

Lessons from the Wilderness

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Very excited to be here with you guys, and I hope you guys had a great week. This week, how many of you guys have read this week's Torah portion? How many of you guys finished it? Every word. Every word, right? Was this the most exciting Torah portion you've ever read? Maybe not. Not so much, huh? Had a lot of counting in it. This week's Torah portion, B'midbar, is the beginning of the book of Numbers. And it's a shame because we call it the book of Numbers mainly because of how it starts out. A lot of counting. It gets kind of boring real quick. But the word B'midbar doesn't mean numbers. It actually means into the wilderness. Now, would you be more apt to pick up a book called Numbers or Into the Wilderness? A little more exciting, right? There is lots of counting. But that's not what the book is about. That's just one important section of it. The entire book of Numbers is a journey into the wilderness. And it's the story of Israel's time in the wilderness after they departed from Egypt until they went into the land.

From Numbers to the Wilderness

Now, unlike some books of the Bible, B'midbar reads like a really gripping, exciting story from start to finish if you can get in the mindset and actually pick it up as what it is. It has adventure, it has some action, it has a little bit of despair, it has some sadness, it has some forgiveness, redemption, it even has a little bit of drama for those of you guys who like that kind of stuff. It has the full story of every single aspect in this book. We only experience that if we read it with a mindset of a story God wanted to tell us instead of a boring part of the Bible.

Torah portions are great. I love them. You can break up the story of the Bible and read it in small sections, hyper-focusing on particular pieces. Thank you. You guys have to excuse me. I may cough a little bit. I just have a slight little cough here. Torah portions are great because you can hyper-focus on these stories and get a lot of cool stuff out of them. But the downside to Torah portions—and it's not the Torah portion's fault, it's our fault—is sometimes what

happens. We read Torah portions as if they're mini stories. And we forget that this is one bigger story. And it's not just a story of the Torah. It's a story that leads us to God's redemption through Yeshua. Everything that we read is one small piece in a big story. And it's one big story.

One Story, One Redemption

We make the mistake of dividing the Bible up between the Old and the New Testament. Anyone have that page in their Bible? I'm talking about the little blank page. You need to circumcise your Bible then. Just go ahead and rip it out. Or we talk about the Torah a lot and we forget that the Torah was not the end of it. We forget that the prophets are not the end of it. We forget that the writings are not the end of it. Malachi leaves you hanging, or Chronicles, depending on which Bible you're reading, whichever canon you're reading from. The Old Testament ends and it leaves you hanging, leaves you anticipating a greater result, a greater story that's going to come out of it. And that's exactly what happened when Yeshua was born. And so we love Torah portions, and when we get to our portions like this one where there's a lot of counting—so and so had this many people and this tribe had this many people and this family had this many people—it's okay. I know you want to close the book sometimes. Maybe that's just me. It's a little boring. Read it. It's important. And it's part of a bigger story. And that's what we're going to discuss today.

A Look at the Whole Book

Now, I wanted to talk about B'midbar, if you will. Instead of just going over today's Torah portion, I wanted to do something a little different. I was reading a commentary from Tim Mackey, Professor Tim Mackey, really cool ancient Near Eastern scholar, and he was talking about some different themes in the book of Numbers, and it really got me passionate about a book that, I mean, I like Leviticus more than I do Numbers. I'll just be honest. That's the kind of person I am. At least it's blood and stuff. And he got me really, really, really excited about this book. And so instead of just going over the Torah portion today—you're welcome—we're going to go over the whole book of Numbers to see if we can find a common theme, to see what the lessons of Bamidbar are.

And so when the book first starts out, it's fascinating because it starts out with Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, and God's going to take them on a trip up to the promised land, right? We all know about the promised land, the land of Canaan, Israel. And God's promised this land to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and these are the descendants of the patriarchs. This is their inheritance. This is the inheritance that you've been waiting hundreds of years to claim, and

now God has taken you out of Egypt and He's made you into a people of His, and we're fixing to go into the promised land. And this trip, guys—this trip is really only going to take about three or four weeks to get there. I mean, four if you're sluggish, right?

A Detour That Takes 40 Years

But we read in the story that this isn't the path that Israel takes. The path debatably looks something like this. And it doesn't take three or four weeks to arrive at the promised land. It takes 40 years. Can you imagine 40 years? A commitment, right? When you get a job, how long? You typically work, what, 20, 30 years before you retire? Something like that? At least that's how it used to be now, I guess. 40 years, that's over half your life nowadays. Camping in the wilderness. This is what this book is about, this 40-year camping trip. That has a whole bunch of stories, adventures, so on and so forth.

