

NUMBERS 25:1 Israel stayed in Shittim; and the people began to play the prostitute with the daughters of Moab;

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While Israel abode in Shittim the people commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, Num 25:1. They become idolaters, Num 25:2. The anger of the Lord is kindled against them, and he commands the ringleaders to be hanged, Num 25:3, Num 25:4. Moses causes the judges to slay the transgressors, Num 25:5. Zimri, one of the Israelitish princes of the tribe of Simeon, brings a Midianitish princess, named Cozbi, into his tent, while the people are deploring their iniquity before the tabernacle, Num 25:6. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, incensed by this insult to the laws and worship of God, runs after them and pierces them both with a javelin, Num 25:7, Num 25:8. Twenty-four thousand die of the plague, sent as a punishment for their iniquity, Num 25:9. The Lord grants to Phinehas a covenant of peace and an everlasting priesthood, Num 25:10-13. The name and quality of the Israelitish man and Midianitish woman, Num 25:14, Num 25:15. God commands the Israelites to vex and smite the Midianites, who had seduced them to the worship of Baal-peor, Num 25:16-18.

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NUMBERS 25:2 for they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods. The people ate and bowed down to their gods.

NUMBERS 25:3 Israel joined himself to Baal Peor. the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel.

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#### Verse 3

Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor - The same as the Priapus of the Romans, and worshipped with the same obscene rites as we have frequently had occasion to remark.

The joining to Baal-peor, mentioned here, was probably what St. Paul had in view when he said, 2Cor 6:14 : Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. And this joining, though done even in a matrimonial way, was nevertheless fornication, (see Rev 2:14), as no marriage between an Israelite and a Midianite could be legitimate, according to the law of God. See the propositions at the close of the preceding chapter Num 24:25 (note).

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NUMBERS 25:4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up to the LORD before the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."

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#### Verse 4

Take all the heads of the people, etc. - Meaning the chiefs of those who had transgressed; as if he had said, "Assemble the chiefs and judges, institute an inquiry concerning the transgressors, and hang them who shall be found guilty before the Lord, as a matter required by his justice." Against the sun - in the most public manner, and in daylight. Dr. Kennicott has remarked that the Samaritan and Hebrew texts must be both taken together, to make the sense here complete: And the Lord said

unto Moses, Speak unto all the heads of the people; And Let Them Slay The Men That Were Joined To Baal-Peor; and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, etc.

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NUMBERS 25:5 Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Everyone kill his men who have joined themselves to Baal Peor."

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Verse 5

Slay ye every one his men - In the different departments where you preside over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, slay all the culprits that shall be found.

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NUMBERS 25:6 Behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

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Verse 6

One of the children of Israel - Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief family in the tribe of Simeon, Num 25:14, brought a Midianitish woman, Cozbi, daughter of Zur, head over a people of one of the chief families in Midian, Num 25:15. The condition of these two persons plainly proves it to have been a matrimonial alliance, the one was a prince, the other a princess; therefore I must conclude that fornication or whoredom, in the common sense of the word, was not practiced on this occasion. The matter was bad enough, as the marriage was in flat opposition to the law of God; and we need not make it worse by representing the woman as a common prostitute, as the Vulgate and several others have done. In such a case this is absolutely inadmissible. Josephus positively says that Zimri had married Cozbi, Antiq., 1. iv., cap. 6; and if he had not said so, still the thing is nearly self-evident. See Num 24:25 (note).

The children of Israel, who were weeping - This aggravated the crime, because the people were then in a state of great humiliation, because of the late impure and illegal transactions.

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NUMBERS 25:7 When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand.

