

**Numbers 25:1 ¶ And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.**

**Numbers 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.**

**Numbers 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.**

Shittim was the last place the Israelites camped before crossing the Jordan River. It was across from Jericho in the plains of Moab—evidently close enough for the men to be tempted into sexual sin by the daughters of Moab (and their Midianite allies as we will see). We learn from a later chapter and from the letter to the church at Pergamos in Revelation that Balaam had evidently reconnected with Balak and suggested that this was how he could get the Israelites to fall out of favor with God and curse themselves.

*Numbers 31:7–16 “And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain...Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. ....And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, **these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.**”*

*Revelation 2:14 “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of **Balaam, who taught Balac** to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

As the Israelites continued to form relationships with the people of Moab, they were encouraged to honor their false god—Baal, also known as Chemosh—and join in the feasts at which they ate the meat that had been sacrificed to these gods. These actions incited the anger of the LORD against Israel (just as Balaam had advised).

I am reminded of the scripture that warns of associating with people of bad character. The CJB words it well:

*1 Corinthians 15:33 “Don’t be fooled. “Bad company ruins good character.””*

**Numbers 25:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.**

**Numbers 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.**

The LORD told Moses to identify and kill all those who had led the rebellion of their fellow Israelites. They were to be executed in broad daylight to appease the LORD’s anger. Moses immediately went to the 70 elders that had been chosen to assist him and told them to execute any of their men that were responsible in accordance with the LORD’s command.

This judgment is in complete accordance with the wisdom of God as recorded in Ecclesiastes.

*Ecclesiastes 8:11 "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."*

**Numbers 25:6 ¶ And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.**

**Numbers 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;**

**Numbers 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.**

**Numbers 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.**

Moses makes record of an Israelite man that brazenly brought a Midianite woman to the door of the tabernacle in the sight of Moses and the whole congregation of Israel. The people were already weeping because many were dying from a plague that was spreading among the people. When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron saw what was happening, he grabbed a javelin and went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust it through the man and the woman through her belly. They were obviously killed in the act of a very intimate embrace if not open intercourse. The action of this priest stopped the plague that was spreading among the people of Israel. Twenty-four thousand people died in the plague.

The NIV commentary posits that they were openly performing a sexual worship ritual to the false god in defiance of the LORD.

**Numbers 25:10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,**

**Numbers 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.**

**Numbers 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:**

**Numbers 25:13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.**

The LORD told Moses that Phinehas was responsible for keeping Him from destroying the people because he was so zealous to protect God's honor among the people. Because of his actions, the LORD had determined to bless him and his seed after him with an everlasting priesthood. The LORD had already chosen the family of Aaron as His priests, so this covenant was a confirmation of that

fact specifically directed to the descendants of Phinehas. It is reiterated that it was because he was zealous for God's honor and for atoning for the sin of Israel.

**Numbers 25:14** Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, *even* that was slain with the Midianitish woman, *was* Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

**Numbers 25:15** And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain *was* Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he *was* head over a people, *and* of a chief house in Midian.

These verses identify the two people that Phinehas killed—Zimri, son of Salu, a prince of one of the leading families of the tribe of Simeon and the Midianite woman Cozbi, daughter of Zur, a leader of one of the leading families in Midian.

**Numbers 25:16** ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**Numbers 25:17** Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

**Numbers 25:18** For they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

The LORD then told Moses to consider the Midianites as their enemies and to destroy them. They had proven themselves to be their enemy by enticing them into the worship of Baal and idolatry by using their women to entice the men, as shown by the actions of Cozbi, the daughter of one of the leaders of Midian that was killed by Phinehas.