

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit. and Theology, Lecture 15

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Before we do anything else let's sing; which means I'm going to turn off my microphone. As I note for you, the expanded version of this, with the English put in there so that you know what you're singing, is actually on Blackboard. This is the one we tried to learn on Friday and we all ended up laughing at the end of it and that's fine so we're going to do it somewhat slowly today. Do you remember the first bullet goes fairly slowly that's Psalm 51:10; "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And then the second one goes a little bit faster, "Cast me not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me." And the third one we really clip along at a great rate and that's where we all fell apart last Friday.

Now you want to see how this goes? Are you in good voice this morning? Alright, well I'm not. Here we go. [Dr. Phillips sings]

Now you know it right? Want to try it one more time just for kicks? Now you're doing really well on the first line, that's great, and the last one's just for kicks. Anyway we'll do it once more than we'll pray together, then we'll get started. [Dr. Phillips Sings]

Not bad, cheer up next time we'll do something a little bit easier but by the end of the semester you'll know this one just fine.

Let's take some time to pray together.

Our heavenly Father, thank you that we can start a week together by bowing to you and your presence and by studying together your word, and by affirming our trust and faith in your everlasting covenant of love. Father, thank you for all your good gifts to us. Thank you most of all for your gift of Christ and new life in Christ. Father we do pray for those who aren't well that you would bring restoration quickly to their health. We pray for those who mourn this day the loss of family members. We pray that you would bring comfort. Father we praise you as we have before, for our leaders in very difficult times we ask for your wisdom for them and for their affirmation and acknowledgment of your presence in their lives. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the implications of

that and that part of the world where life is tenuous and so difficult at times. So Father in all things we offer you our prayers because you are master of the universe. We express our gratitude to you and ask that you would teach us this day, in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

We're going to journey to Canaan today. We are going to deal with forty years in about 45 min. are you ready for this? 50 minutes if we're doing it right. We'll try to make our way from Mount Sinai all the way to overlooking the Jordan valley and therefore after your exam then we are going to conquer the land. That's the way it's going to go.

Well let's have a look at the map first of all and we'll see if we can kind of get ourselves oriented on this map. Coming out of Egypt across this area called the Bitter Lakes I suggested to you that even though there are somewhere around eleven suggestions in sites of where Mount Sinai might be I tend to be in this traditional area right down here. Santa Katarina Monastery is there and also Jebel Musa, the Mountain of Moses, that is, Mount Sinai area. So here they are in a very isolated southern third of the Sinai peninsula for a year and after that time is over then they are going to make their way along this area and then up to Kadesh Barnea which is right in here. Of course, they spend a lot of time in Kadesh Barnea, we are going to talk about those incidents today. They also spend some time in the wilderness of Sin which is this little section that comes in just like that. Then they are going to make their way somehow, and we're not exactly sure how this works, but we're going to talk about it, around Edom. You may remember they asked to go through Edom on the Kings Highway that's this route right here and the king of Edom says absolutely not so they need to go around probably out on the Desert Highway. They'll make their way up north conquering two Ammorite kings, Sihon and Og. Finally, they are going to land right up here and that's where you have Moses viewing the land from Mount Nebo, you have the iteration of the commandments again as Deuteronomy is expressed and articulated and then they will be ready to go into the land.

So today we're going to make our way basically through Numbers 11 through the end of Numbers and the narrative events. That's the direction we're going. Some of them

have parallels in Deuteronomy, especially those first four chapters in terms of the historical prologue, but I'm going to use Numbers as our guide for getting through this. Just a little bit in terms of what this text looks like. Here is looking down again I think we've looked at this picture before but looking down at St. Katherine's Monastery from partway up Mount Sinai or Jebel Musa. Deuteronomy 8:15 tells us that as they made their way through that vast and terrible desert with its scorpions and fiery serpents, these are the things that live out there, and interestingly enough the point of that section of Deuteronomy is to indicate how God protected them through this in spite of these things because even though scorpions aren't lethal, unless of course, they sting you up around your head area, the snake, tiny as it is, is lethal. So you want to keep in mind that those are some of the denizens of the wilderness Sinai area.

