

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NUMBERS 19-21

The ultimate test of a man's character is how he handles power.

There are few men who have gained power and not used it for their own selfish benefit. *This is why when you think of great men Moses rises to the top of the list.*

God gave to Moses tremendous power and authority, yet Moses used that power to glorify God and to serve His people. Numbers 12:3 comments, “the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.”

In the previous few chapters, when the people question Moses and Aaron's authority, God comes to their defense in dramatic ways... Miriam becomes a leper. The ground opens up to swallow Korah and his cronies. Afterwards a ground swell of discontent is thwarted when 14,700 Hebrews die in a plague.

And in case there was any doubt as to who God had set in charge, the Lord Himself caused Aaron's staff to come to life and bud overnight. It was confirmation that God had blessed Aaron as the High Priest and affirmed Moses as the leader.

Yet despite Moses' greatness, nobody is perfect. Not even Moses bats 1000. Tonight we'll see Moses' one big mistake, and how it costs him dearly.

But first, chapter 19 discusses the mysterious ritual of the ashes of the red heifer - a ritual that has puzzled Jewish

rabbis for centuries. Tradition says King Solomon, a man renowned for his wisdom, despaired trying to decipher the meaning of the red heifer. It was quite different from all the other sacrifices...

The sacrifice of the red heifer was given decades after Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai – *where and when he received the other seven sacrifices.*

This sacrifice was offered outside the camp rather than on the altar.

The Priest watched this sacrifice rather than slaughter it like the others.

This was the only sacrifice that made the priest unclean.

And the most significant difference is this sacrifice was a heifer – *a female*. All the other sacrifices were males, but the red heifer was a female sacrifice.

Remember Hebrews 9:13-14 sheds light on all the Old Testament sacrifices *including the red heifer*, “For if the blood of bulls and goats *and the ashes of a heifer*, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Old Covenant sacrifices affected a ceremonial cleaning while the blood of Jesus cleanses us spiritually. But here's the point - all the animal sacrifices spoke of the ultimately sacrifice – the Lamb of God – Jesus.

Yet how does a female cow speak of a man's man, Jesus?

Genesis 1:27 tells us, “So God created man in His own

image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Apparently, God Himself is a combination of the maleness of Adam, and femaleness of Eve. He is a blend of *male strength* and *female sensitivity*. God is a Father with a mother’s heart.

Several times in Isaiah God compares His love for Israel with a mother’s love.

Thus, Jesus is not only bullish, but He’s also nurturing and responsive. I’m not suggesting there’s anything feminine about Jesus. He is a *he-man*, not a *she-man*. But Jesus is man as God originally designed him – an exterior like iron - a heart like velvet. Jesus is the combination of bull and heifer – tough and tender.

This is why whether you need power or intimacy the person to turn to is Jesus.

Verse 1, “Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come.’” The heifer was without blemish. It had no defect or sin. It was never yoked or innocent – this is all just like Jesus.

As I mentioned, Moses learned of the burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering all on Mount Sinai - at the giving of the Law – but this sacrifice comes later than the Law. Jesus’ sacrifice also came later.

“You shall give (the heifer) to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before

him;” Notice it was slaughtered - *not by the High Priest*, as was the other sacrifices – but *before the High Priest*.

Likewise, Jesus was crucified *not by the High Priest*, but *before the High Priest*.

The High Priest Caiaphas sentenced Jesus to death - then pressured Pilate to pull the switch. The chief priests were even in attendance at Calvary – mocking and ridiculing Jesus. The priests observed the sacrifice of Jesus.

And notice too they were outside the camp. This is another peculiarity with the sacrifice of the red heifer. The animal was killed outside the camp - rather than on the bronze altar in the Tabernacle. Jesus was also taken outside the camp and crucified along the road to Damascus, north of Jerusalem, outside the walls.

Verse 4, “and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned.” The heifer was incinerated. It was a black cow - burnt to a crisp.

“And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer.” Three items were burned with the heifer... a stick of cedar wood, a branch of hyssop, a strip of scarlet thread.

Jesus was sacrificed on a piece of wood - a wooden cross.

A branch of hyssop – with its spongy, absorbent leafs – was used to hold the wine that moistened Jesus’ crucified lips, and allowed Him to utter his final words.

