

Sermon for Saturday: Stand Against the Enemies of God

First Fruits Ministries, Pastor Andrew J. Manuse

A sermon loosely based on this week's Torah portions: Numbers 30:1-36:13; Jeremiah 1:1-2:28; Jeremiah 3:4; Jeremiah 4:1-2; Luke 13:1-9; Mark 11:12-23; Acts 9:1-22; James 4:1-10: <https://tinyurl.com/ycx2krch>.



Shabbat shalom brothers and sisters. I have the sense that the Lord is doing something with what I have to share with you today, and I pray for His guidance and His Word to reach you in a way that it has never reached you before. You're going to have to bear with me, because I think the last few Torah Portions, including this week's reading, are going to become a bit of a mini series centered around Phinehas as a turning point for Israel's second generation in the wilderness and the whole battle Israel faced against Balak the king of Moab, Balaam the warlock, and the five Midianite kings from Numbers 20-26 and 31. If God wills it, I think we're going to hover around in Numbers, even while our weekly readings carry on into Deuteronomy. I've never done anything like this before, so pray for the Lord's guidance—pray for the Lord's hand in this—and pray that He reaches many hearts, because I think things are about to get real.

My goal today is to lay a foundation by explaining a couple controversial sections of Scripture, particularly among those in the modern Church and even within Judaism. There are two major controversies. The first is the swift action of Phineas to grab his javelin and thrust through Zimri and Cozbi in Numbers 25, which can seem a bit harsh to our modern sensibilities. The second is from our reading this week in Numbers 31, when God instructed Israel to wipe out most of Midian, but not Moab. The way the Scripture reads in this section, it may appear to be a typo, a contradiction, or an inconsistency, or even unfairness, but I can assure you it's not.

In my message from two weeks ago, called “Eliminate the Sin,” I proposed that we ought to metaphorically take on the same zeal as Phinehas as we eliminate sin within ourselves, within the church, and even within our communities, and I stand by that message. Frankly, I think I could preach the same message today about the way God instructed Israel to destroy Midian, but not Moab. It tracks perfectly. However, today I want to peel back another layer of understanding and particularly focus in on the apparent contradictions or inconsistencies in this section and relate them directly to today’s world, the modern church and the coming judgment on the world.

For starters, there is no inconsistency nor contradiction in any of what we read here in Numbers. Starting in Numbers 20, we read about Israel’s final march toward the Promised Land following the death of Miriam and Aaron, symbolizing the approaching end of Israel’s first generation out of Egypt. We see Israel ask Edom, the descendants of Esau, for passage through their land, but the Edomites denied the request by coming out to guard their border. While this isn’t the end of Israel’s story with Edom, at this point Israel turned away from his brother, despite the ill treatment. We might think of Yeshua’s command to turn the other cheek in Israel’s response here, but the simplest explanation for Israel’s passive response here is God’s commandment. We read in Deuteronomy 23:7a, “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.”

Next, two kings came out aggressively against Israel—the king of Arad, a Southern Canaanite, and Sihon king of the Amorites—and with God’s permission, Israel defeated both kings and wiped out their civilizations completely. These were among the people that God had already told Moses to eliminate on account of their sinful ways. We read in Exodus 23:1-3a one of several places the Lord announced this fate: “the Lord said to Moses, ‘Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey;”

Now after these two victories, Israel moved up to camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan River across from Jericho, and that brings us into the setting for our focus today. We read in Numbers 22:2-6: “Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. **So Moab said to the elders of Midian**, “Now this company will lick up everything around

us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.” And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: “Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

We'll get into the details of Balaam in a later message, but briefly, we know that he was a warlock who through a radical conversion turned his heart in obedience to the Lord and obeyed God in blessing Israel, but he later fell away on account of greed and taught the Moabites and the Midianites how to tempt Israel into sin. After some initial wrangling, he came to Balak but advised the Moabite king that he could not curse Israel. In obedience to God Most High, he said he could only say what the Lord put in his mouth, and in that obedience, he blessed Israel multiple times. God surely had poured His Holy Spirit gift of prophesy into Balaam, for he prophesied about the coming Messiah, and in Numbers 24:9, he prophesied over Israel, saying “Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you.” By the end of this section, Balak had been unsuccessful in his goal to curse Israel and Balaam had departed from his company.