It is also a beautiful area. Here you have some sand stone materials, wind erosion here and just gorgeous all manner of different shades of gold and red and purple and everything in between sandstones. And then we are going to look at the Wilderness of Sin that I just pointed out to you on the map. This is the Wilderness of Sin and I want just to get some perspective. If you look at that figure, that's me, so a tiny little person looking way out over the Wilderness of Sin and, of course, all the way across into Transjordan through the haze there. This is what I want you to see when you're reading the book of Numbers especially chapters 20 and 21 where you have the people in the Wilderness of Sin.

Nearby is going to be off to the west in here is Kadesh Barnea. There is an oasis at Kadesh Barnea and it looks like this but as you look out, it's vast and dry and barren. This is northern Sinai and Sinai generally gets at best between two and three inches of rain a year so there is not a lot of rainfall there. The Israelites do indeed spend quite a lot of time at Kadesh Barnea because there is a water source but obviously not a water source big enough to accommodate all these people. So God does indeed continue to provide water for them. So that's our little visual tour for today I think that's it, yes.

A couple things we need to talk about before we start the Israelites moving. The first is just to articulate some of the things I have on your lecture outline there and that is,

what have they accomplished? They've been there a year, they've been at the foot of Mount Sinai, camped at Mount Sinai for a year, what has been accomplished? Well here they are. God has given his covenant stated in the Ten Commandments, followed up with those stipulations that we've been talking about. The stipulations span moral/ethical Torah, true, civil social organization for them as a people and then also the ritual materials they need to know to live and enter into God's presence. So the covenant has been articulated. They've got themselves established. Taken a census--they've counted themselves. They are ready now to be on the march. They've also, just in terms of being established, have located places to be encamped; certain tribes on certain sides of the Tabernacle. So, all that is important, and then, of course, the tabernacle itself has been built by the contributions of all these people and the things that they brought out of Egypt with them. It's a remarkable place, as we've already said, manifesting God's presence in their midst. So he's dwelling in their midst. He's with them and yet the very sanctuary nature of the courtyard around sets it off. Worship is instituted in terms of the sacrifice system, the priesthood serving as mediators. All these things are now functioning and so they are ready to move on from Sinai.

As you look at these incidents starting with chapter 11 and going all the way through the Balaam incident, there are some themes that keep coming back over and over again. So I'm just going to say a bit about those overarching themes and the things that we can learn, the lessons that we can learn. I'm going to count on you to know the details of each of these narratives. I'll talk about some of them but go back and read them and know them carefully. Here is a sort of ongoing drum beat as you read these stories and it's a drum beat that we can learn a good deal from.

Gordon College as you know has a mission statement and that mission statement is that we strive to train and educate servant leaders. Have you heard the term "servant leaders"? You should have heard it said to you at least 15 times when you first came here. We are striving to educate servant leaders and if you aspire to be in that position you are setting yourself up for difficulties. One of the things I expect you noticed as you read through this is that Moses is perpetually under attack, isn't he? From the people who are

complaining against him from his sister and brother who are complaining against him and from other leaders; from the leaders of tribes who rebel against him and who refuse after spying out the land. Every time he turns around he is addressing a recalcitrant people who don't want to do what they are supposed to do. And that's what good leaders get stuck with. So if you're aspiring to be a leader get ready for the fact that not everybody is going to like you all the time. If you're not doing what's right they'll probably love you but if you are doing what's right there will be opposition and Moses certainly had to endure that. So there are difficulties experienced by the exceptional few who are chosen to lead God's people. That's the reality of it because we live in a sinful and fallen world, which of course, leads us to the rest of us who are generally part of the sinful and fallen crowds.

You'll see when you read these narratives, and you probably have if you've read them, these people are perpetually unhappy and whining and grouching and kvetching and crabby and whatever else we can think about. But, you know, all you need to do is just stop and think about it and you and I probably fit in that category quite often as well when we get vexed about one thing or another. So discontent and rebellion are sadly ever present in these fallen communities. What's interesting here is that God is merciful but God also judges, chastises, deals with the rebellion. Now, this is not going to be viewed or at least presented by me in terms of here's our heavy handed God hitting people upside the head again. In fact, if we go back to Leviticus 26 at the end of that chapter God is chastising in order to bring the people back and that's always the intent. So when you see these places where the Lord is very clearly bringing discipline into their lives it's educational, to bring them back because they certainly need it.