And before we jump into the actual story content and what lessons we can learn, B'midbar is divided up into three main portions. And then two sub-portions. And the three main portions speak about the different places that Israel camped. The three big areas that Israel camped is number one, Mount Sinai. Everybody knows Mount Sinai? We're familiar with this? Number two, they camped at a place called Param. And then number three, the largest section of the book of Numbers, was Moab. And then this is chapters 1-10, 13-19, 22-23, 36. And then there are two subsections in between with them traveling.

When Traveling Gets Dramatic

Now, traveling is always fun because, parents, have you ever put your kids in a van and traveled? Right? Do you have fun? Is that usually a fun experience? I mean, you can only play the DVD over and over again so many times, right? What do the kids start doing? I don't know—seven hours into a long trip. Jenny and I traveled to Pennsylvania, Oklahoma—a long trip, right? They start to complain. Maybe it's seven minutes in. This is where drama starts to happen. I mean, like a soap opera drama. Like that level of drama is in the Torah. It's incredible. When you get the scope of things that happen and when the people of Israel, the things that they dare say or the things that they dare do in front of each other or in front of God or face to face with Moses, it's incredible.

And so this is the outline of today's study. This is what we're going to start at. And, well, let's just get started. Throughout all these sections, we're going to see a lot of things happen. And what I would like to try to show you is this: Despite all the details that are in the book of

Numbers, there's one common theme that arises at the end. And if you're not looking for it, you'll miss it. If you're not looking for it, all you'll see is just a rebellious people who failed, right? And you don't have to read a lot of books about that. You can just look in the mirror for that. The one thing that we see at the very end of Numbers is God's grace, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, and his redemption. And that's what I hope to take you on a journey in today.

The Beginning at Mount Sinai

And so everything happens in—oh, I don't have my Sinai slide. Well, we know what happens in Mount Sinai. We're going to go through this one pretty quick. What happened in Mount Sinai? It was a big deal, right? Mount Sinai is when the covenant was made with God and Israel. Israel became a people. They were no longer just a bunch of nomads or slaves. They became a kingdom with a vocation to be a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood, if you will. The Ten Commandments were given. That was kind of a big deal, right? The Torah was given. That was kind of a big deal. And God's house, the Tabernacle, remember the pattern, was given to Israel to build him a place so that he could dwell where? Among them. And so we have all the details about the building of the tabernacle, and all this takes place in the first section of the book of Numbers.

And what's interesting is God also lays out a plan. He says, listen, guys, I want you guys to camp a certain way. So you guys come to Sukkot, and sometimes you don't get the camp spot that you like, but we do it for a reason. God did it for a reason, too. And so he ordered all 12 tribes, and he said, listen, all the tribes need to have an encampment on the outer corners, outer borders. My house needs to be in the middle where my glory is going to be.

The Center of the Camp

And the priests and the Levites are going to be camped in between the people and me all around there. Long story short, it shows us just a very simple lesson of how God's holiness was the center of the camp. That was the core that everything rotated around in the camp of Israel. We know that at one point, God says, listen, it's time to go. You've been here for about a year now, got some training, let's go. When the cloud moves, you're going to pack up and you're going to follow the cloud. Well, guess what starts happening? The cloud moves. So everyone starts packing up and God says, listen, I don't want you guys just to walk behind the cloud. There's a certain way you have to walk behind the cloud. And number one, we got to get these guys up front to carry the ark ahead of you. Okay? And then in this specific order, the tribes are going to follow the ark. The ark is a symbol of God's holiness, his throne, so on and so forth. It's

through his holiness that we are led. And so we see a lot of these very simple, simple meanings and messages behind these things of why God did things, but they're so meaningful. And I didn't want to pass those up by any means.

