woman may have been stressed in order to explain Israel's subsequent action of decimating the Midianite population (25:16-18; Cf. 31:1-24)

[Labels were not denotative nor exclusive: Kenites are also Midianites; Kamonites were Edomites; Hivites (Horites?) were "villagers", etc.]