

## Torah 101-Balak Portion

### I. ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S STUDY QUESTIONS (from Chukkat)

#### Prayer for Blessing the Scriptures

Barchu et-Yahweh hamvorach  
(*Cong.* Baruch Yahweh hamvorach lay-oh-lam va-ed)  
Baruch Yahweh hamvorach lay-oh-lam va-ed  
Baruch ata Yah-weh, Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-Olam  
Asher bachar banu michol ha-ah-meem  
Ve-nah-tan lanu et-torah tow  
Baruch ata Yah-weh no-tayn ha-Torah (ve'breet chah-dash-ah)

#### ALL READ IN UNISON IN ENGLISH:

Bless Yahweh, Who is to be blessed  
Blessed is Yahweh, Who is to be blessed forever and ever  
Blessed are You, Yahweh our Elohim, King of the Universe,  
Who chose us from all the peoples and gave to us the Torah (and the Renewed Covenant Scriptures)

#### 1) Question for Numbers 19:

How does one phrase in Numbers 19 inform us on one reason why the Temple cannot have been located where the Dome of the Rock is today?

MAYIM CHAYIM (19:17) = living water...in this case from the sense that water is flowing freely and not stored. Y'shua is also drawing on this imagery when he talks about "living waters" in contrast with the WELL water or still water of the Samaritan woman. That is in part why he says in Yochanan 4: Y'shua answered and said to her, "All who drink from these waters will thirst again. But everyone who drinks from the waters that I give to him will not thirst forever. But those waters that I give to him will become in him a spring of water that will spring up into life that is eternal." (verses 13-14-AENT)

Another important point is that the Temple to Abba YHWH must be located where the flow of the Gihon Spring (Hezekiah's Tunnel) ends and a shaft can bring the water up for use. This command, specifying LIVING WATER, means specifically flowing spring water as opposed to water stored in cisterns or reservoirs. The "Temple mount" as most know it today is in the opposite direction from the Gihon Spring and there isn't another water supply within 5 miles of Jerusalem.

2) **Question for Numbers 20:**

Does Miriam die fully forgiven and restored to her former status after having been rebuked by YHWH and stricken with leprosy in Numbers 12? Why or why not?

I believe she does die fully forgiven and restored to her former high status, in large degree because of this reference to her given later...

<sup>4</sup> "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam. (Micah 6:4 NAU)

This is in stark contrast to the way she is referred to in Deuteronomy 24:9, where what happened to her is used to warn Israel against rebellion. So it seems then by Micah's day, the Ruach haKodesh prompted him to view Miriam as worthy of being mentioned as an example of purity and piety, in the same breath as Moshe and Aaron.

3) **Question for Numbers 21:**

Why would Abba YHWH command the Israelites to make a graven image of a copper snake when He has forbidden just such an act elsewhere?

The snake image, once commanded by Abba YHWH in this one instance, is not an act of paganism. Rather it is a way to visually teach the Israelites a stark lesson. Earlier, in the Korach rebellion, Abba YHWH clearly indicated His favor rested with Moshe and with Aaron by having Aaron's staff bloom and bud. In spite of that clear miracle though Israel continued to rebel, so snakes were sent to punish them.

The reason the copper snake was built was as a memorial to that event, and along with that memory would be linked the fact that those who obeyed Abba YHWH were healed of the poison from those snakes. And like Aaron's staff, the copper snake was stored for posterity to be a perpetual lesson (2 Kings 18:1-4) but it later was destroyed by Hezekiah because it had become a pagan corruption.

4) **Haftorah Question of the Week:** Judges 11:1-40

Was Jephtah's daughter really sacrificed?

This Haftorah portion from Judges 11:1-40 deals with one of the most difficult to understand occasions in the entire Tanakh. Reading literally it seems that Jephtah

sacrifices his daughter to fulfill a vow to Abba YHWH, as compensation for Abba YHWH giving him victory in war.

How can this be? Don't we have the example of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac being prevented by YHWH for the express reason of showing Abba YHWH's superiority to false gods that require this to give their pagan subjects victory? How then could such an evil thing be a "reward" to Abba YHWH?

It seems really curious that YHWH would want to destroy those who worship Molech for putting their children into flames and yet Jephthah felt required to do the same thing. What is going on here?

