

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 15, Numbers, Deuteronomy 27-28

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Before we do anything else, let's sing, which means I'm going to turn off the mic. 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 by 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 verse 10 of Psalm 51, "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 then, the third line, we really clip along at a great rate, and that's where we all fell apart last Friday. Do you want to see how this goes? Carrie, are you in good voice this morning? All right, because I'm not.

Here we go. Now you know it, right? Want to try it once more just for kicks? You're doing really, really well on the first line. That's great.

And the last one's just fun. Anyway, let's see if we can do it once more. Then we'll pray together, and then we'll get down to business. Here we go.

Not bad. Cheer up. Next time, we'll do something a little bit easier.

But by the end of the semester, you're going to 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 in your presence, and by studying together your word, and by affirming our trust and faith in your everlasting covenant 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 at loss of family members. We pray that you would bring comfort. Father, we pray 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 its implications

in that part of the world where life is tenuous and difficult at times. So, Father, in all these 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.

Well, we're going to journey to Canaan today. We are going to deal with 40 years in about 45 minutes. You ready for this? Fifty 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, we're going to conquer the land. That's the way it's going to go. But 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, they probably crossed this area called the Bitter Lakes. I suggested to you that even though there are somewhere around 11 suggestions in terms of where Mount Sinai might be, I tend to be in this traditional area right down here. Santa Catarina Monastery is there, as is Jebel Musa, the Mountain of Moses, i.e., the Mount Sinai area.

So, here they are in a very isolated southern third of the Sinai Peninsula for a year. After that time is over, they're going to make their way along this area, probably like so, and then up to Kadesh Barnea, which is right in here. And of course, they spend a lot of time at Kadesh Barnea.

We'll talk a little bit about some of those incidents today. They also spend some time in the wilderness of Zin, which is kind of this little section that comes in just like that. Then they're 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 King's Highway is the term.

That's this route right here. And the King of Edom says absolutely not. And so they need to go around, probably out on the desert highway.

They'll make their way up north, conquering two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. And then, finally, they're 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. Then they'll be ready to go into the land. So today, we're going to make our way through Numbers chapter 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 that historical prelude. But I'm going to use numbers as our guide to get through this.

Just a little bit in terms of what this stuff looks like. Here is looking down. Again, I think we've looked at this picture before.

But looking down at St. Catherine's Monastery from partway up Mount Sinai or Jebel Musa. Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 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.

Interestingly enough, part of that point of that section of Deuteronomy is to indicate how God protected them through this in spite of these things. Even though scorpions aren't lethal unless, of course, they sting you up around your head area, this snake, tiny as it is, is lethal. So, I want to keep in mind that those are some of the denizens of the wilderness Sinai area.

It's also a beautiful area. Here you have some sandstone materials, wind erosion, and just gorgeous all manner of different shades of gold and red and purple and everything in between sandstones. And then we're going to look at the wilderness of Zin that I just pointed out to you on the map.

I think we've seen this before. Have I shown you this picture before? I can't remember what I showed you. This is the wilderness of Zin.

And I just want to get some little perspective. If you look at that figure right there, that's me. And so tiny little person looking way out over the wilderness of Zin and, of course, all the way across into Transjordan through the haze there.

Again, this is what you see when you're reading. This is what I want you to see now when you're reading the Book of Numbers, especially chapters 20 and 21, where you have the people in the wilderness of Zin. Nearby is going to be, sort of off to the west from here, Kadesh Barnea.

And there's an oasis at Kadesh Barnea, and it looks kind of like this. But then, as you look out, it's just kind of a vast, pretty dry and barren. This is in northern Sinai, where Sinai gets, generally speaking, between two and four inches of rain a year.

So, there is not a lot of rainfall there. The Israelites do indeed spend quite a bit of time at Kadesh Barnea. There's the tail right there.

Because there is a water source, but obviously not a water source probably that's 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 of things we need to talk about before we start the Israelites moving.

The first is just to articulate some of the things that I've got on your lecture outline there. And that is, you know, what have they accomplished? They've been there a year. They've been at Sinai for a year.

Camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, basically. What has been accomplished? Well, here they are. God has given his covenant.