NUMBERS 25:8 He went after the man of Israel into the pavilion, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

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Verse 8

Thrust both of them through - Inspired undoubtedly by the Spirit of the God of justice to do this act, which can never be a precedent on any common occasion. An act something similar occurs in our own history. In 1381, in the minority of Richard II., a most formidable insurrection took place in Kent

and Essex; about 100,000 men, chiefly under the direction of Wat Tyler, seized on London, massacred multitudes of innocent people, and were proceeding to the greatest enormities, when the king requiring a conference in Smithfield with the rebel leader, Sir William Walworth, then mayor of London, provoked at the insolence with which Tyler behaved to his sovereign, knocked him off his horse with his mace, after which he was instantly dispatched. While his partisans were bending their bows to revenge the death of their leader, Richard, then only sixteen years of age, rode up to them, and with great courage and presence of mind thus addressed them: "What, my people, will you kill your king! be not concerned for the death of your leader; follow me, and I will be your general." They were suddenly appeased, and the rebellion terminated. The action of Sir William Walworth was that of a zealot, of essential benefit at the time, and justified only by the pressing exigencies of the case.

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NUMBERS 25:9 Those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

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#### Verse 9

Those that died - were twenty and four thousand - St. Paul, 1Cor 10:8, reckons only twenty-three thousand; though some MSS. and versions, particularly the latter Syriac and the Armenian, have twenty-four thousand, with the Hebrew text. Allowing the 24,000 to be the genuine reading, and none of the Hebrew MSS. exhibit any various reading here, the two places may be reconciled thus: 1,000 men were slain in consequence of the examination instituted Num 25:4, and 23,000 in consequence of the orders given Num 25:5; making 24,000 in the whole. St. Paul probably refers only to the latter number.

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NUMBERS 25:10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NUMBERS 25:11 "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I didn't consume the children of Israel in my jealousy.

NUMBERS 25:12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace.

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#### Verse 12

My covenant of peace - of an everlasting priesthood - As the word peace implied all kinds of blessings, both spiritual and temporal, it may mean no more here than the promise of God, to grant him and his family the utmost prosperity in reference to both worlds. The everlasting priesthood refers properly to the priesthood of Christ which was shadowed out by the priesthood under the law; no matter in what family it was continued. Therefore the עולם כהנת עולם kehunnath olam, or eternal priesthood, does not merely refer to any sacerdotal ministrations which should be continued in the family of Phinehas, during the Mosaic dispensation, but to that priesthood of Christ typified by that of Aaron and his successors. The priesthood alone is everlasting, and a covenant or grant of that was made to Phinehas, and his descendants. The Jews reckon twelve high priests of the race of Phinehas, from this time to the days of Solomon, nine more from that time to the captivity, (see 1Chr 6:4, 1Chr 6:15), and fifteen from their return to the time of Antiochus Eupator, the last of whom was Onias,

slain by Lysias. Ezra, the great priest and scribe, was of this line, Ezr 7:1, Ezr 7:5. The family of Ithamar, uncle of Phinehas, had the priesthood for about 150 years; but it was restored to the family of Phinehas in the person of Zadok the priest, 1Chr 6:50, in which it continued in the whole about 950 years. Probably the Maccabees were of the same family; but though this is not certain, there is no evidence against it. See Calmet. God therefore sufficiently fulfilled his promise; he gave to him and his descendants almost the utmost temporal length that could be given of that priesthood which is, in its own nature, eternal. Here then the word עולם olam means, not a limited time, but what is eternal in its duration. See the note on Gen 21:33.

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NUMBERS 25:13 It shall be to him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.”

NUMBERS 25:14 Now the name of the man of Israel that was slain, who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a fathers’ house among the Simeonites.

NUMBERS 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur. He was head of the people of a fathers’ house in Midian.

NUMBERS 25:16 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NUMBERS 25:17 "Harass the Midianites, and strike them,

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Verse 17

Vex the Midianites, etc. - See this order fulfilled, Numbers 31:1-20. Twelve thousand Israelites attacked the Midianites, destroyed all their cities, slew their five kings, every male, and every grown up woman, and took all their spoils.

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NUMBERS 25:18 for they harassed you with their wives, with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the matter of Peor.”

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