

Numbers 25 - Zeal of the LORD

A stumbling block = Gk Skandalon - a trap stick

Rev 2:14 ESV But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to **put a stumbling block** before the sons of Israel, so that they might **eat food sacrificed to idols** and **practice sexual immorality**.

The Daughters of Moab - they were used as the stumbling block

Num 25:1-18 ESV While Israel lived in **Shittim**, the people began to **whore with the daughters of Moab**. 2 These **invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods**, and **the people ate and bowed down to their gods**. 3 So Israel **yoked himself to Baal** of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. 4 And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that **the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.**" 5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you kill those of his men **who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor.**"

Shittim & Jericho - two extremes - a great defeat in Shittim & a great victory Jericho (trials often come in close proximity to a great victory)

They began to whore with the daughters of Moab - (Moab in Heb = from the father)

- **Moabites** - came from the **incestuous** relationship between Lot and his daughter (**Gen 19**)

The nature of the stumbling block

It appeals to the flesh (the lure inside the trap)

- First the offer of sex Then food (they hated "this loathsome bread" - manna)

It leads to something worse (It is what happens when the trap stick is tripped)

- **Spiritual destruction - to turn our hearts from the LORD**

It is self imposed - Israel brought destruction upon himself

- Balaam could not curse Israel (God blessed) -- **but Israel he YOKED himself to Baal of Peor**

Baal Peor - the LORD of the cleft or opening

Now Peor was an obscure local mountain peak in Moab, a place of gross idolatry where Balak brought Balaam to curse Israel and it means a gap, cleft, wide opening, i.e. woman's vagina or other cavities in the body, so Baal Peor "Lord of the opening" is not just about one specific opening but all the openings of the body that could be penetrated or corrupted for worship through sexual purposes. Because the Canaanites worshipped sexual perversion so much they threw great festivals to get everyone involved. Normally worshippers would prepare themselves before by eating lentils/ drinking beer and in turn would approach the altar of Baal to offer their sacrifice, (usually a child) squat down expose their back sides and defecate on the altar and then off into the groves for wild sex. While all sexual immorality gives homage to the god Baal, worshippers in the cult of Baal-Peor forfeited all human moral standards. In fact the more disrespectful & animalistic the act the greater the form of worship. Baal-Peor worship was considered to be vile and obscene this was the heaviest and most degrading demonic form of idol worship available this was basically anything goes with no limits or restrictions.¹

Caught in a strange place

- **Vs 3 The anger of the LORD was kindled against them**
- **Vs 4 That the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel**

¹ <http://www.gen3x.org/2013/04/27/who-gets-your-worship/>

What do we see? and does it move us?

6 And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, **in the *sight of Moses*** and **in the *sight of the whole congregation*** of the people of Israel, *while they were weeping* in the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, **saw it**, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand 8 and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the **plague on the people of Israel was stopped**. 9 Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were ***twenty-four thousand***.

The Actors - Zimri and Cozbi (vs 14 & 15) Moses, the whole congregation and Phinehas

Did Zimri SEE what he was doing?

- All the people were weeping - Yet he marches to his tent in front of everyone
- They were either TOTALLY OBLIVIOUS --- **Or worse DIDN'T CARE**

Moses SAW it and the whole congregation SAW it but were paralyzed

- Maybe in shock, maybe still in grief, not sure how to process it, meanwhile the plague goes on

Phinehas SAW it and he moved

Here God's purpose was to preserve the people from judgement - to turn His anger - 24,000 died, but I wonder how many more MAY HAVE DIED if Phinehas had not taken action

- Vs 3 The **anger** of the LORD **was kindled against them**
- Vs 4 that the **fierce anger** of the LORD may **turn away** from Israel (word to Moses)
- Vs 8 Thus the **plague** on the people of Israel **was stopped** (after Phinehas moved)

What moved Phinehas? --- The ZEAL of the LORD

10 And the LORD said to Moses, 11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, **has turned back my wrath** from the people of Israel, in that **he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy**. 12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him **my covenant of peace**, 13 and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him **the covenant of a perpetual priesthood**, because he was jealous for his God and **made atonement for the people of Israel**.'"

- He was **ZEALOUS FOR MY SAKE** (i.e. something about his feelings for GOD MOVED HIM)
- He was **ZEALOUS WITH MY ZEAL** (i.e. something of God STIRRED in Him)

The trap stick we face is more destructive than we may realize

- Rom 8:12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you **put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.
- 2Co 7:10-11 ESV For **godly grief produces a repentance** that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, **what zeal**, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

What Phinehas did sounds so much like what Jesus Christ has done

Vs 11 [Phinehas] has turned back my wrath

JESUS TURNED AWAY THE WRATH OF GOD

- Rom 5:9 ESV Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Vs 11 he was jealous with my jealousy

JESUS WAS MOVED WITH ZEAL When Jesus made a whip of cords, overturned the tables of the money changers and told them “my Father’s house shall be a house of prayer” --- John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, **"Zeal for your house will consume me**

Vs 12 I give to him my covenant of peace

JESUS MADE PEACE BY THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS

- Col 1:20 ESV and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Vs 13 because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people

THROUGH JESUS WE HAVE RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT

- Rom 5:11 KJV And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

God’s Amazing Redemption

The Moabite women

- Moabites were birthed out of Lot's **incestuous** relationship with his daughter
- The Moabite women **seduced Israelites** in Num 25 - bad track record - don't go near them
- **Ruth was a moabite woman**
 - She married Boaz, they had a son Obed --- Obed had a son Jesse -- Jesse had a son DAVID --- eventually to Jesus Messiah - **Ruth's name is in His genealogy** (Matt 1)

He takes a detestable thing, and makes them his bride

- Hos 9:10 ESV Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor and **consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and *became detestable like the thing they loved.***
- Hos 2:16-17 ESV "And in that day, declares the LORD, **you will call me 'My Husband,'** and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' 17 For **I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.**

The LORD does this same thing for us.

Are you trapped, have you taken the bait?

Are you turned from the LORD? following another god?

Pray that we can SEE our stumbling block for its destructive force

Pray that we can be stirred up with ZEAL and take action like Phinehas

He wants us to remember no more the name of the Baals, but to know him as “My Husband”