And a strip of scarlet thread – which certainly symbolized the scarlet blood that oozed from Jesus' wounds. This was the blood that atoned, or covered, our sin.

Verse 7, “Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening.”

Here's another peculiarity... The red heifer was the only sacrifice that left the High Priest unclean. Again, it foreshadowed his role and guilt at the crucifixion.

Jesus died for the sins of the Jews, but the same Jews accepted responsibility for the crime His sentence represented. I'm certain the High Priest was one of those people who answered Pilate, “His blood be on us and on our children.”

Verse 8, “And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin. And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who sojourns among them.”

The ashes of the red heifer were mixed with water. The water became the vehicle that carried and applied the ashes to what needed to be purified.

The solution was used for years to come in different acts of

purification.

Here're a few examples, where the mixture was utilized, **“He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.”** The 3rd day speaks of Jesus' resurrection. The 7th day was the Sabbath - which speaks of the rest that comes when we put our faith in Jesus. Today we purify ourselves with ashes of the red heifer when we trust our lives to Jesus.

Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. That person shall be cut off from Israel. (Which probably means excommunicated) He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.”

“This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days;” Let's say you walk into a tent where someone just died. It's not your *intent* to sin, but you're *in the tent*.

It's guilt by association. It's a case of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. But according to God its still sin and you're in need of purification.

This is why the blood of Jesus is so vital to us. Before I came to Jesus I was so thoroughly a sinner I wasn't even conscious of certain sins. Some sins I committed willfully. It was my *intent*. But mostly I sinned because I was in the tent

of someone who had died. I was born under Adam's roof – I was born a member of the human family – under the human tent - and as a consequence I inherited his sin nature.

Only Jesus can cleanse me from *wrong intent* and from *being in the wrong tent*.

Notice also, in the tent of a dead man “**every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean.**” Death contaminates even the non-living elements that are in the tent. This was certainly true of Adam's tent. God gave to Adam authority over all nature, so when he died, death spread and affected all that was under his roof. *All nature – from weather to wildlife* - was defiled by the death of Adam.

Verse 16, “**Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.**

And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel.

A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.”

This is how the sacrifice of the red heifer was applied. When a person was deemed unclean, the ashes that had been

gathered and stored were mixed with running water... Then a branch of hyssop was dipped into the solution and the ashes sprinkled on the unclean person. *This applied the sacrifice to the sin.*

And this is a powerful picture of the work of Jesus. When you think about it, *how can the work of a man two thousand years ago affect a person today?*

The answer is in the ritual of the red heifer. Throughout the Bible, *water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit – hyssop is a type of God's Word.* And here's how New Testament purification works... the effects of the cross are carried by the water of the Spirit, and applied to the heart when a person puts their faith in God's Word.

The Spirit and the Word are the vehicles that bring to us the merits of the cross. We're all saved by Jesus' work on the cross, but that salvation has to be received personally through the sprinkling of the water by the Spirit and with the Word.

“But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean.

It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.”

Notice the ritual of the red heifer is called “a perpetual statute”. This was a major distinction for the red heifer - its permanence. All the other sacrifices were repeated continually, but the ashes of a single red heifer lasted for decades.

Only seven heifers were sacrificed in all Hebrew history - one by Moses - one by Ezra - and five after Ezra... Only one heifer was offered during any one lifetime. A truth that also speaks of Jesus - the cross deals with all sin, once and for all.

The Mishnah, a source of Jewish tradition, says there were actually nine red heifers sacrificed. The tenth it says will be burned at the time of the Messiah.

It's interesting too how the ashes of the red heifer figure into future events.

The Bible speaks of a rebuilt Temple in the last days. When the Jews rebuild it, both the Temple and priests, will need to be purified with this mixture of ashes and running water. Thus, there are rabbis today trying to breed an actual red heifer.

Over the years there've been published reports of red heifers being bred in Sweden, Switzerland, Texas, Mississippi, and in Israel. One cow was the result of artificial insemination. Jewish tradition says that in the past when a red heifer was needed it would just appear in the herd. Perhaps man is trying to manipulate through the flesh what God will do supernaturally when the time is right.

Here's a picture from 2001 of Israeli Rabbi Chaim Richman of the Temple Institute in Jerusalem inspecting a red heifer born in Israel. According to Jewish tradition, a heifer does not

qualify if just two of its hairs are not red, so inspections are required. This cow was deemed a kosher candidate. All this talk of a red heifer is significant. It's a definite precursor to the last days event described in the Bible.

