

“Vengeance on Midian”

Numbers Chapter 31

Our 1st Response is Forgiveness Not Vengeance

Romans 12:17-21 “**Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **Never take your own revenge,** beloved, but **leave room for the wrath of God,** for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. “**BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.**” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Hebrews 10:30-36 “For we know Him who said, “**VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.**” And again, “**THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.**” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. **Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.** For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”

Leviticus 19:18 “**You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge** against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.” **In the Old Testament**

The Lord is a Lord of Vengeance

Deuteronomy 32:35-36 “**Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,** In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them. For **the LORD will vindicate His people,** And will have compassion on His servants, When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.”

Psalms 94:1-2 “O LORD, **God of vengeance,** God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth, Render recompense to the proud.”

Isaiah 34:8 “For **the LORD has a day of vengeance,** A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.”

Sometimes He will use His People

Psalms 149:4-9 “For **the LORD takes pleasure in His people;** He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation. Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, **To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones.** Praise the LORD!”

Chapter 31 God uses Israel to take vengeance on Midian for the Sin at Peor where 24000 of Israel died when Midian seduced Israel with their women. Something Balaam taught them to weaken Israel. In Numbers 25:17-18 God told Moses to “Vex” Midian; to take vengeance. Yet it wasn’t immediate. The Lord controls vengeance and the timing of it.

This is a live training skirmish for when Israel enters Canaan engages in battle to drive out the inhabitants. We will see these battles in the Book of Joshua.

1) The Command, The Plan, The Battle, The Victory vs 1-11

Num 31:1

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 31:2

“Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people.”

- The Lord gives the instruction for vengeance.
 - When the Lord is governing vengeance it is a good thing. It is when we take vengeance in our own hands that it becomes an evil thing.
 - Governments are entrusted by God to enact vengeance on evil doers. So when we are called to jury duty, we are called up to the place to participate with God’s system of vengeance.
 - Romans 13:1-4 “**Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.** For **there is no authority except from God,** and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of

authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil."

- For Moses this will be his last official act as leader in Israel.

Num 31:3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD'S vengeance on Midian.

Num 31:4 "A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war."

Num 31:5 So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

- We do not get a number of Midianites they will do battle with. At the second half of this chapter we see the spoils are quite a large number. In **Judges 8:10**, the Midianites rise up again with 135,000. God routed them with Gideon's 300.
- Moses follows the Lord's instruction of recruiting 1000 from each tribe. 12000 total. Even though we know there is numbered over 600,000 fighting men (Numbers 26)
- Whatever the number, it has been consistent that God's people are outnumbered but unmatched for God is with them.
- Vengeance is the Lord's. The Victory is the Lord's.
 - We will see in the book of Joshua that every victory is won when they first seek and submit to God.
 - We will also see that when they fail, it is after they first fail to seek and submit to God.
 - If Vengeance is the Lord's we must be very careful to submit to His plan and not lean to our own understanding.

Num 31:6 Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand.

- It is significant that God wants a priest to lead them in war not a General. It is not a victory based upon man's wisdom.
- These tangible physical battles are Spiritual in their origin.
 - **Ephesians 6:12** "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."
 - **Mark 8:33** Jesus rebuking Peter "But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.""
 - Jesus engaged in physical rebukes (battles) but he realized the spiritual origin.
- Also in front are the holy vessels and trumpets. After Israel crosses the Jordan, they take the Ark of the Covenant into battles. Here we are not sure that it was the Ark of the Covenant.

Num 31:7 So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male.

Num 31:8 They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest* of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

- The Victory is won. They killed all the male among them. They killed the 5 kings they had.
 - Zur was the father of Cozbi the Midianite woman who was slain at Peor by Phinehas.
 - Balaam was the Prophet who was hired to curse Israel but couldn't. He had said "Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!" **Numbers 23:10** Yet he dies the death of the unrighteous.

Num 31:9 The sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods they plundered.

Num 31:10 Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their camps with fire.

Num 31:11 They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of beast.

- Israel won, took the women, children, livestock, and goods. And they burned the cities.

Num 31:12 **2) The De-Briefing** vs 12-24

They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho.

Num 31:13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp.

Num 31:14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.

Num 31:15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?"

Num 31:16 "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Num 31:17 "Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately.

Num 31:18 "But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves.

