



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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## He Didn't Do it!

I'll start this off with a kernel of knowledge about me. Yes, it's TMI, but considering what I'm about to undertake, I'll go ahead and share this.

Lately I've been hearing a lot about Asperger's Syndrome and was wondering what it was. Elkanah was in the room when I decided to research it via YouTube and we both listened to someone talking about what Asperger's is and what the symptoms are.

When it was over Elkanah spoke up and said, "That sounds like me!" and he was speaking of himself. I agreed that I did hear some stuff that fit his personality but I also heard a large amount that fit my personality. Too many of those symptoms fit me. Memories came flooding back of times when people would tell me I'm strange, act in ways that let me know I was different, frequently I was the last one chosen because nobody wanted me on their team, even my friends would have parties and not invite me or even let me know about them.

When Samuel was in elementary I sent him to a private school. I really couldn't afford it but I swallowed my pride and applied for what they called worthy-student funding, and I asked to work in exchange for that tuition help. So, to pay for my son's private school education, I scrubbed the school's floors and toilets. I was working as an office manager in the health care industry and with that experience I was eventually hired as a part-time secretary for the pastor. That also helped to pay for that tuition.

The school he attended hired an after-school sitter who, for a fee, watched the kids until their parents could get off work and pick them up. When school got out for the day the kids would stay in the gym and play or do whatever until their parents arrived. The parents wouldn't have to get out of the car because one kid was stationed at the door to watch for parents and when someone's ride arrived that person would call out the student's name and the kid knew it was time to go home.

One afternoon I pulled into the parking lot at the school and waited for Samuel to come out. It didn't take long. He showed up with books in his hands and began walking on the paved walk toward the car. He was at the gawky age and somehow managed to trip over his feet. When he fell he instinctively put his hands out in front of him to brace his fall. He got up, got his books and came to the car.

Immediately he began whining. "My arm hurts."

I admit it, in lots of ways I was a failure as a mother and this was one of those times. I didn't want him to be hurt so I tried to play it off. How was I going to pay for a visit to the doctor? My bank account was close to zero. But no matter how much coaxing I did try to convince him that it would get better, he kept whining that his arm hurt. With some anger in my voice I said, "Fine. We'll go to the doctor." I took the next exit and turned right instead of left which would have taken us home.

There were several after-hour clinics in the area that my employer was doing business with. As the office manager I had a nominal amount of contact with them, enough that they knew me. I was also their patient.

The clinics were owned by a married couple who were both doctors and it was their job to take care of the patients. The male doctor's brother was the business manager and his former wife was the executive secretary. And I won't give any more identifying information except that the male doctor has acquired a bit of YouTube fame for his work in a specific field. His wife is the cousin of a very famous person that you all know.

I took Samuel to their walk-in clinic that was closest to where we were. I checked him in then we looked for a place to sit. The waiting room was full and there were only two available chairs. I told Samuel to go sit in "that" chair while I sat in the other. Eventually the person beside me was called to the back and Samuel got up and took his seat beside me.

Before long we (and I mean everybody in the clinic—everybody) could hear a woman talking and not bothering to keep her voice down. Suddenly she said, “I’ll tell you this, that Hannah (said my full name) is weird and getting weirder and weirder. She is so strange!”

Samuel and I looked at each other but neither said a word. Everybody in that clinic heard her and my name had been spoken clearly. Nobody stopped her. They let her keep on ranting about whatever was biting her craw.

Interestingly enough, Samuel was the next patient called back. There were others who had arrived before us, but despite that he was the next patient called. The nurse did whatever she had to do then left the room saying the doctor would be there right away. As soon as the nurse left the room we clearly heard that secretary cry out, “Oh! No!”

When Samuel and I were finally alone he asked what that was all about. I told him I didn’t really know but to just keep quiet and act like we hadn’t heard it.

The doctor came in and I nearly broke down and cried in guilt when I learned that Samuel really was hurt. A bone in his wrist had snapped when he threw his hands out to brace his fall. The doctor was nice about it and said she fully understood how I felt. She had experienced something similar when her daughter (?) had broken her arm.

