

THE RIGHTEOUS ANGER OF PHINEAS

Pinchas-Numbers 25

Balaam, the powerful and experienced pagan prophet that was hired by king Balak to curse Israel, failed at every attempt. Every single time he opened his mouth to curse the people of God, nothing but blessings came out. This not only infuriated king Balak, but embarrassed Balaam, as well. It started to become clear to the enemy of Israel that there was just no way to curse them as long as Yahweh was on their side. As long as they remained in alignment with Him, they were unbeatable, impenetrable, and surrounded by a hedge of heavenly angels with swords drawn on every side. The enemy must go back to the drawing board and think of something else that he could do to make Israel fall. And that he would do.



Wouldn't it be amazing to live a life of such blessing and have such protection that even the most powerful dark forces in hell could not prevail against you for even a second? There is such a life and the formula for it is found right here in the story of Balaam, King Balak and Phineas (Pinchas). This entire story is simply a pull-back of the curtain, if you will, to allow us to see into the spiritual realm.

How are these stories a picture of the spiritual realm?

Think about it. At the time that Balaam and Balak are trying to curse Israel, Israel has no idea what is going on behind the scenes. They are completely oblivious to the fact that there was an attempt at their destruction, nor did they know that they had just been abundantly blessed. This is exactly what happens in the spiritual realm around us. We just have no idea how hard the enemy tries to destroy us, hamper us, or, at the very least, ruin our day with some frustrating circumstance. If our eyes were truly open to seeing what is really happening around us, we would quickly shut them and ask Yahweh to take it away.

The truth is that we are not fighting flesh and blood, but the principalities that are in high places in this present darkness. One of the purposes of this story that extends through several portions of scripture is to help us understand that the world we constitute as reality is only a small portion of what real reality is. To an angel, heaven is their reality and is far more real than anything on this earth that is passing away. From their perspective, the earth is just a fleeting shadow that is cast from the real substance it was patterned after. When we truly have our eyes opened to the fact that this world is but an elevator to a higher "floor," we will understand that what happens in the elevator is not reality. It is just the place created as a transport to the rest of the building. With this in mind, let's see how the story of Phineas fits into our peak behind the curtain.

Within a few portions, we have gone from the children of Israel getting disqualified at the Jordan River because of the ten spies' evil report all the way to the same Jordan River 40 years later where they would be tested once again. It is a spiritual principle that before any kind of promotion and realization of a blessing there will always be a test. And from Yahweh's perspective, the test is always in proportion to the size and scope of the available blessing.

The children of Israel were just outside Canaan across from Jericho, which was on the other side of the Jordan River. Before they would take their first city though, this generation had to be tested.

READ NUMBERS 25

How did this happen? How did the Israelites get caught up in such a scandal? We have to go to Numbers 31 to find the answer.

Numbers 31:16 "Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."

So now we know what Balaam was up to when he couldn't find a way to curse Israel from the outside. He certainly didn't want to give back all the money he was receiving from Balak. So he crafted another plan. Balaam knew that they were commanded not to take any foreign wives. He knew that if he could get the people of Israel to break this law, then, in fact, they would be cursing themselves. So he told king Balak to send out the most beautiful of his women to seduce the men of Israel and cause them to break this simple law. *It worked like a charm.*

This was the exact same trick the serpent used in the Garden with Eve. He knew he had no power to curse her on his own. He would have to trick her into cursing herself by breaking the Torah of

the Garden. His strategy is no different today. The enemy has no jurisdiction over the life of an obedient believer. He must get jurisdiction first by getting them to sin. Unfortunately, he achieves his goal many times and God's people don't even realize it.

By the time Phineas comes on the scene, thousands of people had been killed in the plague from this terrible disobedience. As they were gathering the perpetrators together, Phineas just couldn't take it anymore. He took a spear and went into a tent and killed both the Israelite man and his mistress. These were not just any Israelite and Midianite. This was a head and leader of the Simeonite tribe and a princess in Midian.