There's another interesting theory. During the time of the first temple the red heifer was burned on an altar on the Mount of Olives – east of Jerusalem. Today the Mount of Olives is under Muslim control and would need to be cleansed. But purification comes only from the ashes of the previous heifer, so in recent years archeologists and thrill seekers have tried to find the ashes of the last red heifer.

A former Baptist minister named Vendyl Jones became famous in his search for the ashes of the red heifer. It's been reported that his story inspired Steven Spielberg's blockbuster movie, *Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Vendyl Jones, who is from Texas, not Indiana, has explored the caves at Qumran and has actually found what he believes to be the anointing oil used in the Temple, and some spices that were ingredients in the Temple incense.

It is possible that someone soon may discover the ashes of the red heifer.

Back to the text... 38 years transpire between chapters 19 and 20... and *what happens during those 38 years?* Read the blank line between the chapters...

Nothing happens! The Israelis wander through the wilderness for 38 years.

It reminds me of Pascal Perez the rookie pitcher the Braves called up during one of their winning seasons. Perez got on Interstate 285 headed for the stadium. He drove and drove for hours. He kept circling suburban Atlanta. He had no idea which exit to take. And he arrived at the ballpark late for his scheduled start.

This happened to the Hebrews. They spend 38 years driving around in circles. No progress is made until the old geysers, the exodus generation, died off. It was the longest funeral procession in history. For 38 years 100 people died each day.

Now in chapter 20 the Pepsi Generation takes over – the new generation – but they start out singing the same old song. “Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.” Jewish historian, Josephus, says the Hebrews held an expensive, state funeral in honor of Miriam.

But here they are, right back where they started 38 years earlier. Kadesh was the same border town from which the spies were sent out into the land.

Now they return to the scene of the crime. Here is where the first generation buckled under to unbelief. Rather than have faith they were overcome with fear.

“Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! Why have you

brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink." *And speaking of figs...*

Notice, the fig leaf doesn't fall too far from the tree. Go figure!

The Pepsi Generation has been drinking pickle juice and vinegar. They need a little Dr. Pepper – some pep and initiative - instead they're drinking Mellow Yellow. They're as yellow, and fearful, and unwilling to trust the Lord as their parents.

They sound just like the skeptics that died in the wilderness. Rather than have faith, they accuse God of unfaithfulness. They've learned absolutely nada.

Remember in Exodus 17 the exact same situation occurred shortly after the first generation left Egypt. They came to a place that had no water supply, and the people began to complain to Moses. In response, God told Moses to strike a rock.

And a miracle occurred. Life-sustaining H₂O gushed out of a lifeless rock.

But rather than trust God to do what He's done before the people complain.

Imagine Moses' anger and frustration now. *"Here we go again! Haven't you stubborn sinners learned anything in 38 years? Don't you know that God takes care of His people?"* Moses was steamed! His patience was wearing thin.

“So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." This is even more amazing than Israel's doubt – despite their unbelief God shows them mercy.

God does for the Generation-Xers the same as He did for the Baby Boomers. He shows the same love and grace. In verse 8, God tells Moses to speak to the rock, and water will flow out to quench their thirst. *But here's what Moses does...*

Verse 9, “So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels!" Hear the anger and frustration in Moses' voice. He is ticked off with these people. “Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.”

In Exodus 17 God told Moses to take his shepherd's staff and strike the rock. He did and water erupted. This time God tells Moses not to strike the rock, but to speak to the rock. Instead Moses takes his rod and in his anger smacks it twice.

But notice what happens...

Even though Moses disobeys, God refuses to allow an impulsive and ill-tempered pastor to rob His people of a blessing. God will deal with Moses later, but for the moment He blesses His people. Water pours from the rock.

And this is often the case... At times God blesses a church not because of the leader, but in spite of him. Just because water is flowing, and miracles are gushing doesn't mean God is validating the minister's faithfulness. God may just want to bless His people. He'll deal with the pastor later. That's what He does here...

Verse 12 tells us, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Moses made a costly mistake. And Moses' mistake is perhaps the Christian's leaders' greatest failure... *He misrepresented God.* Moses comes out screaming at the Hebrews - calling them "rebels". Moses vented 38 years of frustration on these people.

