

Numbers 21:1-35 Serpents in the Wilderness and War

Serpents and war are two of several methods YeHoVaH used in disciplining His people in the wilderness. **These methods were to bring them into compliance to follow His Instructions and realize their need to trust Him as their source.**

A serpent was used in the garden in Genesis, with Moses and Pharaoh in Exodus, and throughout the Bible. In the last Book of the Bible, Revelation, the serpent is revealed as the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan.

After Aaron's death, because of his rebellion, the Children of Israel continued to face the consequences of their rebellion and experienced YeHoVaH's discipline, grace, mercy, and victory in wars in spite of themselves.

War in the Wilderness

Nu 21:1 And *when* king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took *some* of them prisoners.

In the previous Chapter, the Israelites were forbidden to go through Edom, so they went around Edom. King Arad heard Israel came by the way of the spies. The spies had come 40 years earlier.

This was Israel's second encounter with the Canaanites. Their first encounter was after they rebelled against YeHoVaH after the spies went through the land; then they went out to fight when they had been told not to go (Exodus 14).

Nu 14:40 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

Nu 14:41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

Nu 14:42 Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

Nu 14:43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

Nu 14:44 But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.

Nu 14:45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

This time, Israel vows a vow and keeps it.

Nu 21:2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

Nu 21:3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

Israel kept a vow. There were times when Israel followed Instructions and there were times Israel rebelled against the Instructions of YeHoVaH.

Nu 21:4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

The people went around Edom because they were refused passage through Edom. Discouragement caused the people to sin. The people sinned again.

Nu 21:5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread*, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

Israel did not eat bread for forty years.

Dt 29:5 And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

Dt 29:6 Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I *am* the LORD your God.

Light – **07052** קֶלֶקֶל qeloqel
{kel-o-kale'}

Meaning: 1) contemptible, worthless

Usage: AV - light 1; 1

Bread – **03899** לֶחֶם lechem {lekh'-em}

Meaning: 1) bread, food, grain 1a) bread 1a1) bread 1a2) bread-corn 1b) food (in general)

Usage: AV - bread 237, food 21, meat 18, shewbread + 06440 5, loaves 5, shewbread + 04635 3, shewbread 2, victuals 2, eat 1, feast 1, fruit 1, provision 1; 297

Israel ate manna for 40 years.

Manna – **04478** מָן man {mawn}

Meaning: 1) manna 1a) the bread from Heaven that fed the Israelites for 40 years of wilderness wanderings 1b) means 'What is it?'

Usage: AV - manna 14; 14

The **manna** was called **bread from heaven**.

Ex 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

All the people needed in the wilderness was daily bread, water, and protection from the elements and their enemies. All of which YeHoVaH had provided, but they were not satisfied with His provisions. YeHoVaH responds to the sin of Israel with serpents.

Nu 21:6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Nu 21:7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

The serpents caused the people to recognize they had sinned. What was their sin?
They spoke against YeHoVaH and His servant Moses.

Israel had been in the wilderness forty years and had not encountered any serpents.
Were there not serpents in the wilderness prior to this event?

Israel's only encounter with serpents in the wilderness was YeHoVaH's doing. It is safe to conclude that YeHoVaH kept the serpents away from the people of Israel until He sent them. YeHoVaH sent the serpents amongst the people.

The serpents were in the wilderness all along, but it appears YeHoVaH kept them away from the people unbeknownst to them.

You would think they would have learned by now not to do that!

YeHoVaH could have taken the serpents away as easily as He had sent them, but He added an element, requiring faith on behalf of those who had been bitten.

Nu 21:8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

All those who had been bitten had to do was look upon the serpent. To do so was an act of obedience to YeHoVaH's Instructions. **An act of faith.**

Nu 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Beheld – **05027** נָבַט nabat {naw-bat'}

Meaning: 1) to look, regard 1a) (Piel) to look 1b) (Hiphil) 1b1) to look 1b2) to regard, show regard to, pay attention to, consider 1b3) to look upon, regard, show regard to

Usage: AV - look 36, behold 13, consider 5, regard 4, see 4, respect 3, look down 2, look about 1, look back 1; 69

The people had already acknowledged/confessed they had sinned.

The fiery serpent on a pole was referenced by Yeshua of being lifted up on a cross.

Jn 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

Jn 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Nu 21:10 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth.

Nu 21:11 And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which *is* before Moab, toward the sunrising.

Nu 21:12 From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared.

Nu 21:13 From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which *is* in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon *is* the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

Nu 21:14 Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon,

The book of the wars of the LORD is a lost book.

Lost books of the Bible are being written long after their time by someone who gives their book the same title name. This is why canonization is important to identify the authenticity of Biblical Books.

Nu 21:15 And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.

Nu 21:16 And from thence *they went* to Beer: that *is* the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

YeHoVaH gave the people water in Beer.

Nu 21:17 Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

Insight into how wells were dug at times:

Nu 21:18 The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by *the direction of* the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah:

Staves were staffs.

Staves – **04938** מִשְׁעָנָה mish`enah {mish-ay-naw'} or מִשְׁעָנֶת mish`eneth {mish-eh'-neth}

Meaning: 1) support (of every kind), staff

Usage: AV - staff 11, stave 1; 12

Nu 21:19 And from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth:

Nu 21:20 And from Bamoth *in* the valley, that *is* in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.

Nu 21:21 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying,

Nu 21:22 Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink *of* the waters of the well: *but* we will go along by the king's *high* way, until we be past thy borders.

Nu 21:23 And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

Nu 21:24 And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon *was* strong.

Israel took and inhabited the cities of Sihon, including Heshbon, the city of the king of the Amorites, and all the villages thereof.

Nu 21:25 And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.

Nu 21:26 For Heshbon *was* the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon.

Nu 21:27 Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared:

Nu 21:28 For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed *Ar* of Moab, *and* the lords of the high places of Arnon.

Nu 21:29 Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

Nu 21:30 We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which *reacheth* unto Medeba. Nu 21:31 Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

Israel experienced victory after victory in war.

Nu 21:32 And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that *were* there.

Nu 21:33 And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei.

Nu 21:34 And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

Nu 21:35 So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.