Before we get to our controversial section, let's look a little closer at the verse we just read in Numbers 22. Note right in the middle of the narrative, we see that Balak's conspiracy to curse Israel was not done in isolation, for we read, “**Moab said to the elders of Midian**” that Balaam was the guy who could remove this perceived threat camped at their borders. In Numbers 22:7, we see that the elders of Midian are actually traveling with Balak's elders from Moab to hire Balaam to do the job: “**So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand**, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.” At this point in the story, it's very clear that Moab and Midian are working as a team—they're allies. When we read about Balak of Moab and what he's doing to try and curse Israel, I think we can deduce that the elders of Midian are right there with him supporting the effort.

In two more points of background for our discussion, I want to make a distinction between Moab and Midian. Later in Deuteronomy 2:9, the Lord reminds us the origins of the Moabites as well as how He has restricted Israel from taking action against them. There, Moses wrote, “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession,

because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.” Lot, we know, to be the righteous nephew of Abraham whom the Lord blessed by calling him out of Sodom. We also know that Moab was the son born to Lot’s older daughter from reading Genesis 19:36-38: “So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father.” They had gotten him drunk and tricked him. “The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.” As depraved as this scenario may sound, the Moabites and the Ammonites are distant relatives of Israel, and both had righteous fathers. Perhaps on account of this, God chose to show Midian some mercy at this time, though as Scripture unfolds, we will not see that endure. As we will explore a little later, God did not have this same mercy on Midian, and this is the subject of the second controversy we’re going to address. The people of Midian, by blood, are descendants from a closer relative than Lot, but not necessarily a righteous one. We read in Genesis 25:1-2, “Abraham again took a [concubine], and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, **Midian**, Ishbak, and Shuah.” In verse 5, we learn that “Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac,” the father of Jacob, who became Israel, and then in verse 6, we learn that Abraham only gave gifts to his concubine Keturah’s sons, and then he sent them eastward away from Isaac. Briefly, it’s important to note that not all of the Midianites would meet the fate we’re about to discuss, because, as we know, Moses married Tzipporah the Midianite, and Tzipoorah’s brother Hobab, the son of Jethro, also known as Reuel, went with Moses and later with Joshua into the Promised Land and lived among the children of Israel (Numbers 10:29-34). But as a whole people, it would appear from our reading that the Midianites would fall into the category of the most hateful and deprived peoples at this stage in Israel’s history; specifically, at the time that Israel’s second generation coming out of Egypt was about to enter the Promised Land.

The king of Arad and Sihon king of the Amorites had a hateful intent for Israel, and thus these nations were later destroyed with the Lord’s blessing, but no one got as close to actually destroying Israel as the children of Midian, and it was the righteousness of Phinehas and the mercy of God that saved Israel from total depravity and prepared them for their final march into the Promised Land. Granted, Moab got close to the same level of depravity, but there is a key distinction between what the women of Moab and the women of Midian did against Israel, and I am going to propose that this distinction makes all the difference. It is this distinction that explains why God later commanded Israel in Numbers 31 to wipe out the people of Midian, and it is this same distinction that we ought to be aware of in the world today.

Let's take another look at Numbers 25, which begins with a rather damning story about the women of Moab. Here's verses 1-5: "Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. 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.' So Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.'"