The Spirit is trying to point out to us that it was the leaders of the rebellion that once again caused the people to sin, and specifically from the tribe of Simeon. Because of this sin, it was Simeon's tribe that suffered the most damage from the plague, with almost half of their tribe being wiped out. Do you see the connection? Those that were following the leadership of the tribe of Simeon were the ones that partook the most in the sin of their leader. If it was not for the zealous and righteous anger of Phineas, perhaps the entire tribe of Simeon would have been destroyed.

Why did Phineas do what he did? Did he have something against Zimri and Cozbi?

If Phineas was acting out of hatred or revenge or any other selfish motive, the Almighty would not have approved of his actions. After all, his actions could have, by law, get him killed. But the fact that Yahweh blessed him in his action is because his heart motive was truly out of concern to stop the bleeding and deaths of his people that were being caused by these two. And in this action, we find, once again, a spiritual principle of how to stop the "**plague**" of death.

This story tells us that the plague was not going to stop until someone paid for the sins of all of Israel with their life. In this case, we discover that it was the leaders of the rebellion that had to die to save the sins of their brothers. Didn't Yeshua do the same for us? Did He not take upon Himself the sin of all the people, shouldering all of it Himself? Was He not also thrust with a spear causing the life-giving water and blood to flow for all mankind? Was not the plague of the law of sin and death destroying the second He breathed His last?

Not only does this story tell us that in order to receive life more abundantly, you must first die to the flesh and take up your cross and follow Him, it also tells us how Yahweh feels about people that are sold out and zealous for Him. He loves people with zeal and passion, people that love what He loves and hate what He hates. Look at some of the most powerful patriarchs in the bible and tell me what they all have in common. Jacob was as slick and conniving as they come, but He loved Yahweh with all his heart. He was stubborn as a mule but would not let go of the angel without a blessing. David danced like a crazy man before the Lord and would do anything to promote His Kingdom. Was he perfect? Not by a long shot. With murder and adultery on his resume, it's shocking that Yahweh picked him to begin with knowing what was coming. Peter was simply an emotional roller coaster and Paul was sometimes out of his mind with zeal. He had so much zeal that when Agabus the prophet and the four prophetesses of Philip told him that if he went to Jerusalem he was going to go to prison, Paul responded, "For I am ready not only to be bound but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus!" Paul did end up in prison

because of his zeal and disobedience to the clear instructions of the Holy Spirit. Many believe he went to prison because of the gospel, but the truth is that he went to prison because he was falsely accused of teaching against the law and because he flat out ignored the voice of the Spirit.

So when it's all said and done, you can see that Yahweh chooses some pretty crazy and zealous people. Unfortunately, sometimes that zealousness gets them in trouble. But He was and still is willing to take the risk on those that are zealous for Him because of the ancient Proverb that says, ***"Where there is no ox, the manger is clean. But with the ox comes much increase."*** In other words, people that are zealous for their King sometimes are the same people that can leave quite a mess behind them as they are working. But at the same time, they get more done and create more of an increase for the Kingdom than anyone. I suppose from Yahweh's perspective it's the "one step back and two steps forward" philosophy.

Unfortunately, if David, Paul, Peter, or Jacob were alive today and we didn't know they were bible characters, most believers would call them arrogant, boastful, deceiving, and a downright mess. The Christian community would never let king David be in leadership because he was a felon convicted of both murder and adultery. Jacob would never be considered any kind of national patriarch from his sketchy past. Peter would be voted off the board of most churches simply because he denied Christ three times and then became a massive hypocrite in Galatians when he sided with Paul's arch enemy, the Circumcision Party. And Paul would without a doubt be disqualified to be an elder almost anywhere due to his clear pride and the fact that he wasn't even married! And then there's Yeshua. That poor guy was so much an outcast in his own city and slandered and falsely accused by virtually everyone including his own brothers that no church on earth would dare to let such a man be a guest speaker just because of all of his bad press and cloud of controversy that follows Him everywhere He went!