Some will say this proves the barbarity of Israel during the time of the Judges when "everyone did what was right in their eyes". Surely this was true, however, that apostasy seemed to coincide with worshipping false gods and not with respect to Abba YHWH's worship. So that answer, at best, is not complete.

Others will suggest that Jephthah was obviously wrong to do this horrible thing and that as punishment his daughter his honored for four days each year and he dies an ignominious death about 6 years later. Emotionally satisfying to be sure, but there are other problems.

For example, the daughter doesn't object to being killed but only asks for two months reprieve. For another, no one around Jephthah—he made the vow in front of witnesses—has seen fit to contradict him. Those facts would again suggest that what Jephthah did was normal in his time, leading back to the first explanation. However, where do we get any hint that human sacrifice was an option for Israel prior to the time of the Judges? The answer, I believe, is nowhere! Even at the height of their apostasy—when worshipping the golden calf—no humans were sacrificed but they simply did "normal" burnt offerings to it. The Israelites also hated pagan cults that engaged in this practice, both before and after this time period. We should also look at this:

"You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 'I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. 'If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech. (Leviticus 20:2-5 NAU)

So again, why would Jephtah think this would be okay? The text is clear “he fulfilled his vow”, but perhaps HOW Jephtah fulfilled it has been misunderstood. Did he really slit his daughter’s throat and roast her corpse on a fire?

Before answering, we need to look a bit more deeply at the rashness of this vow. Here is what Biblical commentator Adam Clarke had to say about this aspect:

[The vow] must have been the vow of a heathen, or a madman. If a dog had met him, this could not have been made a burnt-offering; and if his neighbor or friend's wife, son, or daughter, &c., had been returning from a visit to his family, his vow gave him no right over them. Besides, human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord; and this was one of the grand reasons why God drove out the Canaanites, &c., because they offered their sons and daughters to Molech in the fire, i.e., made burnt-offerings of them, as is generally supposed.-Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary

So whatever fate actually happens to Jephtah’s daughter, whether she is put into His service or killed, Jephtah could not have enforced his will on just about anyone else who came out of his door. So if the high priest was visiting his house are we really going to believe Jephtah would make him a burnt offering? And as Clarke rightly points out, not all animals were fit for sacrifice either, so if a runaway pig happened to dash through Jephtah’s open house and then out his door to see him, are we to expect a BLT party and pork rinds for all with Abba YHWH also gratefully receiving the pig?

It’s for these reasons and some others, that I question the idea of Jephtah’s daughter as a sacrifice. The people in the time of the Judges are not of the best character, to be sure, but I don’t see this level apostasy being applied to YHWH worship, only to pagan worship and by forsaking YHWH. So, there must be another answer. I believe the great scholar E.W. Bullinger hit on that answer:

The Hebrew prefix "ו" that is translated in the above passage as "and" is often used as a disjunctive, and means "or", when there is a second proposition. Indeed this rendering is suggested in the margin of the A.V. [Authorized Version =KJV]

Bullinger goes on to give examples from the Bible where the same word has been translated as "or". According to him, the right translation of this passage is: "whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, **or** I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

Jephtah's daughter, being the first that came out of the house, was thus, according to Bullinger, dedicated to Abba YHWH. He also says:

"In any case, it should have been unlawful, and repugnant to Yahweh, to offer a human being to Him as a burnt-offering, for His acceptance. Such offerings were common to heathen nations at that time, but it is noteworthy that Israel stands out among them with this great peculiarity, that human sacrifices were unknown in Israel."- Wikipedia and E.W. Bullinger, "Did Jephthah Really Sacrifice His Daughter? An Analysis of Judges 11:31"

In analyzing this text further, I also agree with Adam Clarke who said:

The translation of which [Judges 11:31], according to the most accurate Hebrew scholars, is this: I will consecrate it to the Lord, or I will offer it for a burnt-offering; that is, "If it be a thing fit for a burnt-offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to him." That conditions of this kind must have been implied in the vow, is evident enough.

So basically the first thing which is SUITABLE as a burnt offering according to Torah would be offered but if NOT it would be given to Abba YHWH's service (as a human, like Samson and Yochanan the Immerser are dedicated to Abba YHWH). And if it was a pig or a dog or something that could not go on the altar, it wouldn't count. Jephthah would simply wait for the next creature that was kosher to present itself.