It's interesting, the word "invited" here is from the Hebrew "qara (קָרָא)," which means "to call, to proclaim, to read." The word was first used in Genesis 1:5 when Elohim "called," or "qara," the light day and the darkness He "called," or "qara," night." The word "light"—"ore (אור)" in Hebrew, has the connotation of enlightenment or righteousness, or goodness, as in what is from God's creation and intent. It is the same light that is identified in Messiah Yeshua, and the same light that He instructed us to dwell in when we walk in faithfulness. In particular, He said in Matthew 5:14-16, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Similarly, "darkness" or "choshek (חֹשֶׁךְ)" in Hebrew, means obscurity, or ignorance, which comes from sin or evil. It is symbolic of judgment. In Matthew 6:22-23, Yeshua said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" This is the same darkness that God identified when He set it in opposition to what He had created, which was the light. We see in Genesis 1:3-4 that "light" was the first thing God created: "Then God said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness." He did not create the darkness, but it was indeed something that was distinctly the opposite of what He created, and thus He identified it and later told us to shine the light that he put into us so the darkness would flee from us. Darkness came about as any rebellion against His order would, because He created the Heavens and the Earth to be good.

I don't think it's a coincidence that this word "qara" is used here in Numbers, because these Moabite women were literally calling the people to pursue darkness by turning

their backs on God. After listing a whole host of sexual sins and idolatry that Israel shall not do in Leviticus 18, God called Israel to pursue the light in verse 24, saying, “Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.” In Exodus 20, from the mountain, in verses 1-6, the Lord commanded Israel, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” And in verse 14, He said, “You shall not commit adultery,” a sin that encompasses all of the sexual sin later listed in Leviticus 18 and 20. The children of Israel were well aware of what God desired; they knew what was good, but instead of withstand the evil day of temptation, they succumbed to it, and this sin would land squarely on their own heads.

In 1 Corinthians 10, after referring to this sin that the children of Israel fell into, the apostle Paul wrote in verse 12-14, “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

When our text reads, “They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods,” this means that the women of Moab tempted the Israelite people to sin, but within the camp of Israel, they were fully capable of escaping that sin. You see, before they “ate and bowed down to [the] gods” of Moab and Midian, the people “began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.” This first sin of sexual immorality opened these men up to the path of increasing sin, until it was too late for them. But even the sin of harlotry here has a much deeper meaning than you might expect, and that meaning can be drawn out of the statement, “So Israel was joined to Ba’al of Peor.” If there are children listening, this might be a good time to cover their ears, for I’m going to get a little big graphic relative to this topic. You see, I don’t think the Bible dictionaries do justice to what this really means, and I think considering the state of our culture today, not just in America but worldwide, it’s very important for us to discuss this in some detail, particularly as I continue on. So I’m going to take a moment to explain just how great the darkness was for these men, and maybe even women, too.

You see, Ba'al (בַּעַל), in Hebrew, means "owner, or lord, and sometimes husband," and the word has some innocuous meanings, too, but within the context of our verse it refers to the Heathen god of the Moabite and Midianite peoples, among others. This "god" is at the very least "a satan," meaning an adversary of God Most High. When fully analyzed, however, you'll note that Ba'al is one of the three attributes of the fallen cherub we commonly call Satan, and when combined to "Ba'al of Peor," the identity of the creature it points to becomes more clear. Now Peor (פְּעוֹר) is a mountain in Moab, but that mountain is named after the Ba'al worshipped by the Moabites and Midianites in our story, and sadly, too many people from the camp of Israel. To get deeper into the meaning, we must look to the root word of Peor, which literally means "the gap." The root word is "pa-ar (פָּעַר)," which means to gape or to open wide. The word is often associated with the mouth, but also with opening one's bowels. And in the context, the word also implies opening wide the female genitals. You see, the demon that these people were worshipping was the lord or owner of the gap. This god was also related to the feminine attribute Ashterah, Astarte or Ishtar and the masculine attribute Moloch or Malcolm. Here's where things get gruesome: Temples to Ba'al Peor had dedicated male and female priests and priestess who performed anal, oral and regular sexual acts with same sex or opposite sex partners in order to commune with their deity. Many of these same peoples sacrificed the children that came from these depraved unions to Moloch. While Yahweh warned against this evil repeatedly, all throughout the Scriptures actually, the people whom God has called out of darkness into His marvelous light continued and continue to fall away into this sin that leads to death. In Leviticus 18:21, God tells Israel, "And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Moloch, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD." This heinous worship is related. The more promiscuous sexual activity that occurred, the more unwanted children there would be. And these people believed through these sexual acts and the sacrifice of their infants, their god "Ba'al" would send rain to give them a prosperous harvest. Does this sound familiar yet?