Well, let's carry on a bit and look at the specific incidents. We'll land on some of them more than others but they all have something to teach us. First of all, Numbers 11. After a year now, remember, when they first came out of Egypt (Exodus 16) they were hungry and they started complaining and they didn't have food so it's completely understandable at that point when God tests them he then provides and there is not a rebuke involved. Here, however, God has been providing on a regular basis day after day after day and instead of being thankful for his regular provision in the Sinai context, they

want, well they want fillet mignon, and they want caviar and they want asparagus steamed just right. You get the point? They want all these delicacies they thought they had back in Egypt and they are not content with what God had given them with the manna. And this time instead of just providing God will indeed bring a test and a chastisement into their context.

Notice a couple of things are happening here in response to this and but I'll just read to you, chapter 11:10: "Moses heard the people of every family." This is contagious and you know as well as I do that moaning and grumbling and groaning is contagious. Somebody starts it and everybody picks it up and there is usually nobody to go against it. "Every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The Lord became exceedingly angry," and here is a translation of the next clause, "and it was evil in the eyes of Moses." And so he says to the Lord, why are you doing this to me? Did I ask for all this? Did I ask to be saddled with all these people?

So God responds in two ways. One of which is to send the quail. And remember we had the quail flying through in conjunction with the manna in Exodus 16 as well and I suggested in that context that that might be a seasonal thing with the birds on their annual migration going across the Sinai Peninsula which does happen. But this time the quail come in droves and the people, as you know from reading this story, are so gluttonous, they are feeding into their craving and they are eating way too much of it. They get sick, and they're afflicted with the plague. So God is going to chastise them in that context. He gives them what they crave for but uses that as well to teach them a lesson. And we find that with ourselves as well. God gives us what we think we want sometimes, what we crave; he'll use it as part of an educational system as well.

The second thing he does however is to help Moses out a little bit because Moses has felt the weight of all these people. So the Lord says alright, verse 16, "bring me 70 of Israel's elders, have them come to the tent of meeting. I will come down and speak with you there and I will take of the spirit....." so again kind of a reiteration of what we saw with Jethro's advice to Moses. Here we have it again but this time the Lord is saying make sure that everybody knows that these people are my designated helpers for you and

I'll put my Spirit on them. Then of course an interesting thing happens and a couple guys don't show up. Their names are called Eldad and Medad and God even in his mercy sends his spirit on those two and they're prophesying in the camp. So you have a group of people now who are designated to help Moses and they are known for that because the Spirit has come upon them and there is evidence of it as the prophesy and people recognize it as evidence of God's Spirit on these folks. So that's God's response and again it's got some chastisement built into it. They should have known better than to do this kind of thing by that time.

Well let's carry on. I know I'm going through some of this fairly quickly. Our next incident is interesting. I'm going to read it for you because it's our next chapter. Then we'll talk about it a bit and I'm going to be very literal in the first verse. It's going to be painfully literal. It's going to be awkward but it's important. "And Miriam began to talk and Aaron against Moses" are you catching the difference between what I just said and what's in your NIV? I'll do it again and then we'll talk "And Miriam began to talk and Aaron against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. 'Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?' They asked, 'Hasn't he also spoken through us?' And the Lord heard this. Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you.' So the three of them went out. Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, 'Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth," I know your NIV says, "face to face" but literally it's "mouth to mouth," "clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? The anger of the Lord burned against him, the cloud lifts from above the tent, Miriam has leprosy like snow. Aaron sees it and says to Moses, 'Don't hold this against us we've been foolish. Don't let her be like a still born infant.' Moses cries to the Lord, 'please, heal her!' The Lord says, 'if her

father had spit in her face would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her after seven days she can be brought back.’” Miriam is confined, the people don’t move for seven days and then she is brought back.

Now what questions come to your mind when you hear that story? [Student speaks] Yes that’s one of the standard questions and it’s a good one. Why is it that Miriam gets this punishment? Why not both Miriam and Aaron? Now did anything in the way I read that first verse maybe give you a hint? [Student speaks]

Yeah interestingly enough the verb forms in Hebrew are a little different than in English, they have built into them person, number, and gender and the verb here is feminine singular as it starts this whole thing as the very first word in this particular sentence, verse and chapter etc. It’s the very first word, because verbs usually come first, and it says “and she spoke.” And then it says Miriam and then it says Aaron and then it says Moses. So you’re absolutely right. Now this is not the only place this happened. For example, if we were to go back to the song of Moses in Exodus 15 you remember that song where it says in NIV, “and Moses and all Israel sang this song” and it starts out in Hebrew “and he sang.” And here it says as well, she’s been set off somehow even though they’re together in this, the verb sets her off. It’s particularly important because generally speaking if two genders are involved, male and female, the male predominates the verbal form will be a masculine form. Here it’s feminine so that might tell us something. Do you like that answer? Will it do? There might be something else going on too. We don’t need just a one sided answer. She’s the oldest that could be that part of it. It goes Miriam, Aaron, Moses in this business. And also it would be difficult; in fact it would be impossible, for Aaron who is the designated high priest to serve in the tabernacle once he had leprosy. So that whole uncleanness issue would be a difficulty as well, but I think all three of those are involved.