Stated in the Ten Commandments. I followed up with those stipulations that we've been talking about. Stipulations that span moral, ethical Torah through civil, social organization for them as a people.

And then also the ritual materials that they need to know to live and enter into God's presence. So, the covenant has been articulated. They've got themselves established.

Census. They've counted themselves. They're ready now to be on the march.

They also, just in terms of being established, have been located in places to encamp. Certain tribes on certain sides of the tabernacle. So, all that is important.

And then, of course, the tabernacle itself has been built from the contributions of all these people. 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 it with the courtyard around it sets it off.

Worship is instituted in terms of the sacrifice system. The priesthood serves as mediators. All these things are now functioning.

And so, they're ready to move on from Sinai. As you look at these incidents, starting with Chapter 11 and going actually all the way through the Balaam incident that we're going to kind of close down with today, there are some themes that keep coming back over and over and over again. So, I'm going to just say a little bit about those overarching themes and the things that we can learn, the lessons 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, you know, go back and read them and know them carefully.

But here's sort of the ongoing drumbeat as you read these stories. And it's a drumbeat that we can learn from a good deal. Gordon College, as you know, has a mission statement.

Our mission statement is that we strive to train and educate servant leaders. Have you heard of servant leaders? You should have heard that expression. You should have heard the mission statement probably 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're setting yourself up for difficulties. One of the things I suspect 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, from other leaders, from the leaders of tribes who rebel against him and refuse after they've gone up spying the land to go, you know.

Every time he turns around, he's addressing recalcitrant people who don't want to do what they're 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's going to like you all the time if you're doing what's right.

If you're not doing what's right, they'll probably love you. But if you're doing what's right, there's going to be some opposition. And Moses certainly had to endure that on a regular basis.

So, difficulties are 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. And you'll see as you read these narratives, and you already have if you've read them, the people are perpetually unhappy and whining and grouching and kvetching and crabbing and whatever else we can think about.

But, you know, all you need to do is just stop and think a little bit 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, and deals with the rebellion.

Now, this is not going to be viewed, or at least presented by me, in terms of our heavy-handed God hitting the 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 to be educational, all right? It's to bring them back because they certainly need it. Well, let's carry on a little bit and look at some of the specific incidents. We'll land on some of them more than others, but all of them have something to teach us.

First of all, Numbers chapter 11. After a year, remember when they first came out of Egypt, Exodus chapter 16? They were hungry, and they started complaining, and they didn't have food. And so it's completely understandable that at that point, when God tests them, he then provides, and there's not a rebuke involved.

Here, however, what's happening? God's been providing on a regular basis, day after day after day, and instead of being thankful for his regular provision in that Sinai context, they want, well, they want filet mignon, and they want caviar, and they want asparagus steamed just right. Do you get the point? They want all these delicacies they thought they had back in Egypt, and they're not content with what God has given them in the manna. And so, this time, it's not just God's providing.

He will indeed bring a test and a chastisement into their context. Notice a couple of things are happening here. In response to this, by the way, I'll just read chapter 11, starting at verse 10, for you.

Moses heard the people of every family. I mean, 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 all up, and there's usually nobody to go against it.

Every family is wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and here's a literal translation of the next clause, which is that it was evil in the eyes of Moses. It was evil in the eyes of Moses.

And so, he says to the Lord, you know, why are you doing this to me? Did I ask for all this? Did I ask to be saddled with all these people? And so, God responds in two ways, one of which is to send the quail. Now, 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. You know, the birds on their annual migration were 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're giving into their craving, and therefore, they're eating way too much of it, and they get sick. They're afflicted with a plague. So, God is going to chastise them in that context.

He gives them what they crave for, but lets that be used as well to teach them a bit of a lesson. You know, we find that ourselves. God gives us sometimes what we think we want, what we crave, but then 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. And so basically, the Lord says, all right, 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 that is on you and put that spirit on them. They will help you carry this burden. 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 to make sure that everybody knows that those people are my designated helpers for you. I'll put my spirit on them, and they'll prophesy. Now, of course, the interesting thing is that you read on in this chapter, and a couple of guys don't show up.

Their names are Eldad and Medad. And God, even in his mercy, sends his spirit onto those two, and they are 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 they prophesy, it's utterances that people recognize 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 a short chapter, and then we'll talk about it a little bit. And I'm going to be very literal in the first verse, very literal.