- Moses became angry when he saw that the army spared the women of the Midianites.
- The reason was that the people did not see that this was the very source of weakness by which they were lured into idolatry. The Israelite either simply didn't learn their lesson or they thought too highly of themselves that they were now beyond the temptation.
- Here we have a very difficult order for you and me to grasp. Kill every woman who has known a man intimately and every male child.
 - The women would have been indoctrinated in the worship of their god and would also have known the ability to seduce Israel away from God.
 - The male boys in ancient culture would know it was their duty to avenge their fathers once they had grown
 - The young girls it is assumed that they would be trained to love the Lord the God of Israel.

Num 31:19 "And you, camp outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day.

Num 31:20 "You shall purify for yourselves every garment and every article of leather and all the work of goats' *hair*, and all articles of wood."

Num 31:21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to battle, "This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded Moses:

Num 31:22 only the gold and the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin and the lead,

Num 31:23 everything that can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean, but it shall be purified with water for impurity. But whatever cannot stand the fire you shall pass through the water.

Num 31:24 "And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may enter the camp."

- Everything from the battle needed to be purified.
 - Anyone who has killed or touched a dead person (Numbers 19:11)
 - Even Clothing; Garments, Leather, Goats Hair, Wood - Washed w/ Watering
 - Items brought back; Gold, Silver, Bronze, Iron, and Tin are purified by fire.
- After battles we engage in at work or on the streets many times we too need to be de-briefed. More so for the sake of purifying our minds.
 - **Ephesians 5:26** " *That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*"

Num 31:25 **3) The Spoils** vs 25-54

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 31:26 "You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' *households* of the congregation take a count of the booty that was captured, both of man and of animal;

Num 31:27 and divide the booty between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation.

- The spoils of war were divided between two groups.
 - The soldiers - this is customary
 - The congregation who stayed behind - to build solidarity and to prevent soldiers to become looters.

Num 31:28 "Levy a tax for the LORD from the men of war who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the persons and of the cattle and of the donkeys and of the sheep;

Num 31:29 take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the LORD.

Num 31:30 "From the sons of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys and of the sheep, from all the animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

- From the spoils given to the two groups a portion was taken from them and given to the Lord.
- It is interesting that this was not taken from the booty first then distributed to the two groups. The Lord wants the people to give to the Lord. That they participate in the process of recognizing the bounty from the Lord's Victory.

Num 31:31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Num 31:32 Now the booty that remained from the spoil which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep,

Num 31:33 and 72,000 cattle,

Num 31:34 and 61,000 donkeys,

Num 31:35 and of human beings, of the women who had not known man intimately, all the persons were 32,000.

Num 31:36 The half, the portion of those who went out to war, was *as follows*: the number of sheep was 337,500,

Num 31:37 and the LORD'S levy of the sheep was 675;

Num 31:38 and the cattle were 36,000, from which the LORD'S levy was 72;

Num 31:39 and the donkeys were 30,500, from which the LORD'S levy was 61;

Num 31:40 and the human beings were 16,000, from whom the LORD'S levy was 32 persons.

Num 31:41 Moses gave the levy *which was* the LORD'S offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Num 31:42 As for the sons of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war—

Num 31:43 now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep,

Num 31:44 and 36,000 cattle,

Num 31:45 and 30,500 donkeys,

Num 31:46 and the human beings were 16,000—

Num 31:47 and from the sons of Israel's half, Moses took one drawn out of every fifty, both of man and of animals, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Num 31:48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, approached Moses,

Num 31:49 and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a census of men of war who are in our

charge, and no man of us is missing.

- The captains came to Moses after taking a count of the returning soldiers.
- They report to Moses that NOT A ONE was missing.
- It was obvious to all that this skirmish was a DIVINE MIRACLE. This training skirmish is more about Israel learning that the Battle is the Lord's rather than learning the *Art of War*.

Num 31:50 "So we have brought as an offering to the LORD what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

Num 31:51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of wrought articles.

Num 31:52 All the gold of the offering which they offered up to the LORD, from the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels.

Num 31:53 The men of war had taken booty, every man for himself.

Num 31:54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD.

- Out of realizing the mighty victory the captains took up an offering above the tax that was previously given to the Lord.
- Moses took this 16750 shekels and made a memorial from it.
- Imagine how many times the people in battle needed a memorial to remind them that God intervenes in our struggles.
- Our internal struggle is to maintain the knowledge that God intervenes for us. When He does, build a memorial in your heart and mind that will remind you of His mighty hand when you encounter again a battle.

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