Complaints in the Wilderness

People start traveling. Israel has left Sinai now, and they're excited. They're going off to the wilderness. Parents are telling their kids, we're fixing to go on the promised land in a few weeks. Everything's going to be great. I mean, you'd be pretty excited, right? We've been camping out for a year. We got this whole holiness, Kedusha thing down pat. Three days pass, and they're walking through the wilderness, and Israel begins to complain. They start complaining about being hungry, which is just incredible. I mean, God has provided for them so, so, so, so much. They're complaining about the traveling, about this, about that. Things get so bad that in chapter 12, Miriam and Aaron begin to turn on Moses and gossip about Moses in front of the people of Israel. Now, if that were a television show, you'd get a lot of ratings on that. That's the drama I'm talking about. Can you imagine? What in the world? Right? Why were they talking bad about him? Uh-oh, because he married a Cushite woman. He married an Ethiopian woman. The ratings go, oh, whoa, look at the drama, right?

The Kushite Woman

And so we're going to read that account, and it's fascinating. So this is the beginning of Numbers chapter 12. And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married. For he had married a Cushite woman. What kind of woman did he marry? Make sure it lets us know that, right? It wasn't just anyone. It was specifically an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all the people who were on the face of the earth.

So Miriam and Aaron are looking at Moses, and you can tell that they think they're accusing him of something. And a lot of people in Western United States, of all places, and I've touched on this before, and I'm going to touch on it again because it's a fascinating lesson about if we don't understand the context and culture of the Bible, we will take a concept and totally make something up. MSU, right? Make stuff up. And we typically, us in America, we look at Moses, right? Married an Ethiopian woman. And obviously, Miriam and Aaron didn't like that. He shouldn't have married an Ethiopian woman because why would he do that? You know, like maybe as if the Ethiopian woman was a lower class than Moses.

Understanding the Kushites

Something that we seem to forget, guys, Moses was a slave along with Miriam, along with Aaron, along with all the other Israelites out there. They were the slave people, right? They were the low class. They were the humble people. Guess what? God chose them. Meek people. Ethiopians or the Kushites. The Kushite empires were one of the most well-respected empires in the ancient Near East, especially when it came to warfare. We see a lot of different hieroglyphics of Egyptians, and you'll see them change color. So sometimes they'll be like black, black pharaohs, and then other times they'll be like really dark but not quite the same skin tone. Well, one's Egyptian and one's Kushites because the Kushites and the Egyptians were constantly battling back and forth, and the Kushites more than once defeated the Egyptian army and took over Egypt. I mean, this happened more than once. There are some pharaohs that would not let their own men guard them. They wanted Kushite contractors, if you will, Kushite mercenaries to be their bodyguards. That's how well respected the Kushite people were in the ancient Near East.

The Real Reason for Their Objection

Miriam and Aaron weren't mad or upset at Moses because he was marrying lower class people. They were upset at Moses because he was marrying a high-class woman. Who does he think he is, marrying such an honorable woman from an honorable people? Look, you can see this right there. Has the Lord indeed only spoken through Moses? Who does he think he is? Okay, Matt, that's a great stretch. How do you know that? Because, line 3, the scripture enforces the fact that Moses was the humblest man ever to live. Despite him marrying such a fantastic pedigree of people, and despite his own family looking down on him and gossiping about him among the people, he was still a humble man, despite the status that he now had. And so that's the drama. Anyway, I found that interesting when I studied that a few years ago, and it just really, really hit me, so I'd love to touch on that.

The Journey to Canaan

Traveling is not going well. Things are going downhill very quickly. I mean, National Lampoons Israelite exodus vacation. Every turn is just more and more drama. And then we arrive in Paran. Now, Paran is the place where you remember what happened. You guys know what happened at Paran, right? Now you're going to know. That's the place where the twelve spies were dispatched. They were told, "All right, go into the land, check it out. We're about to cross over.

Check everything out. Everything's going to be good, but let's see what kind of report they bring back."

The Spies' Reports

Well, you guys know what happened, right? Two of the spies came back and they were carrying big old fruit and big old grapes and big old cantaloupes and watermelons and all kinds of mess. Man, this land is awesome. God has truly given us a great land. And then ten of the spies came back with a different report, saying, forget the fruit. The Canaanites are big folks. They're going to kill us. We're scared. We can't take this land. I don't think we should take this land. I'm not going to take this land because we can't. There's no way, despite how great our God is, there's no way we can take this land that has been the promised inheritance from generation to generation to generation all the way back to Abraham. No way. No way. They even began to remove Moses from his position and appoint a new leader to lead them back to Egypt. Imagine how disheartening that must have been for Moses. All it took was ten men to influence millions of people, if you will. Just a few little mouths yakking.

