

**Peace** be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

Last time, in the fourth section of the Torah, in the book of Numbers, we saw how the Israelites arrived at the border of Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. God planned to drive out the wicked giants which lived in the land and turn everything over to the Israelites. However most of the people of Israel were afraid of the giants and **would not believe God's promise** to give them the land of Canaan.

Thus, we read how God judged the Israelites because of their unbelief. He said to them,

*"Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb...and Joshua...because they have a different spirit and follow me wholeheartedly. Their descendants will inherit it. And also, as for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected! But you, your bodies will fall in this desert!"*

What we must understand is that God wanted to bless the Israelites abundantly, but **He could not bless them because of their unbelief**. Since they refused to believe what the Lord had promised them, God condemned the Israelites to wander in the desert for forty years, until all those over twenty years old who had not believed Him died.

Now, let us continue in the book of Numbers to see what happened at the end of the forty years which the Israelites wasted in the wilderness due to their unbelief. In chapter twenty, we read:

*After the Israelite community had walked in the wilderness for about forty years, they arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh [where they had first refused to believe God and enter the land of Canaan which He had promised to them]. There Miriam (the elder sister of Moses) died and was buried.*

*Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They **quarrelled** with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! <sup>4</sup>Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? <sup>5</sup>Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"*

Do you hear what the Israelites were saying? After all that God had done for them and their fathers in Egypt and in the wilderness, were their hearts full of thankfulness and trust? No! They were doing exactly as their fathers had done. They were grumbling! Of course, they were weary of the wilderness, but they should have remembered that it was because of their unbelief that they had not yet entered the land of Canaan. True, the Israelites did not have water. But why then did they not pray to God? The One who had cared for them for forty years in the parched wilderness-could He not give them water to drink? Of course He could! God wanted to supply all their needs! However, the Israelites did not yet fully trust the Lord their God.

Let us continue in the chapter to see what happened. The Scripture says:

*Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and fell face down, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. **Speak to that rock** before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so that they and their livestock can drink."*

*So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and **struck the rock** twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."*

Did you grasp what happened? What did God command Moses to do so that the multitude of Israel would have water to drink? He said, "*Speak to that rock!*" Did Moses obey God by speaking to the rock? No! In his anger Moses hit it twice. This did not prevent God, in His goodness, from causing the rock to spout forth water, but what Moses did displeased God. That is why God punished him, saying, "*Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me **as holy** in the sight of the Israelites, **you will not bring this community into the land I give them.***"

Perhaps in our thinking, the punishment that God imposed on Moses was too severe. However, we must remember that what pleases God is faith in His word and obedience to His word. God cannot accept anything that is against His word-even if it came from the prophet Moses!

God does not show favoritism. Moses was a great prophet, but he was a human like all of us. Therefore, he was a sinner like all of Adam's offspring. Even the prophet of God, **Moses, could not save himself** because of his good works. Like all of Adam's descendants he had defects and did not fulfil all that is righteous. The prophet Moses, like all the Israelites, had to come by the way of salvation which God had established, by the way of the blood sacrifice. Through the sin of Moses, God wants to remind us that **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All are guilty before God.

Everyone has sinned. No one is righteous! There is no one who has not strayed from the way of God-except for the perfectly righteous Redeemer who came from heaven to save sinners!

Continuing with the story of the Israelites, in the end of chapter twenty we read how Aaron, Moses' older brother, died on the mountain called Hor, and the community of Israel mourned for him there for thirty days.

After that, in chapter twenty-one, the Scripture says:

*They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea...But the people grew **impatient** on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"*

*Then the Lord sent **venomous snakes** among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and **looked** at the bronze snake, he **lived**.*

Let us think about this amazing story. Why did God send venomous, snakes among the Israelites? He sent the snakes because of their **sin**. We heard how they spoke against God and Moses, and despised the food which God sent down to them. That is why God sent venomous snakes to bite them, causing many to **die**.

**What could the Israelites do to escape death?** Could they save themselves from the plague of snakes? Could they heal themselves of the deadly poison? Impossible! What

could they do then? They could cry out to God! And that is what they did. We saw how the Israelites repented and went to Moses, saying to him, "We have sinned! We have transgressed against you and against God! Pray to the Lord for us that He might have mercy on us and take away these snakes!"

Did God take the snakes away from them? He did something even better than that! God told Moses to make a bronze snake and raise it up on a pole so that *"anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."* This was **God's remedy**. If a snake bit someone, all that a person had to do was to look at the bronze snake which was hung on the pole and he would be healed! This was the way of deliverance that God arranged: **Look and live!**

God promised to heal **whoever looked** at the bronze snake which Moses suspended on the pole. What happened then to those who **refused to look**? They died a painful death. But whoever believed God and looked at the bronze snake was delivered from death, because God had promised them, saying, *"Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."*

Truly, this is a fascinating story, but it is more than fascinating. It was written to instruct us. God wants to show us that **we all** are like the Israelites. We too are sinners, which is why we often grumble against God and man, and offend God in our thoughts, in our words and in our deeds. **Satan** is like the venomous snakes that were biting the Israelites. And **sin** is like the poison that was killing them. Satan has bitten all of the children of Adam and the poison of sin will cause us to perish forever, unless God provides for us **a remedy!** The payment of sin is to perish in the eternal fire and, in ourselves, we have no means of escape! However, we praise God, because just as He designed a plan to save the Israelites from **the poison of the snakes**, so also He has designed a plan to save the children of Adam from **the poison of sin!**

You who are listening today, do you know what God has done to save you from the curse which sin has brought? **Listen to what the holy Redeemer said** about fifteen hundred years after Moses raised the bronze snake in the wilderness. He said, "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man (the Redeemer of the world), must be lifted up...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life!*"

From this verse in the holy Gospel or *Injil*, we learn that the bronze snake, which Moses raised up in the desert, was **an illustration** or a symbol of the Redeemer who was to come and die on a cross so that He might defeat the devil who holds the power of death. (Heb. 2:14) Oh, how wonderful this message is! As we will discover in coming lessons, through the death and resurrection of the Redeemer, God has opened for the children of Adam a door of salvation, peace and joy forever! All God wants is for you to admit that you cannot save yourself from the power of sin, and believe in your heart what God has testified concerning the Savior who died on the cross to pay for you your debt of sin. God says: **Look to the Redeemer and you will live!** Believe on Him and God will heal you, save you from the poison of sin and reserve for you an eternal dwelling place in His presence in heaven!

Old and young, men and women, rich and poor, God is saying to everyone: **Look and live!** Look to the mighty Redeemer whom God has sent and you will be **saved!** But God is also saying: **If you refuse to look**, if you do not believe in the Savior through whom God has provided the only cure for sin, then "*you will die in your sins!*" (John 8:24) God's righteous law declares that whoever does not accept the remedy that He has provided **will perish**. God has no other remedy by which the sons of Adam can be cured from the poison of sin. Have you looked to the Redeemer of whom all the prophets have written? He will cleanse you and give you eternal life if you will simply put your trust in Him alone. Listen again to what the Scripture says: "*Just as Moses*

*lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man (the Redeemer of the world), must be lifted up...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life!"*

Fellow listeners, our time is up today. Thank you for listening. Next time, God willing, we will consider the final words of the prophet Moses, and thus complete our study in the holy Torah...God bless you as you ponder this promise from Him:

*"[Look to Me, and you will be saved!]"*

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