By reading Isaiah 57:3-5, you can see that later generations continued in this type of sin. The prophet, writing down a Word from God, condemned these idolators: "But come here, You sons of the sorceress, You offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, offspring of falsehood, inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?" Jeremiah 2:20-21 alludes to this same sin continuing among the people of Israel, where we read the Lord say: "For of old I have broken your yoke

and burst your bonds; and you said, 'I will not transgress,' when on every high hill and under every green tree you lay down, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?" And in society today, this sin continues and grows more fowl, for even our government-run schools are grooming children to become sex slaves or to alter who they are so they can participate in this bizarre demon worship. Many of us were sickened to hear this week of a young boy, a self proclaimed "male trans activist," who said he fantasizes about getting a uterus transplant so he can get pregnant and have an abortion (<https://twitter.com/libsoftiktok/status/1678892214682890241?s=20>). Of course, his intent is to upset people like you and me who love God, but what type of evil needs to dwell in a person's heart to fall into this level of depravity? I highly recommend you read the book, "The Return of the gods," by Jonathan Cahn, which gets into the spiritual history of this pagan worship and explains how pervasive it has become in the world today. The thoughts and intents of man's heart may be inclined to evil, but this level of evil comes from the tormenting grasp of evil spirits and demons, and there is only one solution for that problem: the light of Christ. Only through faith in our Messiah can we throw off the evils of the flesh and the gods of this world and take on the light of Christ that will renew the spirit of our minds and direct our hearts toward Heaven and the One God who created all things that are good.

In his book, Cahn gives an interesting interpretation to the following verse from Matthew 12:43-45, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." You see, on the individual level, if we do not "**put on** the Lord Jesus **Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts," as the Apostle Paul exhorts us to do in Romans 13:14, then the emptiness that remains from a lack of faith or a life practicing lawlessness will allow the evil spirits that are very real in this world to find their home back in your heart. Without Christ dwelling within us as individuals, we cannot possibly avoid the temptations of the flesh, the world and the pride of life. Now, Cahn takes this idea to a whole new level and says that it applies also on a cultural and generational level. In brief, he said he believes that our generation is experiencing a cultural reversal right now from the time when Yeshua brought His light into the world. While all of these cult religions existed in His day and before, He and His apostles fought against them and drove them out by the Power of

God, and they didn't just drive these demons out of people, but also out of the culture at large. For many centuries, society at large did not accept the type of depravity that we are experiencing right now and which ancient peoples accepted for many generations before Christ. Unfortunately, our culture and our generation has largely turned its collective back on God and has lost track of the power that comes in knowing Yeshua our Messiah, and on account of that, evil spirits have full liberty to return to the empty space that is left behind, and with them they bring seven times the wickedness there was before. Yeshua said the last days would be like the days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-39), when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). I pray this day isn't upon us, and I pray for revival, but it will not come without full repentance of the great majority of people and a restoration of obedience to God and all of His ways. We can't just allow things to remain as is, but we need to listen to the Holy Spirit, if He is dwelling in us, and take action to be the light of Christ in this world. In order for us to stop this present darkness, we must shine the light of Messiah Yeshua. We'll return to this thought again later.