Any other questions? I saw some of you smiling when I read verse 3. [Student speaks] Yeah, we view if Moses has written this text, of course your NIV has put it in parentheses, but if Moses has written this text it seems peculiar for him to say, “Moses was a very humble man, more humble than any on the face of the earth,” does that bother

you? How do you answer it? Got an answer? Two possibilities, possibly somebody writing later just as we have with the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 written later may be here with some other changes, possibly, what else? The word that's translated "humble" here can also mean "afflicted." Now frankly I kind of like the idea that Moses is writing this and he is feeling really beleaguered at this point and he hasn't even seen half of it wait till we get to chapter 21. It could simply mean at this point he's feeling afflicted, beaten up, poor, it also means "poor," and if that's true then God in his absolute mercy with what he says next; "with Moses I speak mouth to mouth." So Moses is feeling like he's been beaten down to a pulp and God with that declaration is going to lift him right back up again. That's one way to look at it. You might want to go the redactor route as well but I don't think that's quite necessary. It's a possibility.

At any rate we do have Moses, remember by the way that Aaron is the one who's supposed to intercede that's his priestly role. He's supposed to intercede but here is Moses in this context interceding particularly on behalf of Miriam because those two have failed considerably.

Anything else about this passage that's an interesting issue? Who do you know is Moses' wife? Her name starts with Z... Zipporah and where is she from, Midian. So who's this Cushite wife we're talking about? That's a good question isn't it? Again just two possibilities and then we will go charging on here. Some people suggest that at the end of that very odd incident in chapter 4, where she has to circumcise her son because, remember, the Lord meets them on the way back to Egypt and he's about to kill somebody either Moses or the son. Some people suggest that that is so distasteful and so awful that not only does she go back home, because we know that she's back home with her father during all the Exodus events, but maybe she just stays away. And maybe in that context Moses has married a Cushite wife. Do you know where Cush is? It's what we think of as modern day Ethiopia--south of Egypt. So that's one possibility. However, having said that here's the other interesting thing. In a couple of places, and of course, now that I have said this I can't remember it's a minor prophet its either Habakkuk or Zephaniah so don't write it down I'll go check it and Ted, you can help me out with this.

There is a parallelism that uses Cush in parallel with Midian (Hab. 3:7). Isn't that fascinating? So maybe it's referring to the same woman. He's married a Cushite wife; he's married a Midian wife. They are not pleased with his marrying outside of Israel. So maybe all the way back, they are vexed with this Zipporah who is not an Israelite. That's another possible way of looking at it.

Here's the interesting issue. That's not really the problem. They said it is at the beginning but then what's the issue? The issue is pride. Has God spoken only through Moses? How about us? That's really the issue when you keep reading in the text. Anyway those are some illustrations of reading the text closely and addressing some of the fun aspects in it. Anyway, anything else on that chapter? [Student speaks] That's chapter 12.

Well chapters 13 and 14 are interesting as well. We have Moses' choice to send the spies into the land or command to send the spies into the land. Just a couple things we want to notice here. Chapter 13:3 "all of them were leaders in Israel." All of them are leaders. They're not just any old people that are good spies. They're all leaders. Two of them happen to be Joshua and Caleb. When they come back they're bringing a marvelous assortment of fruit from this land and remember where they have been wandering now. Think of those pictures that I showed you and think how beautiful it's going to look to come back with great big clusters of grapes and reports of what a wonderful lush country this is a land "flowing with milk and honey;" that's the expression and yet what do they see? What's scary up there? [Student speaks] Say it again. Yeah there are people who are a little bit on the big side aren't they. "We even saw the descendants of Anak there. All these people are great size. We saw the Nephilim," remember that term? Where does the Nephilim show up? Genesis 6:4 right the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim. "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes but we look the same to them." It's scary, we've got to face the giants.

