

May 9-15, 2022

Numbers 11-14; 20-24

“REBEL NOT YE AGAINST THE LORD, NEITHER FEAR”

Summary: *Numbers 11. Fire from the Lord consumes the rebels in Israel—Israel murmurs and lusts for meat instead of manna—Moses complains that he cannot bear the burden alone—He is commanded to choose seventy elders to assist him—The Lord promises meat until it becomes loathsome to the Israelites—The seventy elders are chosen, they prophesy, the Lord comes down, and Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp—Israel is provided with quail—The people lust, a great plague follows, and many die.*

Numbers 12. Aaron and Miriam complain against Moses, the most meek of all men—The Lord promises to speak to Moses mouth to mouth and to reveal to him the similitude of the Lord—Miriam becomes leprous for a week.

Numbers 13. Moses sends twelve spies to search the land of Canaan—Ten of them bring an evil report, telling only of the strength of the inhabitants.

Numbers 14. Israel murmurs and speaks of returning to Egypt—Joshua and Caleb give a good report of Canaan—Moses mediates between Israel and the Lord—The adults of Israel will not enter the promised land—The Lord slays the false spies by a plague—Some rebels try to go alone and are slain by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

Numbers 20. Miriam dies—Moses smites a rock at Meribah and brings forth water—The king of Edom refuses to let Israel pass peacefully through his land—Aaron dies, and Eleazar becomes the high priest.

Numbers 21. The children of Israel destroy those Canaanites who fight against them—The Israelites are plagued with fiery serpents—Moses lifts up a serpent of brass to save those who look thereon—Israel defeats the Amorites, destroys the people of Bashan, and occupies their lands.

Numbers 22. Balak offers money, cattle, and great honors to Balaam to curse Israel—The Lord forbids Balaam to do so—An angel opposes Balaam on the way.

Numbers 23. The Lord commands Balaam to bless Israel—He does so, saying, Who can count the dust of Jacob? and, What hath God wrought!

Numbers 24. Balaam sees in vision and prophesies of the destiny of Israel—He prophesies of the Messiah: There will come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre will rise out of Israel.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

(In) Judaism, “looking to God” and “revelation” are almost figurative and in modern times, have become

What is the difference of “revelation” for the Jews and the Members of the

unexplainable. “Revelation, the act by which the hidden, unknown God shows himself to man. There is no specific term corresponding to “revelation” in the Bible or in rabbinic Hebrew. God is said to “appear” to the patriarchs and prophets, and the appearances are described by a series of anthropomorphic (i.e., human) expressions and concrete images.

“Sometimes God manifests Himself “in a

vision” or “in a dream” or he appears through the mediation of an angel. However, the Bible emphasizes that no direct, sensory perception of God is possible. Thus, various phrases are used when describing appearances of the Divine, for example *kavod* (“glory”) or *shekhinah* (“Divine Presence”) or *davar* (“word” of God).” “Any event in which the Divine presence is felt is called a revelation, but the term is applied more particularly to communications of the Divine will as revealed through God’s messengers, the prophets. The Bible itself, and later the rabbis, discerned among the prophets a hierarchy of form and degree, with that of Moses as supreme and unique. At Sinai, the principal revelation of God to man took place. At that time, all the assembled “heard” the Voice of God, and through the mediation of Moses (who, according to the rabbis, functioned there as a scribe), received the complete text of the *Torah* and its interpretation, the Oral Law.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) “Revelation is communication from God to His children. This guidance comes through various channels according to the needs and circumstances of individuals, families, and the Church as a whole. When the Lord reveals His will to the Church, He speaks through His prophet.”

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/revelation>) Revelation is communication from God to man. It can occur in many different ways. Some prophets, like Moses and Joseph Smith, have talked with God face to face. Some persons have had personal communication with angels. **(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1982/09/revelation>)** The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children. Through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, the Lord will assist us in all our

righteous pursuits. **(President Russell M. Nelson, *Revelation-for-the Church, revelation for our lives* <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04>)**

Which two of the Twelve came back with a “good report?”

When Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan, two came back with a good report and evidence of a fruitful land. They were Caleb of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua of the tribe of Joseph. They believed that God would lead them to succeed. They were the only men from their generation permitted to go into the Promised Land after the exodus. “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” **(Numbers 13:30)** In Israel today, the Israeli government uses the symbol of Caleb and Joshua carrying a huge clump of grapes between them as the official seal of the Ministry of Tourism, bringing a good report! It is significant that Caleb and Joshua, who reflected faith in Moses’ prophecies and brought back the good report, were the only original emigrants from Egypt that were allowed into the promised land. They maintained their faith throughout the wilderness journey. That journey introduced symbols (like the serpent) that represented faith in the Lord. Apostles Howard W. Hunter and James E. Faust were the LDS General Authorities in charge of the Jerusalem Center project, where the BYU Jerusalem Studies are now housed. When it was completed, they related the miracle of its approval and construction. After a marvelous meeting recounting the solid approval of the Israeli Government and the failure of a small religious band to thwart the completion of the Jerusalem Center, Elder Faust hastened to say, “We take no credit for these miracles—we want to enter the ‘promised land.’”