Refusing the Promise

So basically, the entire journey and everything they had gone through, they finally made it to the land that God had promised. The one thing that they were going to get, the supreme blessing, and the people refused to enter the land. We're not going. Now, this upsets God if you read the narrative. He gets very upset. But you cannot help but feel that it hurt God even more when you read how God responds. He's just so devastated that his own people, that he'd spent so much time with and cared for so much. Every need was met. Every time they complained, I had something else for them. I have this great present for you, right? I mean, this is an entire country. And I'm going to make sure it has the best watermelons and pomegranates and all kinds of stuff. I'm going to give it to you. You wrap it up all nice and you take it outside. Surprise, this is yours. This is for you, my people. We don't like it. We're not going to go in there.

God Honors Their Choice

The weight of that, and what's fascinating, is how God responds. Ultimately, he honors their decision. Huge lesson in this section of scripture. He honors their decision to not want to obey. He honors their decision to not want to take the inheritance that he had given to them. He honored it. He says, you know what? That's fine. You don't want to go into the land? That's your

decision. That's what you want. Nope. That's what we want. Then you will wander around until every single one of you is dead, and there will be another generation that actually cares about the inheritance of Abraham enough to take this wonderful gift. And so that's what they did. An entire generation of people forced to wander, and not until every last one of them is dead can you enter into the land.

And there's—as I said, there's a huge lesson in this. Although God loves his people dearly, he always honors their choices. This entire generation wasted their lives away—literally wasted their lives away—wandering around because they chose disobedience versus obedience. But that's the thing: God will allow you to make your own decisions in your life one hundred ten percent, always. He wants you to obey. He wants an intimate relationship. He wants to see the blessing poured out into your life, into the lives of your family. If you choose, he will stand back and watch you waste your life away.

This is definitely a time of self-audit. What are your priorities? Do you want to have meaning in your life? Or do you just want to wander around in this wilderness? So we could conclude that this big family vacation out in the desert has officially turned disastrous, to say the least. Moving on to a place known as Moab. Moses even has a moment in this journey where he loses it and strikes a rock with a stick and forfeits his inheritance as well. Now, Moses is not allowed to go into the land either. Why such a severe punishment?

Or as you guys know, God told Moses, "Moses, the people are thirsty. I need some water. See that rock over there? Speak to the rock. Just speak to it. It'll give you some water." People were complaining. Moses had had enough. You guys ever have that moment in a family vacation where your kids clam it up, right? That was one time I saw my father lose it in our minivan when we were traveling. And I don't know how old I was, but it was not a fun age, I'm sure, for my parents. And I was yakking, and I think Melanie was in there. Everybody was yakking in the van, and my mom was a little unnerved, and Dad was just driving. And Dad never really spoke. When he put his foot down, it was like a mountain landed. Let me put it that way. When it happened, and I remember I just kept going on and on, bugging my mom or fighting with her or something, and he turned around in his seat. He looked at me, gritting his teeth. He could have been a vinctulatory. He just didn't even move. We clammed it up. Always remember that.

A Lesson in Authority

This was probably what Moses was going through at this moment in time. People are complaining. "Come on, Moses. You've led us out here to die once again. Why can't you just do

this? Why can't you do that? You're a horrible leader, Moses. We loved it in Egypt when they were whipping us. We loved it in Egypt when they took our hay away. At least we didn't have to face this. At least we used to sneak a watermelon or two every once in a while. I mean, those were good. You know what I'm saying? Moses, why can't we?" Moses, Moses, Moses. Moses slipped and he looked at Israel and he yelled at them, "Do I have to bring water out of this rock for you?" And he slammed a stick against the rock and water came out. But that's not what God's intention was. God's intention was, "Listen, I'm leading them through a journey to teach them some lessons, and they need to learn to depend on me, not you. It was never you that was going to take that water out of the rock. So don't ever say that you did anything. You are my servant, and you are the most humble man. Watch it, and now you've lost it."

During their travels, another rebellion from the people caused fiery snakes to come up and bite them, make them all sick and everything. And what makes all of these rebellious acts, every single one of them, heartbreaking is the fact that after every single one, we see God always standing by. God never left. He could have. He talked to Moses about that one thing: "Man, let me just wipe them all out and let me start over with you." God was not going to abandon his mission and he wasn't going to abandon his people. Despite discipline, despite punishments, despite their rebellion and the severity of it, there was always a way back in every single scenario.