What else is there? This by the way has been demonstrated by archaeology. We haven't found any giants but notice Numbers 13:28 the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. These Late Bronze Age or Middle

Bronze and then late Bronze Age cities had huge fortifications on them. So the Israelites are looking at this. The Israelites are semi-nomadic and they don't think they can do this.

So as you know, reading on in chapter 14 everybody except Joshua and Caleb say "nah, folks, we can't do it." And they persuade the people that they won't do that. Now the sad part is, of course, the whole assembly, Numbers 14:10, talks about stoning Moses and Aaron but the glory of the Lord appears at the tent of meeting and the Lord says "how long will these people treat me with contempt?" He says, "I'm going to wipe them out." Moses again intercedes. And here is the lesson for us. In a leadership position instead of turning around, packing our bags and stomping off when everything doesn't go right Moses continues to intercede on behalf of his people. It's an amazing thing. God forgives them (Numbers 14:20). "I've forgiven them, nevertheless, they're not walking up into the land. Everyone 20 and over is going to die and they are going to be wandering for 40 years. So a sad outcome to that particular instance of disobedience.

Here is the interesting thing as well when you read the end of chapter 14 remember what happens? They felt chastised and then they say, "let's go up after all." The Lord says, "No you're not going up." But what do they do? They go up after all and of course, they lose a battle up there. It's fascinating because I don't know about you but I see myself in this all the time. Whatever God says don't do, well we do. It's really perverse but that's the way people are.

Chapter 16--O and one thing I need to say. As you read through Numbers, it's fascinating to see how these little bits of legal instruction are interspersed among the narratives. Chapter 14 has just said everybody over 20 is going to die off; you're going to wander for a generation, 40 years. Chapter 15 is all about offerings that they should give when they get into the land. It's God's way of saying you're going to get there. Don't worry you're going to get there. It's going to be delayed, but you're going to get there and when you get there here's what you do to show your submission and obedience to me. So 15 is very strategically located we'll see some others like that as well.

Well, chapter 16, another round of rebellion. Let's see who's involved in this this time. Listen carefully. Korah gives his genealogy; son of Levi, that's important, and

certain Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab and On son of Peleth. What are the issues here? There are 250 other men who are leaders. The rebellion is growing, getting bigger. It started with two people against Moses then we went to the tribal leaders now we've got 250 people involved.

But what do you think the issues might be, or at least some of them? It's not only the exclusive office of the priest, though that's the big one. But listen, "certain Reubenites," are your antennas waving? Twitching? Anything that might prompt Reubenites to have a case against Moses? [Student Speaks] And he's the firstborn right? He was the firstborn son and lost those firstborn rights because of his own sin and your thinking, "Oh come on! That was four hundred years ago!" But think of a different culture. Think of a culture where tribal issues are ongoing and important, as you may know if you follow issues going on in the Middle East today. Tribal issues carry on from generation to generation to generation, they really do. And so this is a tribal issue and therefore it is not at all surprising that there would be some Reubenites in this whole thing that is fomenting against Moses and Aaron. They want some leadership too. Their tribe deserves it etc. etc. So you've got that, you've got 250 people, well known tribal leaders, they've been appointed the head of the counsel and at any rate they start all of this, and we learn when we read on a little bit.

We're going to start with verse 9 and read 10 as well. Moses is speaking to Korah at this point who really does seem to be the inciting force, "Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you," remember he's a Levite, "separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near to himself to do the work at the Lord's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them?" But now verse 10, "He had brought you and all your fellow Israelites but now you are trying to get the priesthood too." So they're not satisfied with the position they have. They want something else. They want the position of being the people who mediate between humans and God because that's what the priests did. And that's what Korah and his followers the Levites are doing. Typical, never content with what God gives us. Competition always getting in there, one of the things you see on an ongoing basis is competition among the

leaders. Not a very good thing.

Well at any rate God sets up a test, verse 17. Each person, each man has to take a censer, put incense in it, 250, and all present it to the Lord. Moses and Aaron do it too. Korah gathers all his followers, they're in opposition, the Lord says, to Moses and Aaron, you separate yourselves, something bad is coming. Moses and Aaron pray. Again don't lose sight of the fact that here they are praying for these people. My inclination would be to slam my book shut and walk out and say, "I'm going somewhere else," but they're praying for them. But then, in verse 28 Moses says, "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea" hang on to that by the way, I'm going to come back to that in a minute. "If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt."