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've just said and what's in your NIV? Let me just do it again, and then we'll keep going. And Miriam began to talk, and Aaron, against Moses because of his Cushite wife, because he's married a Cushite. And she said, they said, Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us? And the Lord heard this.

Now, Moses was a very humble person, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. At once, the Lord said, we're going to come back to that. The Lord said to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, Come out to the Tent of Meeting all three of you.

They came out. The Lord comes down on a pillar, and then he says, Listen to my words. When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions.

I speak to him in dreams. This is not true of Moses. With him, I speak mouth to mouth.

I know your NIV says face-to-face, but literally, it's mouth-to-mouth. I speak with him mouth to mouth, clearly and not in riddles. He sees the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against Moses? The anger of the Lord burned against him. The cloud lifts from over the tent. Miriam has leprosy.

It's like snow. Aaron sees it. He says to Moses, Oh, don't hold this sin against us.

We've been foolish. Don't let her be like a stillborn infant. Moses cries to the Lord.

Oh, please heal her. The Lord says, if her father had spit in her face, would she not have been a disgrace for seven days? Confine her. After seven days, she can be brought back.

Miriam's confined. The people don't move. And then they finally do.

Now, what questions come to your mind when you hear that story? It's time for you to talk. Chelsea. Yeah, 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? Yeah, Nick. Yeah, interestingly enough, the verb form. Verb forms in Hebrew are a little different from English.

They have built into them person, number, and gender. And the verb form here is feminine singular as it starts this whole thing. It's the very first word in this particular sentence, verse, chapter, et cetera.

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, And Aaron. And then it says, Against Moses. So, you're absolutely right.

Now, that's not the only place this happens. For example, if we were to go back to the song of Moses in Exodus chapter 15, remember that song where it says, if you read your NIV, And Moses and all Israel sang this song. But it starts out in Hebrew, and he sang this song to all of Israel.

But here it is as well. She's being set off somehow. Even though they're together in this, the verb sets her off.

It's particularly important because, generally speaking, if there are two genders involved, a male and a female, the male predominates. The verbal form predominates. It will be a masculine form.

Here it's feminine. So, that might tell us something, Chelsea. Do you like that answer? Will it do? There might be something else going on, too.

I mean, we don't need just to have a one-sided answer. She's the oldest. That could be part of it.

It goes Miriam, Aaron, and 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. Right? So that whole uncleanness would be a difficulty as well.

But I think all three of those things are involved. Any other questions? I saw some of you smiling when I read Verse 3. Sarah, you were smiling. Yeah, we view if Moses has written this text, and of course, your NIV has put this in parentheses, but if Moses has written this text, it seems maybe a bit peculiar for him to say, and he's a very humble man, more humble than anybody on the face of the earth.

Bother you? How do you want to answer it? Got an answer? There are two possibilities, Zach. Possibly, somebody was writing later, just as we have the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 written later. Maybe here.

There are some other changes, possibly. What else? The word translated humble here can also mean afflicted.

And 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 seen half of it yet. Wait until we get to Chapter 24.

No, sorry, 21. Right? But it could simply mean that you know, 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. I'm not sure that's entirely necessary, but it's a possibility. 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. Is there 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, there are just two possibilities. And then, by the way, we'll go charging on here. Some people suggest that after that very odd incident at the end of 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.

In that context, maybe Moses 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've said this, I can't remember. It's a minor prophet, and it's either Habakkuk or Zephaniah, so don't write it down.

I'll go check it. Ted, you can help me out with this. There is a parallelism that uses Cush in parallel with Midian.

Isn't that fascinating? So maybe it's referring to the same woman, and he's married a Cushite wife, he's married a Midianite wife. They're not pleased about his marrying outside of Israel. And so maybe all the way from way back they're a little vexed with this Zipporah who is not an Israelite wife.

That's another possible way of looking at it. Here's the interesting issue. That's not really the problem.

They say 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 interesting illustrations of reading the text closely and addressing some of the fun aspects of it.

Anything else in that chapter? Yes. That's Chapter 12. Yeah, 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, Verse 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've been wandering now. Think of those pictures I showed you. And then 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 have they seen? What's scary up there? 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 a great size. We saw the Nephilim.