This is them traveling from Paran to Moab in chapter 21. We've already covered 21 chapters. Don't you wish you could do that every day?

The Pattern of Rebellion and Redemption

And Mount Hor, they set out by the way to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses. "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food or no water. And we loathe this worthless food." Everything God has given them, we loathe it. Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many of them died, and the people came to Moses and said, "We're sorry, we've sinned. For we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord that he may take away the serpents from us."

So Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery or brazen serpent and set it on a pole. And everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, when he looks upon it, shall live and have life." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Lord, everything you've given to us is loathsome, just horrible. Fiery serpents strike—Lord, we're sorry. We did not mean to doubt. Please save us. We know that you are mighty to save. Please save us. Moses, make a serpent, lift the serpent up, and anyone who looks at it will live. They will have their life back. I want them back. I want them back as my people. I do not want to lose them. I want them with me.

We know that in [John 3:14](#), Yeshua is speaking, and he makes a reference to himself and this story. He says, "Didn't Paul get bit by a snake? He died, right?" Paul knew what he was looking up to. Paul knew what was exalted in his life. I truly believe those stories are connected. Every step of the way, God always has a plan of forgiveness, a plan of redemption. He was waiting for them to come back. Snakes bite them, repent, be healed, be reconciled.

The Coming of Balak and Balaam

This theme is more and more revealed in this final section of the largest section of the book of Numbers in the wilderness of Moab narrative with a man by the name of Balak. Anybody know who Balak is? Kind of a cool name, Balak. He was the king of Moab. And so Israel gets up from Paran and they're moving and they go into the section of the wilderness of Moab. And the king is looking up and he sees all these people coming in, smoke trailing behind them. Good gracious, he just flips out. "What are we going to do with all these people? I don't want these people here. Oh, we got to get these people out of here."

So he calls this man, and it's a very vague figure in scripture, a man by the name of Balaam. We don't know much about him. We have a lot of commentaries and midrash, but the scripture narrative doesn't really—we don't know much about him. We know that he wasn't an Israelite, and we know that he was a diviner. He was a sorcerer. He's like a pagan sorcerer, if you will.

We're in Moab now. There we go. That's a little illustration of Moab with Balak in the background. And Balak wants Balaam to curse Israel. "Listen, I want you to curse Israel. Make them fry, fizzle up, go away. Make some meteors come down for effect. I mean, just big shock waves, something. Do something cool. Just curse them away."

So it's fascinating because we have a lot of different writings from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and even scripture about how sorcerers had a certain workflow to do things. And they're all very different at times. And so Balaam seemed to think, he said, "Okay, Balak, let's do this. Let's talk to the God of the Hebrews. Let's talk to the Lord and let's see what we can work out."

The Failed Curse

So Balaam, long story short, inquires to the Lord, and the Lord basically tells him, "There are blessed people. You can't curse them. Listen, God, I'm going to make a lot of money if I can do something really cool here, plague something. Give me something." No, they're my people. They're blessed people. You cannot curse them. In fact, if you try to curse them, only blessings will come out of your mouth.

So he went back, let Balak know. Balak kind of argued with him. There was a whole incident with the donkey. Another time. And Balaam finally tries to entertain the idea of cursing Israel. So he tells Balak, he says, "Make seven altars and let's do this thing." And each time, several times this happens, the altars are made and Balaam proceeds. He's like, "Listen, I don't think it's going to work." And an oracle—God speaks through Balaam and blessings come out over Israel.

Now, I really want to hone in on the weight of this. This is the people that have said, "God, everything, every blessing you've given to us is just awful. Like, we don't even like the manna—it's awful. The quail, it was awful. Everything's awful. These shoes that last a lifetime, awful. Like, it's all awful and it's all for nothing. That whole rock trick you did with the water, that was stupid. Like, we just want to go back to Egypt. We want to go back to being slaves. And we want our watermelons. This is those people. This is those people. Okay?

And then finally they're in Moab, and they're still doing it. They have not stopped yakking. "Hey, how you doing? A little warm out. Wish I had my air conditioning like I did back in Egypt." I know, right? Still doing it down in the camp. They have no idea that Balak is up on this mountain, and he's hired this sorcerer guy, Balaam, to curse them. Had no idea this is happening, right? And they still just... And so Balaam begins to speak. And blessings come out over Israel. Weighty blessings. Grand things. This is a blessed people. Blessed. He stops, looks at Balak. I don't know what happened. Try again tomorrow. Comes back tomorrow. Blessings over Israel.