What happens, the earth splits open, Korah's men go down. By the way, the line of Korah does not die out. It's not everybody, it's Korah's men. We learned from Numbers 29:11 that the line of Korah does not die out but at any rate there they go. The sons of Korah are responsible for a number of the Psalms that show up in the 80s thereabouts. Most scholars say this is their way of being repositioned back to a place of honor after what had happened to them but it seems to be the same line. Not only that, you have verse 35, fire comes out and consumes the 250 men.

[Student speaks] Who's Korah? [Dr. Phillip's response] He is a Levite. In fact this is the first time we know about it, chapter 16. It gives us a little genealogy and all we know is that he comes out of the tribe of Levi. So he already has a fairly elevated position because we know Levites had some stature in terms of taking care of the tabernacle etc. but he wants more and he's leading rebellion to get more.

Now with all that punishment happening notice what the people say. "The next day," verse 41, "the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron and said," are you ready for this?, "You have killed the Lord's people!" when Moses had

been explicit in terms of, “you’ll know it’s not me it’s God because you’ve treated him with contempt,” but the people come back and say you’ve killed them. And then a plague breaks out and you’ll notice Aaron is the one that stands between the living and the dead, serving as the priest, serving as the mediator. So in that context he is doing in a very real sense what his role is defined to do.

Now chapter 17 is going to be the affirmation then that it is indeed Aaron and Aaron’s line that will serve as priests because you have that fascinating incident of putting Aaron’s rod with the rest of the rods from the tribes and Aaron’s rod will bud and that’s going to demonstrate that. “The Lord says,” in verse 10, “put back Aaron’s rod in front of the testimony so that it will be a sign to them.” Well that’s that narrative. This is a discouraging day isn’t it? Because we see such obnoxious rebellion on the part of these people but they’re lessons.

Let’s carry on to further incidences, water from the rock in chapter 20. They arrive at Kadesh Barnea. Miriam dies here in this context so now she’s going to be of the scene, but now here we have another incident where they don’t have enough water and the people are complaining and the Lord says to Moses, verse 8, “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out water.” What does Moses do wrong? Instead of speaking to the rock, what does he do? He whacks it twice. Now in some ways he’s going on the pattern from Exodus 17 because remember in that context the Lord said strike the rock. But Moses hasn’t listened very carefully because God said, “speak to it” and Moses does not only do the striking but he does it in anger and he says to the people, “Listen you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” which seems to be taking on the responsibility of himself for doing this and it certainly seems to be an angry response. God will say, “you have not honored me as holy,” and as a result of that Moses is not allowed to go into the land. There is more said about this in the book of Deuteronomy and this incident is unfolded but the key here is God has not been honored as holy by Moses himself in this context and that is serious business. No matter what, we need to honor God as holy especially in leadership positions.

Well as I was showing you the map I said they also make their way around Edom. They ask to go through because, remember, water is a key issue here. They even say we're not going to drink from your wells etc. but the king of Edom says, "No, we don't want you." So they're going to have to swing out around probably to the south and then to the east probably around the Desert Highway.

There are 2 more incidents we really need to deal with and then we'll just talk about closing down Deuteronomy. But the snake incident is one. This is chapter 21, and I want to read this for you. They're complaining again, there's no bread, there's no water, we detest this miserable food--the manna. So the Lord sends venomous snakes among them, remember the little picture I showed you? They bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray the Lord will take the snakes away from us. So, as usual, Moses prayed for the people and now we have this fascinating instruction. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole and anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and actually the word there is "fiery," that kind of matches the word for copper or bronze, it matches the venomous snake things that we saw in verse 6. Those, by the way, are called the seraphim, fascinating that word is there. He made a bronze serpent, put it up on a pole, and anyone who looked at the thing lived. What's going on there? Can we just unpack that a little bit? What's so unusual about what God tells him to do? [Student speaks] Yeah, I mean they've made what looks like an image and they're supposed to look at it. So your suggestion is absolutely right. It could indeed seem like worship couldn't it? And by the way, this shows up later on, during the time of King Hezekiah who we're going to study in about a month and a half or so. The people were actually worshipping, they preserved this thing and were actually worshipping it. King Hezekiah is going to break it up and do away with it for that very reason. But in this context it doesn't seem to be that but you're right, that could be a challenging issue here. What else strikes you about this?