The next day at work I arrived early enough to get a pot of coffee made before anyone arrived. The boss showed up, greeted me then headed for his office. I followed him, stopping to grab a black coffee for him, walked into his office, sat the coffee on his desk and asked if we could talk.

“I need to know,” I said, “have you ever seen or heard me say anything or do anything out of line when talking to that secretary?”

The boss thought a moment then shook his head. “No,” he said. “I haven’t noticed anything. Why do you ask?”

I told him what had happened and asked if I should say something to her. He advised against it. He said to act as though nothing at all had happened. Well, I almost did that. Almost. I never said anything about it but neither Samuel nor I ever used them as a physician again. Our company’s medical director was made aware of what had happened and he told me to take Samuel to the pediatrician that worked in his clinic. I did.

But I got just a bit ahead of myself in bringing up the medical director. After my boss told me to not say anything, I went back to my desk and began my workday. The boss and I were the only ones there and it was only about 5 after 8 a.m. when the phone rang. It was the Business manager from the after-hours clinic. He identified himself then asked to speak with my boss. I put him on hold and told my boss the caller was asking for him.

The call was short. My boss came into my office and sat down chuckling, and told me that was one of the strangest phone calls he'd ever had. If I hadn't told him about my experience the night before he wouldn't have had a clue what the call was all about.

I can't tell you exactly what was said because I got it second-hand and it's been over 30 years since it happened. But it was something like this:

Her boss: "Hey, J, how are things going?"

My boss: Good. "Everything's good."

Her boss: "Is everything OK?"

My boss: "Everything's good."

Her boss: "Is there anything wrong?"

My boss: "No. Everything's good."

Her boss: "Are you sure?"

My boss: "Everything's good. Is there something I should know about?"

Her boss: "No. Everything's good here too. Have a good day."

End of phone call.

I never found out what I had done or was doing that caused her to publicly defame me like that. I now remember that I did take Samuel back for a follow-up on that arm after he ruined his cast by getting it wet. Then I took him to the pediatrician our medical director had recommended and let him take over finishing what the other clinic had started as well as monitoring him for a different problem that had surfaced. And like I said, memories fade over the years and that was 3ish decades ago.

Samuel liked that pediatrician. He was acquainted with me through my employer and treated Samuel like he was a VIP. He even told Samuel to drop the doctor bit and call him by his nickname. He would also take time to give Samuel tours of the clinic and showed him how some of the in-house lab work was done. He was amazing with my kid and this has nothing at all to do with my story. Henry, I salute you.

The point of telling you about that encounter at the after hours clinic is that it's just another experience I've had where people have let me know that something about me is different. My boss called me Radar because I was so in tune with what people in the office needed I was able to provide what they wanted before they asked for it. He once told me that he would come into my office for something and by the time he reached my office he'd forget what he wanted. I would tell him and hand it to him. He'd thank me then leave. I once offered to tell him how I did that but he declined to know. He didn't want me to spoil it.

In researching about Asperger's I learned that one of the symptoms is that Aspies focus on what isn't obvious. For example, if you are shown a square that is painted yellow and there is a giant blue circle on it, most people will focus on that big blue circle. Not me. I want to know how thick the line is that outlines the circle. Who cares about the obvious? I want to know about the thing that's overlooked. And if the circle doesn't have an outline then I'll be perturbed. Depending on where that circle is located, if it wouldn't be considered vandalism I might grab a pen or marker and give it an outline. But if drawing an outline would be considered vandalism then I would spend some time imagining myself doing something to get that circle outlined.

All that to explain what happened last Friday night. As mentioned before we host a Bible study on Friday evenings and have been doing that for several years. Right now it's only the three of us who live here that are attending, and if we count the cats who usually join us then there are 5 who attend.

Presently we are going through the book, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, by Greg Boyd, Ph.D. The premise of the book is to address the stories in the Bible that seem to indicate God is acting in ways that are outside his character. He's taking on stories that seem to show God acting to destroy and is reexamining these stories trying to find a way to show that God is acting in love rather than looking for reasons to zap.