But just like all of these men and just like with Phineas, the Father does not judge by what others think, say, or how they view someone. The Father judges by what HE sees. He judges by the intentions of the heart. A person that drives through a red light to save his dying wife in the seat next to him is treated far differently than someone that is just late for work.

The Hebrew word "kanaw" means "zealous, jealous, competitive." It carries with it the idea that no one can come between you and the one you love. What is one thing you can think of right now that you would do whatever it took for? What is something that you would lose your "cool" for like Phineas? For me, it's my wife and children. But a close second is to compromise and not tell the truth. There is a reason why our ministry is called "Passion for Truth." I simply cannot stand lies of any kind, especially false statements, and theology about the word. Sometimes, when I see sin or compromise in myself, I take the javelin of Phineas and try to thrust it through myself to get rid of the sin. Sometimes we are harder on ourselves than we are on others. Is anyone else out there like that?

Can you think of any other times in the bible that we see this zealousness come out of people?

How about when Yeshua turns over the tables in Mathew 21? He could not stand idly by and watch His Father's House be turned into a den of thieves. His jealousy for Truth moved him to do something about it. He could not stand by and watch them rape what He loved so much.

How about the story of the Good Samaritan? There was a man that was robbed, beaten, stripped of his clothing, and left to die on the side of the road. Everyone saw what was happening but no one wanted to intervene. No one had the zeal, jealousy, or competitiveness to say to themselves, *"I am not going to let the enemy do this to this man. He is not going to win this time. I am going to stand in the gap and fight for this man and help him get back on his feet."* No one except a half-breed Samaritan that was hated by the Jewish people raised a finger to help. Not the Levite and not a priest. The one that had the zeal to be Phineas for the moment was someone of no noble blood, no social status, and no rank, just one that was filled with compassion, mercy, and enough zeal to do something about it.

Many more examples could be given such as Peter cutting off the ear of the soldier for trying to take his master, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refusing to go along with the crowd and bow before a false god, Moses killing the Egyptian slave master, etc... When it comes to zeal and standing up for what's right, Yahweh seems to smile and approve, even though the methods of those who do so might be a bit unconventional.

What are you passionate about? What are you zealous for? When you see an injustice that stirs your heart and turns your face red, what do you do about it?

The Bible tells us that it's okay to be angry as long as it is righteous anger. How can we know the difference? Because unrighteous anger focuses on hurting the other person that is committing a crime. Righteous anger's focus is on stopping the crime itself before it hurts more people. Righteous anger focuses on intercession and intervening on behalf of the truth or righteousness itself. Righteous anger does not find pleasure in vengeance or hurting the perpetrator. It finds all its pleasure in stopping injustice and fighting for what's right. When Yeshua turned over the tables in the Temple, I'm sure He not only offended the merchants but perhaps even hurt a few as the tables landed on their feet and in their laps. He did not mean to hurt them or their feelings. But just like Prince Zimri and Princess Cozbi from our Phineas story, they wouldn't have lost their lives if they were not participating in those sins, to begin with.

There is a big difference between vengeance and righteous anger. The Hebrew word for vengeance deals with getting revenge and punishment. Unless we are commanded specifically to do such a thing, "Vengeance/punishment is Mine, says the LORD." But on the other hand, righteous anger comes from above and is His way of stirring us to fight for the weak, the hopeless, the picked on, the widows, and the orphans, and to fight for the Truth.

I will end with a famous quote often attributed to Irish statesman Edmund Burke: ***"The only thing that allows evil to prevail in the world is when good people stand by and do nothing."***

So be zealous for the things of the Spirit! Get in the game and score for Team Yah! Don't let the enemy steal, kill, and destroy. We get only one chance to make a difference in this world. So grab your slingshot and grab your javelin and get jealous for God!

Shalom,
Jim Staley