I'm not bringing up these later depravities for no reason; namely, the depravity of Israel once they entered the land, the depravity of the mystery religions that existed just before Yeshua's day, and the depravity of this present age of darkness. You see, I believe Torah is explaining this same very thing within Numbers 25 and the surrounding passages. It explains how things will get worse, but also how to survive in the midst of these trying times, and it gets into great detail of what we should be doing and what pitfalls to avoid. Torah truly is a love letter from God for all of eternity, and He truly does want us to make it into His Promised Land. But one thing is certain. God is not going to sit idly by and allow the depravity of this age to continue for much longer. As we return to Numbers 25:1-5, we can see that when the Moabite women tempted the people of Israel to sin and many fell into the depravity we've discussed, the clear punishment for such sin is death, and either God will take care of this judgment through pestilence, famine, war, or government oppression (Ezekiel 14:12-23), or He will send you and me to be His light and wake people up out of their darkness, or both. Notice in Numbers 25, after the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, the faithful leaders of the Body came together to seek the Lord and find out what He wanted them to do. In this case, the answer was to take the leaders of the people who were sinning and hang the offenders before the Lord. Each member of the congregation was responsible for this, for we read, "every one of you kill his men who were joined to Ba'al of Peor." Now, we know, particularly from studying 1 Corinthians 5 a few weeks ago, that God does not want us out killing people—that kind of judgment

can only come directly from Him, for judgment is the Lord's and He shall repay. But we absolutely should be calling people out from among us who are falling into this type of sin, and removing them from positions of authority in the church or other Christian institutions.

I think it's time to speak about the context of what we've studied so far, though. The people went out to the Moabite areas to worship Ba'al of Peor and participate in his depravity outside the camp. Whether in the Moabite temples or on the high places or under the trees, at this point, the people were not committing these atrocities inside the camp of Israel. This is why Moses and his elders were meeting, to hear from the Lord about how to handle the situation out in society at large. The Lord's answer, again, was to eliminate the people who may have come to worship with them on the Sabbath, but then during the week these same people went out to worship the Moabite gods due to the temptation of the Moabite women. And this is where the narrative gives us what is often seen as a controversial shift.

In Numbers 25:6-9, we read: "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**. 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; 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. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand."

As we begin to analyze this, please note that this is a Midianite woman, and not a woman of Moab, and this will be critical for understanding the full meaning here. Next, note that Moses, the elders and "all the congregation" were "weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting." They were at the place where God had chosen to put His name. They were outside the Holy of Holies, waiting on the Lord to tell them what to do to respond to the moral attack on their congregation. They were waiting for the Lord to tell them how to prevent the sin from spreading within the camp, within the assembly of the people who were on their way to the Promised Land. And God answered, as we have discussed, explaining that the offenders had to die. This is not the answer any of us would ever hope for. We do not want to excommunicate our brothers and sisters. We do not want to put an end to our relationship with them, and neither did Moses and the people of God. These were their brothers, their sisters, their family, and not just physical, but spiritual. The Spirit of Lord was with them and had carried them through

the wilderness for 40 years and they were about to reach their destination. But on account of the seduction from Median, this generation was about to see another major judgment. Of course they were weeping. No one wants to see God's judgment; we all want to see repentance. Now when Zimri, the son of Salu, a leader of his father's house among the Simeonites, came before the tabernacle of meeting with the Midianite woman Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a head of the people of a father's house in Midian, it's critical to focus in on this verse. He was a Simeonite. According to Numbers 2:10-12, the tribe of Reuben was camped on the south side of the tabernacle of meeting, 46,500 men, not to mention women and children. And the 59,300 men of Simeon, not mentioning women and children, were camped next to the tribe of Reuben, even further south from the tabernacle of meeting. Do you think it's possible that Phinehas, who was at the tabernacle of meeting with the whole congregation, could have seen Zimri and Cozbi enter Zimri's personal tent from that far away? I don't believe so. The tent that Zimri and Cozbi entered to fornicate was none other than the tabernacle of meeting itself. Think about that for a moment, because that is the punchline that I've been building up to.

Let's turn back the clock to Leviticus 10:1-3, when Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron the High Priest, offered the Lord a sacrifice that He had not commanded. Let's read that just for impact: "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.' So Aaron held his peace.'" If God judged the sons of the High Priest because they sacrificed with incense in a way that God had not commanded, what do you think God would do to Zimri and Cozbi for going into the tent of meeting to practice cult prostitution before the Lord? What do you think God would do to all of Israel if they allowed this abomination to take place?

Let's read on into Numbers 25:10-13 and find out: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: '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. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; 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.'"