Remember that term? Where does Nephilim show up? Genesis 6-4. Right. The descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim.

We seem like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we look the same to them. So they're scary—scary people.

Got to face the giants. What else is there? Which, by the way, has been demonstrated by archaeology. They haven't found any giants.

But notice Verse 28 of Chapter 13. The people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. These Late Bronze Age, well, Middle Bronze, and then Late Bronze Age cities just had huge fortifications on them.

So, the Israelites are looking at this, and they are semi-nomadic. And they don't think they can do this. And so, as you know, reading on in Chapter 14, everybody except Joshua and Caleb says, Nah, folks 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, Chapter 14, Verse 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's the lesson for us. In a leadership position, instead of turning up, packing our bags, stomping off when things don't go right, Moses will perpetually intercede on behalf of his people. It's an amazing thing.

God forgives them. Verse 20, I've forgiven them. Nevertheless, they're not walking up into the land.

Everybody 20 years and older is going to die. And they're going to be wandering for 40 years. So, a sad outcome to that particular instance of disobedience.

Here's the interesting thing as well. When you read the end of chapter 14, remember what happens? They felt chastised, and then they said, Let's go up after all. And the Lord says, No, you're not going up.

But what do they do? They go up after all, and then, of course, they lose a battle up there. It's fascinating because, I mean, 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, oh, 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 is 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 Aviram.

Sons of Eliab and on the son of Pella. What are the issues here? And there's 250 other men who are leaders. The rebellion is growing.

It's getting bigger. It started with three people, 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, although 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, Trevor? And remember, and he's the firstborn, right? He was the firstborn son and lost those firstborn rights because of his own sin. And you're thinking, oh, come on.

That was 400 years ago. But think of a different culture. Think of a culture where tribal issues are ongoingly important.

As you may know, if you follow things that go on in the Middle East today, tribal issues carry on from generation to generation to generation. They really do. And so this was a tribal issue.

And therefore, it's not at all surprising that there'd be some Reubenites in this whole thing that's fomenting against Moses and Aaron. They want some leadership too. Their tribe deserves it, et cetera, et cetera.

So, you've got that. You've got 250 people, well-known community leaders. They've been appointed members of the council.

And at any rate, they start all of this. And we learn when you read on a little bit, I'm 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.

Is 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. He's brought you near to himself to do the work of the Lord, to be at the tabernacle, to stand and minister.

But now, verse 10, 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 that 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. Typically, we are never content with what God gives us, and competition is always getting in there.

One of the things you see in an ongoing basis is competition among leaders. It's not a very good thing in this context. Well, at any rate, God sets up a test, verse 17.

Each person, each man is to take his censer, put incense in it, 250 in all, present it to the Lord. You and Aaron do it too. Korah gathers all his followers.

They're in opposition. The text says they are 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, verse 28, Moses says, this is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and it wasn't my idea.

Hang on to that, by the way. I'm going to come back to that in a minute. This is how you will know that the Lord has done this.

If these men die a natural death and experience only what happens to men, the Lord has not done it. But if the Lord swallows them up in the earth, they go down to Sheol. Then you'll know that it's God's doing because 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. I believe we learn from Numbers 26, verse 11.

The line of Korah doesn't die out. But at any rate, there they go. Yeah, Katie.

Yeah, yeah, exactly. The sons of Korah are responsible for a number of the psalms that show up in the 80s thereabouts. And, in some ways, most scholars say this is their way of kind of being resuscitated.

That's not the right word. But, you know, repositioned back to a place of honor after what had happened to them. But it seems to be the same line.

Great. Not only that, you have verse 35. Fire comes out and consumes the 250 men.

Yeah, Ginger. Who's Korah? He is a Levite. In fact, this is the first time we know about him, in chapter 16.

It gives us a little genealogy. All we know is that he's coming out of the tribe of Levi. So, he's already got a fairly elevated position because Levites had some stature in terms of taking care of the tabernacle, et cetera.

But he wants more. And he's leading a rebellion to get more. Yeah.

No, it's not a stupid question. Thanks for asking. Now, with all that punishment happening, notice what the people say.