That was not God's attitude at all. God loved these people. God was starting over and was prepared to be as patient with the new generation as he had with their parents. God told Moses to speak to the rock, instead Moses struck it!

Psalm 106:32-33 provides insight into this episode, "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips." Evidently, Moses sinned with his lips. God empathized with his anger, but He

expected Moses to show restraint. Moses was to speak for God - not vent his own frustrations.

Without realizing it Moses marred a beautiful picture God was painting for future generations – *even for us*. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness, and says, “**that Rock was Christ**”. The rock was a symbol of Jesus.

Jesus needed to be struck. The crucifixion was necessary for man to be saved, *but how many times did Jesus need to be struck?* Only once! He died once, for all for the remission of sin. Just before He breathed His last, Jesus uttered the words, “**It is finished.**” All that needed to be done was done. His work was totally sufficient.

Today, if you want to be forgiven all you have to do is speak to the Rock.

But here is where Moses spoiled the symbolism. He marred the picture. In essence, Moses took crayons and colored all over a Rembrandt or a Picasso.

Moses misrepresented God, and it cost him severely. And because of his disobedience Moses was excluded from entering the Promised Land. Moses will take the Hebrews to the border, but it'll be Joshua who'll lead them in.

Moses' punishment was a profound lesson for the Hebrews. Nobody was exempt from doing God's will, not even Moses. In fact, James 3:1 tells us, “**My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**” God holds the leader and teacher to an even higher standard.

At times ministry is full of frustration. Too often people aren't receptive, or don't live up to the truth they're given. People are apathetic and don't want to serve.

And we're tempted to lose our patience. We can blow our lid, come unglued in the name of Jesus. We can lose our composure – and get angry and resentful toward the same people God loves, and that we've been called to serve. A spiritual leader must be careful. Misrepresenting God is a serious offence.

My job is not to express my opinion - it's to represent God's eternal truth... To be a faithful ambassador for Jesus it's my job to represent heaven not me...

And here we discover God had enormous patience. His love, and mercy, and grace are boundless... When a leader clouds that truth God deals with the leader.

One final thought, though Moses' anger marred God's symbolism, even in his disobedience another picture was established. Moses represents the Law, and in the end the Law could not take the people into the Promised Land. That job was left to a man named Yeshua, or Joshua. *Jesus* and *Joshua* are the same name.

The Law leaves us lost and dead in the wilderness. It's Jesus who leads us into God's bounty. Even in his moment of failure Moses provides a lesson for all time.

Verse 13, **“This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.”**

The Hebrew word translated “Meribah” means “contention”.

“Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom.” The Edomites were the descendents of Esau, the brother of Jacob or Israel.

Moses figured since they were relatives Edom would offer safe passage.

"Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us, how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. When we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.'" Apparently, God wanted Israel to enter Canaan by crossing over the Jordan River north of the Dead Sea. Easiest and quickest access to that point of entry was through the borders of Edom.

“Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword." He not only refuses Moses’ request, but threatens a military reprisal. “So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." Then he said, "You shall not pass through."

So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.” Moses ended up circling south around the territory of Edom.

Verse 22, “Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: “Aaron shall be gathered to his people, Notice, the wording that describes Aaron’s death – he’s not buried in the ground, or stuffed in a tomb, but he’s “gathered to his people”.

Here’s an inference to the afterlife. When we die we go to a populated place.

“For (Aaron) shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.”

Evidently, Aaron somehow was a party to Moses’ failure.

Verse 25, “Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there.” So Moses did just as the LORD commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.”

This was a strategic event in the life of the nation. This was the first transition of priestly power, and the people needed to see that the institutions God established were greater than

any one individual. Access to God would not die out with Aaron.

Verse 28, “Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.”

After Aaron dies, Moses marches the nation northward. And the Israelites encounter the first of many confrontations they’ll have with the Canaanites.

Chapter 21, “The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim, then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. So Israel made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.”

And the LORD listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of that place was called Hormah.” The Hebrew word “Hormah” means “*utter destruction*”.

Verse 4, “Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.” To avoid conflict with Edom Moses took a detour south. Their back tracking over 100 miles, and the Israelites became discouraged. They seemed to be *regressing* rather than *progressing*... And again they start to grumble...

“And the people spoke against God and against Moses:

"Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." Murmuring about the manna...