If Phinehas had not grabbed his javelin and thrust Zimri and Cozbi through, God would have destroyed all of Israel. Why so severe, you might ask? Well, the whole congregation was standing in front of the tabernacle of meeting asking the Lord how to handle the problem with their Israelite brethren who were fornicating with Moabites and worshipping their gods outside the camp, and God commanded them to remove these people from the congregation. In fact, on account of their delay in taking action, God had already spread a plague that had taken out 24,000 of these sinners, and it would have spread further without action. But now, the princess of a Midianite kingdom was bringing her cult prostitution into God's holy tabernacle, and a prince of the tribe of Simeon was leading the way. Can you imagine if Phinehas had not acted to stop this from happening? Recall that the fathers of these people had just about died out after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years because they doubted the Lord's power to bring them into the Promised Land. If their children didn't just doubt the Lord's power, but outright rebel against it, well, I think God would have simply consumed them all in an instant, just like He said. Phinehas's zeal for the Lord saved the whole nation by effectively saying, 'Do not make the Father's House a house of prostitution,' just as Yeshua's zeal for the Lord that we read about in John 2 when He drove the money changers out of the Temple, saying, "do not make my Father's House a House of merchandise." His disciples remembered it was written, "zeal for Your House has consumed me." And some false teachers want to say that Phinehas doesn't worship the same Yeshua that we do. I think it's quite clear that He does.

So consider this: In late June 2023 (last month), Edina, Minnesota Community Lutheran Church "Pastor" Anna Helgen asked "her" congregation to stand in "body or spirit" to "confess" their "faith" with the "sparkle creed," according to a live stream recording of the service on YouTube. The church went on to chant a blasphemous statement of faith in a "nonbinary God" whose "pronouns are plural" and Jesus Christ, "who," she said, "had two dads." (Source: <https://www.wnd.com/2023/06/allegedly-christian-church-god-non-binary-whose-pronouns-plural/>). This woman stands in what she calls a "Christian church," claiming to be a pastor of the One True God while promoting a demonic counterfeit, surely celebrating the same deviousness of Zimri and Cozbi. Paul wrote in Romans 1:32 that "those who practice such things are deserving of death," but also the unrighteous men and women who "approve of those who practice them" are sinners on their way to eternal damnation. Let it be known that I not only disapprove of this woman's heresy, I think it's high time that we all start explaining quite publicly that such orators are not practicing Christianity. This type of lawlessness represent worship of demons and we had better start calling it out lest God consume us all. If only this was the only example. I feel pity for her congregants, but for wolves

in sheep's clothing like her, it is time for us to acknowledge Paul's words in Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." The light of Christ does not shy away from boldly expressing the Truth against such evil, and it is time for us to stop cowering in fear lest this plague spread throughout the whole church. We serve an awesome God who has put His Holy Spirit into us. Love does not mean affirmation of evil. Love does not mean acceptance of sin. Yeshua said that those who practice lawlessness will have no part with Him. Let us, on the contrary, keep the commandments of God because we love Him and enhance our faith in Yeshua and love for His followers, so that we can endure until He comes. And let us love our enemies enough to tell them the Truth, and pray that it causes godly sorrow in them rather than worldly sorrow, so they can come to repentance. This is the lesson of Phinehas, and I believe that it lines up completely and in every way with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the final verses of Numbers 25, we learn the critical pieces of the story that are going to help us to understand Numbers 31. Here's Numbers 25:14-18: "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. 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**. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Harass the Midianites, and attack them; 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.'"