The next day, in 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 this not me, it's God because you've treated him with contempt. The people come back and say, you killed him.

And then a plague breaks out. Notice Aaron is the one who stands between the living and the dead, serving as the priest and 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 priest because you had 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, verse 10 of chapter 17, put back Aaron's rod in front of the testimony so 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 there are lessons here.

There are lessons. Let's carry on a little bit—further incidents.

Water from the Rock, chapter 20. They arrive at Kadesh, Kadesh Barnea. This is Miriam, who dies here in this context.

So now she's going to be off the scene. But 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, speak to the rock.

Before their eyes, it will pour forth water, and you will bring water out of the rock for the community. 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. God has said speak to it.

And Moses not only does 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? He seems to be taking responsibility for doing this. And it certainly is an angry response.

And God will say, you have not honored me as holy. As a result of that, Moses was not allowed to go into the land with the people. There's more said about this in the book of Deuteronomy as this incident has 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 at the map, I said they also make their way around Edom. They ask to go through. Remember, water is a key issue here.

And they even say, hey, we're not going to drink from your wells, et cetera. But the king of Edom says, nope, don't want you. So, they're going to swing out, go around, probably to the south and then to the east along the desert highway.

We have two 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 told Moses to make a snake and put it up on a pole so that anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So, Moses made a bronze serpent. And actually, the word there is fiery kind of matches nechoshet, copper, bronze.

It matches the venomous snakes thing that we've seen 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 was bitten by a snake and looked at this thing lived.

What's going on there? I mean, just unpack that a little bit. What is God? What's so unusual about what God tells him to do? Yeah, Susanna. Yeah, I mean, they've made what looks like an image.

And they're supposed to look at it. And 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, whom we're going to study for about a month and a half or so, the people actually worshipped. They preserved this thing, and they actually worshipped it. And King Hezekiah is actually going to get rid of it, 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 sort of issue here, couldn't it? What else strikes you about this? Yes, McKenna.

Yeah, good point. The snake has, well, let me say a couple of things, but you're absolutely right, right away from Genesis 3. The serpent is the enemy, isn't it? Serpents are indeed instruments of death in Genesis 3 and beyond that. So clearly, it seems like an odd thing.

Now, having said that, in the wider culture, you do have kind of an ambiguous nature for the serpent because serpents were sometimes viewed as healing in some of the wider cultural contexts. The serpent was one of the gods of Egypt, and the cobra was one of the gods of Egypt.

You know, the pharaoh wore it on his head. So that was an issue there. But you're right, it does seem a little odd since part of the Israelites' cultural heritage is clearly to recognize 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, isn't it? McKenna's point is well taken. It's not exactly what we would think of 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? New Testament.

What do your footnotes tell you? Yeah, go ahead. Kate, it's Kate, isn't it? I called you Becca earlier. I'm sorry.

Under my breath. Kate. Precisely.

When you have Nicodemus coming to Jesus, John chapter 3, 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.

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. It's John chapter 3, verse 14, which, as you know, 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 so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

And then 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' context, and you all know this because you've had the New Testament, what kind of a kingdom were they expecting? Political. Certainly not one instituted by a crucified person. The 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 to the crucifixion.

Of course, the source of our healing is going to come from that. So, it's a wonderful image, and it draws together the same kinds of things into Jesus' context and the expectations there based on what was going on in the First Testament. Well, we need to move on.

There are several other things to do. Here's our next question for the day: Let's move back to Numbers.

Let me get there. Who's Balaam? Hold on a minute. 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. How many think Balaam was a prophet of the Lord? 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 in terms of why? Katie, were you a prophet of the Lord one? Did you dare defend that position? He makes some very specific prophecies,

doesn't he? Right, and what are those prophecies? They're things the Lord has given him.

Yeah, right. As a matter of fact, in that opening invitation, we know that the people you bless are blessed, and the ones 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 it? Some majority folks. Carrie, do you want to say why? He does use divination, although when we get to, I think it's 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? Are they negative voters? Trevor. I think prophets sort of pick Balaam. That's true, although he does have that ongoing reputation, doesn't he? I mean, when Balak sends this message to him, it's because Balaam already has a reputation, and somehow his name is associated somehow with Yahweh.