"So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." The idea of the snakes being "fiery" may have referred to their color – perhaps they were red or a copper color. It also could've spoken of their bite. Their venom caused a burning, fiery sensation.

Whatever it was, these snakes carried lethal venom. People were dying.

"Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people." Again he intercedes...

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." This is a strange remedy. Make a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and anyone who looks at it will be healed.

In John 3:14-15 Jesus provides some interesting commentary on this episode, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus Himself saw in these instructions a portrait of His work upon the cross.

But here the symbolism needs an explanation... In Scripture *bronze* is usually a symbol for judgment. The *serpent* is symbolic for sin and Satan – the venom of sin now flows through the spiritual veins of every man, and produces death.

So why would Jesus, be represented by a serpent – a symbol of sin?

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us Jesus was made sin for us. Jesus took possession of our sin, and died in our place. On the cross of Christ God judged sin and Satan.

A bronze serpent is a judged serpent. His venom has been neutralized.

Now all a dying man needs to do to be healed of the venom of sin – is what the Hebrews did to be healed of the viper's poison... Just look with faith to where sin has been judged. In our case today we need to look to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Salvation comes to us as it came to the Hebrews not by doing anything to earn our healing, but by simply looking on with faith. It's not by *doing*, but by *looking*...

Verse 10, “Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth. And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which is east of Moab, toward the sunrise.” (or the east). The mountains of Moab are east of the Dead Sea. “From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered.

From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border

of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.” The Arnon was a river or brook that brought water out of the Moab Mountains and into the Dead Sea.

Verse 14, “Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD: “Waheb in Suphah, the brooks of the Arnon, and the slope of the brooks that reaches to the dwelling of Ar, and lies on the border of Moab.” Notice the source that’s quoted, “the Book of the Wars of the LORD”. This is one of the lost books of Israel.

In fact the Bible references several books that we no longer possess...

Joshua 10:13 speaks of the *Book of Jasher*.

The *Annals of Solomon* are mentioned in 1Kings 14:19.

The *Annals of the History of the Kings of Israel* appear in the same verse.

And we find in 1Kings 14:29 the *Annals of the History of the Kings of Judah*.

Notice, though the book mentioned here, “the Book of the Wars of the LORD”. If you’re a pacifist, the title alone might make you squirm. But evidently, some battles are the Lord’s wars. Just wars are apparently within the will of God.

Verse 16, “From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

Notice they drank water at Beer – not beer at Beer.

Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! All of you

sing to it - the well the leaders sank, dug by the nation's nobles, by the lawgiver, with their staves."

And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah, from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland." Mount Pisgah is west of the Dead Sea. It rises 2600 feet above sea level. It's also called *Nebo*.

Just before Moses dies God will take him to the top of Mount Pisgah, and give him a view of the Promised Land. He sees the land, but he never enters.

Verse 21, "Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells; but we will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." The King's Highway ran east of the Dead Sea through what is today, the country of Jordan. It's still a passable road.

Sihon ruled over a tribe of Amorites that lived east of the Jordan. His people were camped in the path of the Israelites, and Moses tries to be nice...

He asked for safe passage... "But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel.

Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of

Ammon was fortified.” The Jabbok was a tributary that flowed into the Jordan River 25 miles north of the Dead Sea. Moses and Israel now have control of the territory they’ll use to stage their crossing of the Jordan.

“So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages. For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon.” Moses routed Sihon and the Amorites.

“Therefore those who speak in proverbs say: "Come to Heshbon, let it be built; let the city of Sihon be repaired. "For fire went out from Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it consumed Ar of Moab, the lords of the heights of the Arnon. Woe to you, Moab! You have perished, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, to Sihon king of the Amorites. "But we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon. Then we laid waste as far as Nophah, which reaches to Medeba." Sihon conquered Heshbon, but Israel conquered Sihon. “Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.”

Verse 32, “Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.” Hey, Moses is suddenly on a roll!

“And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan.” Bashan was an area further east – deeper into Jordan. “So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Do

not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land."

God is blessing...

The Israelites are on a winning streak. They're whipping every army they face. They're gaining momentum, and strength, and confidence, and experience.

And they're also putting fear in an observer name Balak, king of the Moabites. Balak is watching the Israelites and taking note of their successes - and he's growing concerned. His own country of Moab may be their next victim.

Balak wants to stop Israel, so he pulls out his secret weapon...