No curses. Blessings. Balak again. I don't know. Do it again. Third day. Blessings. Balak's getting all upset. Why can't you just do this? The most interesting of all of these blessings is the final one. And it happens in [Numbers 24](#). People have no idea this is going on down below. So God is not only protecting them from the curses, closing the lion's mouth, closing Balaam's mouth, flipping a switch to blessings. But He's basically forcing the blessings from Balak to come out—everything that they facilitated to curse Israel is now turning into blessings, and these are not just little blessings. This is the final oracle, the final blessing that comes out of his mouth, and it's [Numbers 24:15](#). It is very interesting because this is going to lead us to a messianic prophecy. Basically, this king is spoken of that is going to arise out of Jacob, and he's going to have dominion, and his kingdom is going to rule all over. He's going to dispossess every other

major kingdom in the earth, in the world. And so it's in Numbers chapter 24 verse 15, and we've read it a few times, a couple verses in this blessing. So you may be familiar with it. "And he took up his discourse and said, The oracle of Balaam, the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is open, the oracle of him who hears the words of God and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, his eyes uncovered. I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob. A scepter shall rise up out of Israel. It shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all of the sons of Sheth. Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said, And he looked upon the Kenite and took up a discourse and said, Enduring is your dwelling place and your nest is set in the rock. Nevertheless, Cain shall be burned when Asher takes you away captive. And he took up this discourse and said, Alas, who shall live when God does this? But ships shall come from Kittim and shall afflict Asher and Ebor, and he too shall come to utter destruction." So this king that's spoken about, this star, this scepter, this one of Jacob that will exercise supreme dominion—what's he going to do? He's going to have dominion over every single major nation of the world. You see, these nations right here don't exist, and they didn't exist in the first century—many of them—but these were the top nations, if you will, when this prophecy was spoken. And I couldn't help but read Scripture and look because I mean, I wonder who that's speaking of. Who do you guys think that's speaking of? This is obviously a messianic text. The star that comes out of Jacob is Yeshua. Yeshua.

The Messiah's True Victory

Colossians 2:15: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." This is something that Paul writes about, and he writes about this subject repeatedly through all of his letters. He talks about a victory that came through the cross. And you guys know that the Pharisees in the first century were expecting the Messiah to come and to ignite a second revolt, if you will—they wanted to see the Maccabees raise back up and just slaughter these Romans, and they wanted to see a victory, a messianic king come with violence. That was not the plan of the Father. Obviously, the plan of the Father was to send His Son and establish a government that had true power. How are we going to defeat all the other powers in the world? We're going to defeat the other powers by showing that they don't have any power at all. We're going to show them what true power is. Violence is not power. That's not true power. True power comes by, get ready, love. Something that the Pharisees just couldn't comprehend. What do you mean, love? What's that going to do for anybody? It's going to do a lot. Defeat and disarm.

Now, I'm not going to be naive here. This verse, when it says "the powers" right there in the Greek, it means spiritual powers, unseen powers. Okay, Matt, well, this isn't talking about actual kingdoms. This isn't talking about the Roman Empire. This isn't talking about the Persian or the Babylonian Empire. This is talking about, like, Satan and stuff. Do you guys not think that powers unseen gave authority and power to Rome? Or Persia or Babylon? Do you not think that there were unseen powers behind every single entity and government? Johnny, last week, or the week before, you brought the book of Enoch—apocalyptic writing. In apocalyptic literature, especially in Enoch and Revelation, unseen spiritual entities are always attached to physical entities and governments, right? A demon is ultra-powerful when what? It possesses someone, right? They go together. And so I can't help but see the prophecy about the star coming out of Jacob—his dominion is going to defeat and dispossess, take the authority, disarm every single scope of power that these other governments have over Israel.

We may be expecting a big old sword, maybe a guy on a white horse coming out of heaven with a big old sword and chopping people's heads off. That's not what Revelation says. Revelation says it's the sword that comes out of his mouth. It's the power of his word. His authority is in that. And so I find that fascinating because if that prophecy hasn't already come true, it has definitely started. Because we know that in—let's see here. Oh, I've got my commentary right here from IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary. I thought you guys might like this. Here's what IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary states about the rulers and authorities in [Colossians 2:15](#): "...here the cosmic powers themselves are shown off as captives in Christ's triumphal procession, an image familiar to Romans and presumably known to others throughout the empire." In Roman triumphs, the general dressed as the chief god Jupiter and led behind him humiliated captives stripped of their possessions. Prominent captives were the most impressive. Here Christ displays his triumph over the most prominent captives possible. Everybody has been defeated and they have been disarmed. What can they take from you now? You are part of the greatest kingdom. We spoke about that last week.