I know, but I'm a little bit argumentative here. Let me read you a little passage out of Peter. This is 2 Peter 2. All of 2 Peter 2, as you remember from your New Testament class, is about false teachers.

Remember that? All right. Judgment is coming on them, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Verse 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 wrongdoings 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 the 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 really scared to death because along come this horde of people, 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. It's the fee for divination. They arrive at Balaam's house, and Balaam says, Spend the night.

I'll bring you back the answer, the Lord. And the word, the name there is Yahweh. I'll bring you back the answer the Lord gives me.

So, Katie, there's some ammunition. Your position is being substantiated here. 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. And so, they send the folks away. But of course, the king is not quite happy with that.

And the king sends them back, and they've got a little more money, don't they? Are you hearing something? Love the wages of wickedness is what Peter says. All right. So Balaam says, Well, 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, here's where the crack is starting to form. He knows there's money involved in this, and so all God has said is, Don't go; he's going to push and see if he can get a further answer from the Lord.

Do you see how we do that sometimes? We know what God wants, but, 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's this great prophet.

He is known for his prophecy, and he can't see the angel standing there, but the donkey does. That's funny. That's funny.

At any rate, they get there, and he offers, you know, Balaam offers these four oracles. And the last oracle is particularly impressive. By the way, a lot of things are said.

Example. Second oracle. God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of a man that he should change his mind.

He is intending to bless Israel. Nothing can change that. He's 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, verse 17. A star will come out of Jacob, and a scepter will rise out of Israel. This is a Messianic prophecy, a prophecy 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 skulls of all the sons of Sheth. Eden will be conquered, et cetera. And then it says, Balaam goes home.

But he doesn't apparently stay there. In the meantime, and here are the two things you need to have in your mind. In the meantime, the king of Moab has been really angry, and he says, you're not going to get your payment.

You're not going to get paid. You didn't do the job I told you to do. And so now you start putting things together.

In chapter 25, right after that prophecy, we read, what do the Israelites start doing? They're getting themselves seduced by Moabite women to go worship the Baal of Peor. It's sacred prostitution, and these women are drawing all these Israelite men into this whole morass of sexual prostitution in the context of ritual worship of Baal. And you're thinking, how's that connected? And we find out how it's connected, because in chapter 31, when finally, these folks are being dealt with, it lets slip for us that it was Balaam who gave them that advice.

Balaam gave them that advice. And so you can kind of put this together. He figures, I'm not getting paid, oh no.

So, under the table he says, you know how to get these Israelites? Do you know how to trap them? You 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 it says, 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 come from. He was indeed a false prophet of the most heinous kind because he looks good and he said the right things.

And he said things that came from the Lord, but he led them astray and away from God. All right. 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.

I mean, that's what we're supposed to see, which is this wide-open mouth right there. All right. Let's do it fast.

Just some closure on the last couple of chapters of Deuteronomy. The last couple of chapters of Deuteronomy. Stuff I want you to be aware of.

Chapter 27 and Chapter 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're obedient, God's going to bless them richly in the context of the land.

But if not, there are going to be chastisements. They renew the covenant and he gives them instructions on how to renew the covenant or actually articulate the covenant when they get into the land. Moses sings a song.

And this ain't no happy song. This is more like a Bob Dylan song. I don't know.

That's before your generation, anyway. This is a depressing song because, basically, it's a song that's going to serve as a witness against them when they sin. And he says they're going to sin.

This is the kind of stuff that's going to happen. Then it goes into blessings on each tribe. Just as we saw Jacob blessing the tribes in Genesis 49, you'll see them here again as well.

And then, finally, I would suggest to you that probably whoever is putting together the Pentateuch, maybe at a later 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. If you sit with a map and you find Mount Nebo, which is just opposite the north end of the Dead Sea over in the Moab area, he looks first way up north and sees Dan, that area, way up north of the Sea of Galilee. And then his eye is going to sweep right out to those lands on the Mediterranean Sea and swing all the way around.

It's a counterclockwise movement, and it is a supernatural vision. He wouldn't have been able to see it by his own eyesight seeing these things. 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. All right, it is time to stop. See you Wednesday whenever you are ready to take the exam. I will be here by a quarter of.