Here it's important to note that from the Lord's perspective, the daughters of Moab and the daughters of Midian were involved with this conspiracy against Israel the whole time, but what I think this study shows is that the Midianite women took things to a whole different level. Yes, the Moabite women seduced Israelite men and led them away to practice cult prostitution, but these women, it would seem, never committed this sin within the camp of Israel; they invited these people back to their place. The people of Israel who resisted their temptation continued to live, while the people of Israel who went with the women of Moab died in their sins; and they were punished for their own sins. With the notable exception of Ruth of Moab, I don't know of any other women or men of Moab in the Bible who converted into the Nation of Israel. And God made it very clear in Deuteronomy 23:3 that "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread

and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.” And Ruth is a notable exception, and this is why: she said to her mother-in-law Naomi, a Jew, “Your people shall be my people and your God, my God” (Ruth 1:16b). In order for any cursed people who have no place with the Lord to have any hope at all, they must be grafted-in to Israel through faith in Yeshua, and this is precisely what happened in Ruth’s case. She was willing to give up everything to be with God Most High, entirely giving up her people’s history and her family’s history. This is what Yeshua said it takes. But let’s be clear, the Moabite people are not in good shape here in general. On account of what Balak did by trying to curse Israel, the whole nation would be cut off as a general rule from the only Assembly of God.

Still, what the Midianite women did was worse, especially Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a Midianite king. Rather than seduce the men and assimilate them into their own culture, this woman, at the very least, sought to practice cult prostitution right within the Tabernacle of God. They sought to take over the faith, if you will. If God took immediate vengeance on Nadab and Abihu, He would certainly take vengeance on a pagan people with a murderous heart. Israel had already lost 24,000 to a plague on account of the Moabites, and now the Midianites were going for the rest. Our God is a righteous God, and His glory will endure forever. It is He who called Israel to go to battle against the Midianites and destroy them because of Cozbi’s actions.

Let’s read Numbers 31:1-8: “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.’ So Moses spoke to the people, saying, ‘Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the Lord on Midian. A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.’ So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from each tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, **Zur**, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.”

Brothers and sisters, when the evil forces and present darkness of this world starts to come after us, we need to stop the sin from entering our camp entirely; we need to stand strong in our faith and endure. Then, we need to go after them. We cannot allow

our enemy, which is spiritual, to define us falsely or turn the grace of God into lewdness. For me personally, that means I must keep preaching here at this Church and going out with the Gospel, which is exactly what I'm doing and have been doing according to what the Holy Spirit has directed me to do, and God willing, what we're doing is pleasing to Him. For some of you, there might be a different avenue, so long as you are also grounded in Messiah Yeshua and His Word and associated with your brothers and sisters. Messiah ought to be the center of absolutely everything you do. The worst thing you could possibly do is nothing, for the Lord has called us to be his soldiers, enlisted for battle.

In the case of the Israelites, when they went out to battle against the Midianites, they messed up, as we read in Numbers 31:12-14: "Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle." But why was he angry? We read on in Numbers 31:15-20: "And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' hair, and everything made of wood."

We learn a few more key details that really rounds everything out. First of all, Balaam, after blessing Israel seems to have had a change of heart. Because Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness," we're told in 2 Peter 2:15, he counseled the women of Moab and the women of Midian how to defeat Israel and set up the whole plan of seduction and idolatry himself. You can't serve God and mammon, and those who seek worldly things cannot inherit Heaven. Paul even tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." We have one choice to make in this life and this Word from the Lord in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 explains it: "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord

your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.” Balaam chose death. We read earlier that Balaam was killed with the sword among the kings of Midian. Let us be among those who choose life.

Secondly, we have to be careful not to confuse love with having a corruptible heart. It may seem harsh for Moses to order the execution of these Midianite women, but these were the very ladies who were leading the cult prostitution efforts to take down Israel. If they let these women live, their efforts to destroy Israel would have just continued on. We cannot look at our enemy and accept or affirm their evil ways, giving them an easy victory, allowing their darkness to snuff out the light. We must love our enemy in the way that the Lord commands and expose darkness by bringing the light of Christ into every situation. The Word of God has the answer to every situation; so let us look to Scripture with the help of Yeshua’s Holy Spirit, not with sentimental or worldly eyes, but with the same spiritual boldness of Phinehas, or Moses, the Apostle Paul or Yeshua, never afraid to listen to those who are seeking the Lord with repentant hearts, but always willing to stand firm for the Truth against all unrighteousness.

As the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:10-20, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and

supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

We'll end here for this week. Shabbat shalom.