Extending the Kingdom

We know that in [1 Corinthians 15](#), Paul speaks about another victory, or fulfillment of victory, that's coming. He says, "Then comes the end," speaking about the end. If Yeshua's kingdom is here now—and Yeshua said his kingdom is where? Where is his kingdom? It's in you? I was scared to answer. We know the answer. Is this the right answer? Yes. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, is within you. That means you carry it. So what's our job as ambassadors? To extend the kingdom. And the more we extend the kingdom, the more that the powers are

defeated, the more that this is being fulfilled through you if you choose to have meaning in your life, if you choose to walk across, if you choose to take up the banner and walk forward—that's your weapon. It's not violence. Military victory in the first century was a pagan concept; that's what Rome did. God had other plans: something radical, something revolutionary, something that most of the Pharisees couldn't even comprehend—Gamaliel and the Sanhedrin: "Listen, guys, we can whip them and disband them. If this thing is actually true, then it will stick around because it is from God. But if it's not, if these guys are just a bunch of little hippies running around let's love each other, then they'll be wiped out, just like Judas the Galilean and the other messianic figures were by the Roman Empire."

Is it two billion people in the world today who proclaim Jesus Christ as their Savior? That's impressive. No, but you know the statistics—you know, we're not all of them are living that way, or not all of them are, well, that's okay. That's fine. But the name of the King is known, step one. Let's march forward and change the world with how Messiah did.

From the Wilderness to the Promised Land

So Israel's camped down and they're about to pack up into the promised land. Another incident happened where I think Revelation mentions that Balaam gave some advice to Balak about how to trip up the Israelites, and they did, and there was a whole Baal Peor thing. But a couple battles took place, and they're standing at the edge. And Aaron died earlier in the story, and Moses, about to, and all the tribal leaders come together around Moses in the final chapters of the book. And Moses begins to tell them how to build the community after they cross the land. There's some ceremonial stuff that they have to do, and there's some stuff that has to do with holiness that you have to do, and there's some laws here and laws here. Don't be stupid. Just do this, and here's how you're supposed to address these issues. Here's how you're supposed to be a community of righteousness, a community of holiness, a community of God, after you take the inheritance, this present that God has given to you guys.

And that entire conversation where Moses basically—an expanded version of it is the next book of the Bible, Deuteronomy, the second law, if you will. That's basically a recap of Moses' final recap of everything that took place in his lifetime, in Exodus and all through the wilderness. And that's him repeating it back essentially to Israel, saying, listen, don't forget this. This is important before you go into the land. It's fascinating because there are some lessons we can learn from the wilderness. The wilderness is hard. It's hard, but that's not an excuse to be ungrateful. The wilderness sometimes is a time of transition for the better. If we miss that, we

endanger ourselves from missing out on God's ultimate blessing for our life, just like the Israelites almost did.

One generation did. Wilderness is scary if we refuse to see God's presence alongside us. The wilderness has to be conquered before God's inheritance could be poured out. Why do you think Yeshua had to go into the wilderness?

So in John chapter 4, we're just going to read it. In John chapter 4, we know that Yeshua is baptized. And it says that he just wandered into the wilderness, right? He just wanted to take a walk and got lost for a little while. That's not what it says. It says the Holy Spirit. He was led by the Holy Spirit. So God led him into the wilderness, just like God led Moses and Israelites into the wilderness.

Some of you guys know that Yeshua is the prophet likened unto Moses. And Moses was the prophet of the Exodus, right? And the Passover, which means Yeshua is going to be a prophet of the greater Passover and the greater Exodus. We're going to see in a series coming up all of the parallels between these things, but I wanted to share this one with you.

A Prophet Like Moses

The temptation of Yeshua. You can turn with me there. And it states that it only took 40 days for him to get a little hungry. 40 days, 40 nights. Who else fasted for 40 days and 40 nights? Moses did. Like and unto. And it's fascinating because the generation, the wandering in the wilderness, how many years was that? Forty years. So right now we see maybe a link, if I can make a stretch, to try to parallel what's happening here. Something about the wandering in the wilderness of Israel and now Yeshua's going back out in the wilderness to do something else by the same type of means.