During our study Friday night, we read about the story in Numbers 25. I wasn't clear about what he was trying to say and how we misunderstood it. Elkanah

and my dad were wondering how he came up with the idea that the man and woman who were killed were in love. We had all been taught that he had brought this woman into his tent in defiance to the Lord and that Phinehas had rammed the spear through them both while they were in the middle of the sex act.

Elkanah and Dad were ready to move along with the book but I wasn't. I didn't understand how Dr Boyd's explanation had vindicated God so I spoke up.

Me: "I think it might help if we knew what the plague was."

Elkanah: "Huh?"

Me: "The plague. What was the plague?"

Dad: "What plague?"

Elkanah to Dad: "It says there was a plague and when Phinehas killed the two who were having sex the plague stopped."

Elkanah to me: "We don't have any way of knowing what the plague was. The Bible doesn't say."

Me: "Where are you reading?"

Elkanah gave me the text and a quick trip to [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) brought up the text and I saw immediately what the plague may very well have been.

Me (interrupting the reading of the book): "I know what the plague was."

Elkanah and Dad both: "Huh?"

Me: "I know what the plague was. It's right here. I'm surprised you didn't see it."

Elkanah: "What have you found?"

Me: "Just listen and I'm using the (whatever) version."

I read part of the passage then stopped, looked up and asked a question. They both caught on immediately and one of them brought up the time when David had numbered the fighting men and "God" slew all those thousands. Without looking up that story we all knew that the same principle applied to that story as

well.

Let's look at that text in question and I'm going to show it to you in several different versions. Let's start with the NIV.

### **Moab Seduces Israel**

**25** While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, **2** who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. **3** So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.

**4** The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn away from Israel."

**5** So Moses said to Israel's judges, "Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."

**6** Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **7** When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand **8** and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman's stomach. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; **9** but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

**10** The LORD said to Moses, **11** "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal. **12** Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. **13** He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

**14** The name of the Israelite who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family. **15**

And the name of the Midianite woman who was put to death was Kozbi daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

**16** The LORD said to Moses, **17** “Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them. **18** They treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the Peor incident involving their sister Kozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of that incident.” – *New International Version*

That was rather gruesome. God became enraged and told Moses to kill all the elders and expose them during the day. By doing that God would no longer be angry. Later God rewards Phinehas for murdering two people and also tells Moses to kill all the Midianites.

Ouch! Is this the kind of god that I want to serve in love? No! I would run from him in fear. This doesn't meet the criteria for Love which is God's character and he cannot commit an act that is outside his character therefore something is wrong with this translation. Or is it our interpretation?

Let's try a different version. Here's the KJV:

**25** And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

**2** And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

**3** And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

**4** And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

**5** And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

**6** And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.



**7** And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

**8** And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

**9** And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

**10** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**11** Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

**12** Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

**13** And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

**14** Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

**15** And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

**16** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**17** Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

**18** For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake. – *King James Version*

So how does this version work for you? God gets angry, tells Moses to chop off everybody's head then hang them in the sun so he will get over

his temper tantrum. Do you like this? Is this a loving god or is it a Loving God?

For me, I don't like this picture of God. Losing your temper and ordering your servant to chop off people's heads in order to appease your temper tantrum isn't an act of love so something is wrong here. Did the translators goof or are we misinterpreting?

*The Message* is a paraphrase but I've always like it because it seems to show God in a better, more loving light than the other versions. Let's look at it next.

### **The Orgy at Shittim**

**25 1-3** While Israel was camped at Shittim (Acacia Grove), the men began to have sex with the Moabite women. It started when the women invited the men to their sex-and-religion worship. They ate together and then worshiped their gods. Israel ended up joining in the worship of the Baal of Peor. GOD was furious, his anger blazing out against Israel.

**4** GOD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of Israel and kill them by hanging, leaving them publicly exposed in order to turn GOD's anger away from Israel."

**5** Moses issued orders to the judges of Israel: "Each of you must execute the men under your jurisdiction who joined in the worship of Baal Peor."

**6-9** Just then, while everyone was weeping in penitence at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, an Israelite man, flaunting his behavior in front of Moses and the whole assembly, paraded a Midianite woman into his family tent. Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw what he was doing, grabbed his spear, and followed them into the tent. With one thrust he drove the spear through the two of them, the man of Israel and the woman, right through their private parts. That stopped the plague from continuing among the People of Israel. But 24,000 had already died.