Well let me say a couple things. Right away from Genesis 3, the serpent is the enemy isn't it? And serpents are indeed instruments of death in Genesis 3 and also

beyond that so clearly it seems like an odd thing and having said that, in the wider cultures you do have kind of an ambiguous nature for the serpent because serpents were sometimes viewed as healing things too in some of the wider contexts. And serpent was one of the gods of Egypt, the cobra was one of the gods of Egypt. You know the pharaoh wore it on his head, but your right, it does seem a little odd since part of the Israelite culture heritage clearly recognizes this as something bad.

So, having said that, let me move on a little bit, isn't it unlikely that God would say, you turn and look at that, and if you turn and look at that you're going to be healed? That's an unlikely thing to ask and it's not something we look at as the object of attention and then the source of healing. Are you with me so far; unlikely in terms of the object of attention, unlikely in terms of the source of healing? Why am I beating that to death? Where does this show up again? In the New Testament, what do your footnotes tell you? When you have Nicodemus coming to Jesus, John 3, you know Nicodemus is coming at night but he's got some questions. He's trying to figure out, frankly when you read that whole chapter; he's trying to figure out if this Jesus is going to bring in the kingdom of God. That's basically what he's interested in and so they have an ongoing discussion about the need to be born again and so forth and so on and then Jesus makes that remarkable statement John 3:14, which as you know this comes right before John 3:16, something we all memorized when we were kids, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up." Then John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." That's the verse we all know but the bigger context is Jesus' allusion back to this serpent in the wilderness thing.

Now do you get the picture here? In the wilderness experience that was an unlikely object to focus your attention on and an unlikely source of healing, in Nicodemus's context, and you all know this because you've had New Testament, what kind of a kingdom were they expecting? Political, certainly not one instituted by a crucified person. A crucified Messiah wasn't going to make it in their whole popular understanding and yet Jesus is saying the Son of Man is going to be lifted up and he's

referring of course to the crucifixion and the source of that will be our healing. So it's a wonderful image and it draws together the same kinds of things not in the Jesus' context and the expectation there based on what was going on in the First Testament.

Now we need to move on to several other things. Here's the next question of the day, moving back to Numbers, let me get there. Who is Balaam? Let's break this up a little bit. Second question, how many of you think Balaam was a prophet of the Lord? Raise them high. Okay we've got three strong voters. How many think Balaam was not a prophet of the Lord? That means everybody else because nobody gets to sit on the fence. Okay, not a prophet of the Lord. Does anybody want to venture on as to why? Do you want to defend your prophet of the Lord position? [Student speaks] He makes some very specific prophecies doesn't he? And what are those prophecies? They're things the Lord has given him. Yeah! As a matter of fact in that opening invitation, we know that "the people you bless are blessed and the people you curse are cursed." So it sounds like he's a prophet of the Lord doesn't it? In all four oracles he's uttering things that God has given him to say.

All right, who voted against? [Student speaks] He does use divination although when we get to the third and the fourth oracles it says, "and he didn't use divination as before," but you're right, that's an issue. Anything else... our negative voters? [Student speaks] That's true although he does have that ongoing reputation doesn't he? When Balak sent his message to him it's because Balaam already has his reputation and somehow his name is associated with Yahweh. I know I'm being a little bit argumentative here. Let me read you a little passage out of 2 Peter 2. All of 2 Peter 2 as you remember from your New Testament class is about false teachers do you remember that? 2 Peter 2:15, "They have left the straightway and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrong doing by a donkey, a beast without speech, who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness."

So, he's a prophet but Peter here is calling him a false prophet, a false teacher and so we've got to figure out why don't we? That's our task. So let's do our quick recital of

the events going back to Numbers 22 and we'll run through it fast and then you can go back and look at it. The Moabites and the Midianites are scared to death because here comes this horde of people, the Israelites. And so as the first message comes to Balaam, the end of it says, "I know those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed," that's the message, or part of the message. They take a fee as payment for the divination. They arrive at Balaam's house and Balaam says, "spend the night I'll bring you back the answer the Lord" and the name there is Yahweh, "I'll bring you back the answer the Lord gives me." God came and said, "what are these men doing here?" And Balaam explains the whole thing and God says, "Don't go. Don't go." So Balaam sends them away and of course, the king is not happy with that. So he sends them back and they've got more money with them. Are you hearing that? Peter says he "loved the wages of wickedness." Alright, so Balaam says, "I couldn't do anything great or small beyond the command of my Lord. Stay here and I'll find out what else the lord has to say." Now this is where the crack is starting to form. He knows there is money in this. Now God has said don't go but he's going to push to get a further answer from the Lord. You see how we do that sometimes? We know what God wants yet you know if you can make things twist and rationalize them a little bit maybe the Lord will let you do this even though it's slightly over the boundary, interesting.