And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Father.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you. And on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against the stone. Then the devil left him, and behold, the angels came and were ministering to him.

Can you imagine? Struggled with Satan, battled with Satan. You defeated him. Now some angels come, pat you on the back. Good job. You did such a great job, man. You need some water.

The Three Temptations

What I found fascinating is how many times was Yeshua tempted? Three times, right? And we're going to look at those three times. The first one is in [Matthew 4.4](#). Well, he's actually quoting [Deuteronomy 8.3](#). Right? And it's fascinating because why would he say this? Why was that the temptation? Bread, really? Hungry? That was something that Israel messed up.

Notice all these verses come from the Exodus account, somewhere in Torah. [Exodus 16](#), 3. So Israel got hungry. And they were saying that God is not going to meet his promises. God is not going to fulfill his promises. God is really just a traitor to his own cause, and he just took us out to die. We're hungry. Then the Lord said to Moses, behold, I'll rain some bread down from heaven for them. They're going to complain that much.

Yeshua, just turn the stones into bread. Just command them. Command them. Cry out. Despite your hunger, despite your pain, cry out and say that God didn't do enough for you for this journey. Go ahead. I will not.

Do Not Test the Lord

You see, the second temptation is similar. [Matthew 4](#), 7. Yeshua said to him, on the other hand, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. The test. What test? Take you on top of a temple? Jump off. Why? Because the angels will come and save you. What will that prove? Prove that God is sitting there watching back. Proves that God's with you, right?

He's quoting [Deuteronomy 6](#), 16. He says, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test as you tested him at Massa. What happened at Massa? Glad you asked. That's 17. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah because the quarreling of the people of Israel and because they tested the Lord their God by saying, is the Lord among us or not? Is the Lord among us or not?

Yeshua, is the Lord among you or not? Come on, let's take you up to the temple. Look, jump off. Jump off. God will show you he's with you. Don't worry. Just jump off. Test him. Make him show you he's with you. Come on. No, you shall not test the Lord your God.

[Matthew 4.10](#), then Jesus said to him, Go, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Only him.

Worship Him Only

This comes from [Deuteronomy 6](#). You shall fear only the Lord your God, and you shall worship him and swear by his name. This takes us back to an incident that was most heart-wrenching for both God and Moses. When Moses was actually away on his 40-day trip, if you will, he was up on the mountain, and Israel decided to make a calf, right?

And he received the gold in their hands, speaking about Aaron, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Listen, Yeshua, I can give you all this glory. I can give you every kingdom. I can give you all this great power and authority and if you just bow down and worship me, if you just make me the God that's going to give you provision, if you just make me your God that took you out of Egypt, if you just make me the God that's going to give you blessing, I will give you all of it.

Yeshua went into the wilderness to accomplish and to fulfill and to teach us and to reinforce the lessons of numbers, the lessons of Bamidbar, the lessons of the wilderness. And guess what? I'd say he passed the test. Greater Moses, a greater Passover, a greater Exodus. Love that.

Always a Way to Come Back

The God we serve is always waiting for us to come back if we stray. That was the one thing through numbers that I had never seen before now. Always. And when we come back, guess what? He gets a little giddy. He gets a little excited. Yeshua talks about, rejoice over one lamb. Amen.

Guys, despite where we are in the wilderness, whether we're at Sinai excited about the future, maybe we're traveling and getting hungry, or maybe we're at Paran and just have lost all confidence in God's blessings to us. Maybe we're at Moab, and geez, there's always a way to come back. There's always a way to have assurance of where God is, because no matter how far, when we get to a point where we don't feel God is with us anymore, it's not because he moved. He's always been there. That's why it's coming back.

And so these are some of the lessons I feel like we can learn through the next few weeks when we read through the Torah portions of the Midbar into the wilderness. And I would like to

encourage you to read through these chapters each week. And I hope that you can see it in a new light now. And I hope that you will look for God's grace. And I hope that you will look for God's mercy. And I hope that you will look at this book as not just a bunch of little stories, but as something that goes into a greater story that unfolds throughout the entirety of all scriptures that climaxes with our King established on his throne. Amen.

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