How did the serpent become a symbol of the will of God?

“The *Mishnah* states that the copper serpent (*nahash nehoshet* in Hebrew) was not the power which cured the people. Rather it was when the people finally turned their eyes upward toward Heaven and listened to the will of God that they were cured. After the plague ended, the *nahash nehoshet* served as an ever-present reminder of the dangers and evils which could befall the people in the desert were it not for God’s constant loving care.” “The people kept the copper serpent when they settled in *Erez* Israel and remembered its significance. However, when they began to look up to it instead of gazing beyond it to heaven, King Hezekiah had it destroyed so that it should not lead to idol worship.” “Sometimes seals . . . bore emblems with . . . a serpent on it, since the Hebrew word for snake was numerically equivalent to the word for Messiah.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How did the minor festival, *Tu Be Av*, begin?

“*TU BE-AV* or the 15th day of the month of *Av*, was the date of a minor festival, observed only in the days of the Second Temple, which marked the beginning of the grape harvest in *Erez* (land of) Israel.” “In the *Talmud*, several additional reasons for the festivity of *Tu be-Av* are given. It was believed to be the day on which the Israelites in the desert ceased to die for the sins incurred following the return of the spies sent to spy out the land of Canaan . . .” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How does religious clothing remind us to keep the commandments?

Jews use garments to remind them of ancient temple rituals. The garment is called a ‘*tallith*’ and it has four sets of *Zizit* (strings), with knots that are reminders of the binding covenants. “According to the

Bible, God commanded the Jews to wear fringes on the corners of their garments as a reminder of the Lord’s commandments: “And it shall be unto you for a fringe that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord.” This fringe is called *zizit*.” “The *tallith* is usually white and made either of wool, cotton, or silk . . . Although the ordinary *tallith* is worn only in the synagogue, strictly observant Jews wear the *tallith katan* (small *tallith*) under their upper garments the whole day.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. (Numbers 15:37-40)

What can I learn from Balaam?

There is quite a collection of Jewish traditions about Balaam, mostly negative and confusing. First of all, he is considered a “gentile prophet.” What makes this of interest is the acknowledgment, or at least the inference, that there were prophets outside of ethnic Israel. Unfortunately, the same Jewish tradition distrusts “gentile” prophets, (the Jews state that there are a number of gentiles prophets in the Bible; *Daniel Balaam, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, several converted and became Israelites). At the same time, it diminishes the importance of the positive Biblical accounts of Balaam before his apostasy. Balaam was very

politically involved and apparently prophesied of a latter-day King David: “Even in *parashat-Bilam*, (weekly *Torah* reading) the prophecy in that section bears upon two *Mashiachs*; the first, namely David, who helped to save Israel from the hand of their enemies, and the future *Mashiach*, a descendant of David, who will help Israel.” (**Torah and Existence-Dr. Chaim Zimmerman**) “I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.” (**Numbers 24:17-19**) Balaam is provoked to curse Israel, however returns the message that he can only do what Jehovah commands! Balaam is riding a donkey, which tries to avoid an angel. After Balaam starts punishing the donkey, it is miraculously given the power to speak to Balaam (**Numbers 22:28**), Then, Balaam is allowed to see the angel, who informs

him that the donkey's turning is the only reason the angel did not kill Balaam. Balaam immediately repents, and is told to go on. The prophecies which Balaam makes take the form of poems: in Hebrew: The first, (**Numbers 23:7–10**), prophesies the exaltation of the Kingdom of Israel. The second, (**Numbers 23:18–24**), celebrates the moral virtue of Israel, its monarchy, and military conquests. The third, (**Numbers 24:3–9**), celebrates the glory of Israel's monarchy. It is the source of the liturgical prayer *Ma Tovu* – “How good are your tents, O Jacob, your tabernacles, O Israel!” The fourth, (**Numbers 24:14–19**), prophesies the future of a king who will conquer Edom and Moab. The fifth, (**Numbers 24:20**), refers to the ruins of Amalek. The sixth, (**Numbers 24:21–22**), concerns the destruction of the Kenites by Assyria. The seventh, (**Numbers 24:23–24**), points to the “ships of Kittim” coming from the west to attack Assyria and Eber. There is a Jewish tradition that after a good life, an evil spirit entered Balaam and he “counterfeited” God’s word.