But in the end this is still a rash vow, if for no other reason that Jephthah could not enforce his will on everyone; only perhaps his family and servants could be off-loaded to Abba YHWH's service, not anyone else. Or perhaps his exuberance got the better of him, thinking he was cornered (which he was) that such was the only way to get out alive. Yet I still say Jephthah had to base his hopes for deliverance on the Torah rather than away from it. If he intended to sacrifice possibly his daughter, he would ask that of Molech who was the false god literally next door. To ask it of Abba YHWH was simply a non-starter.

So the vow, while not perfect and not from the most righteous place, is nevertheless not an invitation to barbarity.

## II. QUESTIONS FOR THIS TORAH PORTION (Balak)

### Please NOTE:

For clarity and time constraints, if I elect to not read the whole parsha (which is the case this week) I may still ask questions relating to the portions I did not read!

#### 5) Question for Numbers 22:

Someone in this chapter has a name that may be connected to an event leading to the destruction of the Second Temple. Who is it and what does their name mean?

#### 6) Question for Numbers 23:

Numbers 23:19 says “YHWH is not a man that He should lie, nor a Son of Man, that He should change His mind”. How do we reconcile this line with the idea that Y’shua, who is the Son of Man, is also YHWH, when Abba YHWH is NOT a Son of Man?

#### 7) Question for Numbers 24:1-25:9:

Is there a Hebrew Tanakh prophetic term for the Romans, and if so, what is it?

#### 8) Haftorah Question of the Week: Micah 5:6-6:8

How might the Hebrew approach of reading this portion all the way through lead to a different interpretation than a more Christian style of just quoting the last line which may suit their purposes?

#### 9) Renewed Covenant Commentary: 2 Peter 2:1-22

### **2 Peter 2:4**

**7)** This verse speaks of judgment on fallen angels, the Aramaic has them in “*fiery regions,*” the Greek inserts “*tartaroo,*” derived from Tartarus. In 400 BC Plato wrote that souls were judged after death and those who received punishment were sent to Tartarus, a mythical, deep, dark, underworld pit or abyss, a gloomy place and dungeon of torment, where god-sized suffering awaits “sinners.” A Greek deity called Zeus was known to toss nasty villains into Tartarus. Calling Y’shua by a name that sounds very close to calling on Zeus (Jesus) helped morph mythological ideas about hell into Christian culture. Many Christian theologians literally believe that “Tartarus answers to Gehenna of the Jews” which is far from the truth. Please see footnote [Mar\\_9:47](#).

**8)** *B’shishlata d’amtana* (chains of darkness) is carried in Greek and English translations. Chains is a metaphor for captivity, they were used to bind captives

and manage slaves, and therefore used to express judgment, “*all her great men were put in chains*” ([Nah 3:10](#)). This kind of “darkness” is a metaphor for being low, troubled, afflicted or anguished. [Psa 88:6](#) “*You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.*” Hebrew Scripture uses chains and darkness to express doom and gloom, separation for YHWH’s love and joy. However, mythology, Tartarus and Hades is “spiritual darkness,” dark and demonic teachings. YHWH says, “*For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but YHWH shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you*” ([Isa 60:2](#)). This is expressly talking about calling the nations (Gentiles) out of worldly paganism, “*And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising*” ([Isa 60:3](#)). Mashiyach brings people out of spiritual darkness, yet mythology is rampant in Christian Bibles and culture. Many Christians believe that “when Jesus taught on earth He taught more about Hell than Heaven.” See footnote [Luk 12:5](#).

**9)** *Anguish* or “*chiyl*” in Aramaic and Hebrew, not “torture” as some translations use. YHWH does not torture either these fallen angels or “fallen people.” He brings “*chiyl*” (anguish, sorrow) upon unrighteousness. Please see [Jer 50:43](#); [Mic 4:9](#).

**2 Peter 2:5**

**10)** Or, age.

**2 Peter 2:15**

**11)** *Balaam the son of Beor* professed himself a prophet, teacher and authority on YHWH, but he had his own religious agenda and so was slain with an Israelite sword ([Jos 13:22](#)).

**2 Peter 2:21**

**12)** To have “*known the way of righteousness*” means that the Set Apart Commandment was once living inside but the person turned away from Mashiyach and went back to worldly living where transgression and rebellion is an acceptable lifestyle. Please see footnote on [Rom 11:29](#).