God says, "Go with them but do only what I tell you. Do only what I tell you." And then God's angry with him and he sends the angel in his path and of course, that's where the donkey starts speaking and I hope you see the humor in this. Balaam is this great prophet known for his prophesy, yet he can't see the angel standing there but the donkey does, that's funny. At any rate they get there and Balaam offers these four oracles and the last oracle is particularly impressive. By the way, a lot of things are said, for example in the second oracle, "God is not a man that he should lie nor a son of man that he should change his mind." He is intending to bless Israel, nothing can change that, he is going to bless Israel. Balaam stops using sorcery and divination and in his last oracle he says, "I see him, not now, I behold him, not near." This is chapter 24:17. "A star will come out of Jacob and a scepter will rise out of Israel." A messianic prophesy, a prophesy

of a leader. What's that leader going to do? Crush the foreheads of Moab, who's the person that's been asking for the curse? The king of Moab! "He's going to crush the foreheads of Moab; the skull of all the sons of Sheth, Edom will be conquered" etc. And then it says Balaam goes home but he doesn't apparently stay there.

In the meantime, these are the two things you need to have in your mind, in the meantime the king of Moab has been really angry. He says, you're not going to get your payment, you're not going to get paid, you didn't do the things I asked you to do. And now you start putting things together. Chapter 25 right after that prophesy we read, what do the Israelites start doing? They're getting themselves seduced by Moabite women to go worship the Baal of Peor. This is sacred prostitution and these women are drawing the Israelite men into this whole mass of sexual prostitution and the context of ritual worship of Baal. And you're thinking, 'how's that connected?' And we find out how its connected in chapter 31 when finally these folks are being dealt with. It lets slip for us that it was Balaam that was giving them that advice. So you can kind of fit this together. He goes, "O no, I'm not getting paid!" so under the table he says, "you know how to get these people cursed? Just have your women go seduce them. That'll get them." But of course, the Lord knew that. Chapter 31, by the time you read through chapter 31 you'll see the whole problem. "And they also killed Balaam who had given the advice to have the Moabite women seduce the Israelite men." So he may have gotten paid, but it certainly didn't last him very long and that's of course, where Peter's "wages of wickedness" comes from. He was indeed a false prophet and the most heinous kind because he looks good and he says things that came from the Lord but he led them astray, away from God. Just a couple more things. Oh yes, another wonderful work of art. Don't you like that donkey? The donkey is very clearly speaking here and that's what we're supposed to see as his wide open mouth right there.

Alright, let's go fast, just some closure on the last couple of chapters of Deuteronomy. Stuff I want you to be aware of chapters 27 and 28, reiterate the blessings and cursings that are part of the covenant that we read in Leviticus 26. So you'll see the same kinds of things. If they obey, God is going to bless them richly in the context of the

land but if not they're going to be chastised. They renew the covenant and God gives them instructions on how to renew the covenant or rearticulate it after they get back into the land.

Moses sings a song, and this ain't no happy song. This is more like a Bob Dillon song I don't know, that's before your generation anyway. This is a depressing song because basically this song is going to serve as a witness against them when they sin. He says they're going to sin, this is the kind of thing that's going to happen. And it goes into blessing on the tribe just as we see Jacob blessing the tribes in Genesis 49, we're going to see that here again as well.

And then finally, I would suggest to you that probably whoever is putting together the Pentateuch maybe at a late date will write this postscript on the death of Moses after he views from Mount Nebo the promised land which is by the way a supernatural vision because if you sit with a map and you see Mount Nebo which is opposite the end of the Dead Sea over in the Moab area, he looks way up north and sees the Dan, way up north of the Sea of Galilee. Then his eyes are going to sweep right out to those lands by the Mediterranean Sea and swings all the way around. It's a counter clockwise movement and it is a supernatural vision, he would not have been able to see it by his own eyesight. So God gives him a look at the land. It's God's gift to him since he's not going to be able to go in.

Alright it is time to stop. See you Wednesday whenever you are able to take the exam. I will be here by quarter of.

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