**10-13** GOD spoke to Moses: "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has stopped my anger against the People of Israel. Because he was as zealous for my honor as I myself am, I didn't kill all the People of Israel in my zeal. So tell him that I am making a

Covenant-of-Peace with him. He and his descendants are joined in a covenant of eternal priesthood, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the People of Israel.”

**14-15** The name of the man of Israel who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, the head of the Simeonite family. And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

**16-18** GOD spoke to Moses: “From here on make the Midianites your enemies. Fight them tooth and nail. They turned out to be your enemies when they seduced you in the business of Peor and that woman Cozbi, daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed at the time of the plague in the matter of Peor.” – *The Message*

So, does this version float your boat or does it sink your ship? For me, I find this version to be the worst of the 3. So, let's keep looking.

### **Israel Worships Baal**

**25** While Israel was staying in the Acacia Grove,[a] the people began to prostitute themselves with the women of Moab. **2** The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods. **3** So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the LORD’s anger burned against Israel. **4** The LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and execute[b] them in broad daylight before the LORD so that his burning anger may turn away from Israel.”

**5** So Moses told Israel’s judges, “Kill each of the men who aligned themselves with Baal of Peor.”

### **Phinehas Intervenes**

**6** An Israelite man came bringing a Midianite woman to his relatives in the sight of Moses and the whole Israelite community while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. **7** When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he got up from the assembly, took a spear in his hand, **8** followed the Israelite man into the tent,[c] and drove it through both the Israelite man and the woman—through her belly. Then the plague on the Israelites was

stopped, **9** but those who died in the plague numbered twenty-four thousand.

**10** The LORD spoke to Moses, **11** “Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites because he was zealous among them with my zeal,[d] so that I did not destroy the Israelites in my zeal. **12** Therefore declare: I grant him my covenant of peace. **13** It will be a covenant of perpetual priesthood for him and his future descendants, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the Israelites.”

**14** The name of the slain Israelite man, who was struck dead with the Midianite woman, was Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family.[e] **15** The name of the slain Midianite woman was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a tribal head of a family in Midian.

### **Vengeance against the Midianites**

**16** The LORD told Moses, **17** “Attack the Midianites and strike them dead. **18** For they attacked you with the treachery that they used against you in the Peor incident. They did the same in the case involving their sister Cozbi, daughter of the Midianite leader who was killed the day the plague came at Peor.” – *Christian Standard Bible*

So far, I've like this version the best. But this doesn't give me a lot to work with. I can do it with this, but I would like a little more. Let's try again.

### **Israelites and Moabites intermarry**

**25** When the Israelites lived at Shittim, the people made themselves impure by having illicit sex with Moabite women. **2** The Moabite women invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. So the people ate a meal, and they worshipped their god. **3** Israel became attached to the Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry at the Israelites. **4** The LORD said to Moses: Take all the leaders of the people and kill them on behalf of the LORD in broad daylight, so that the LORD’s anger turns away from Israel.

**5** Then Moses said to Israel’s officials, “Each of you: kill your men who are attached to the Baal of Peor.”

## **Israelites and Midianites intermarry**

**6** An Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to his brothers in the sight of Moses and the entire Israelite community, who were weeping at the entrance of the meeting tent. **7** When Phinehas (Eleazar's son and Aaron the priest's grandson) saw this, he arose in the middle of the community, took a spear in his hand, **8** went after the Israelite man into the chamber, and stabbed the two of them, the Israelite man and the woman, through the stomach. Then the plague stopped spreading among the Israelites. **9** Yet those who died by the plague numbered twenty-four thousand.

**10** The LORD spoke to Moses: **11** Phinehas (Eleazar's son and Aaron the priest's grandson) has turned back my rage toward the Israelites. Because he was jealous for me among you, I didn't consume the Israelites due to my jealousy. **12** Therefore, say: I'm now giving him my covenant of well-being. **13** It will be for him and his descendants a covenant of permanent priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and sought reconciliation for the Israelites.

**14** The name of the slain Israelite man who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri the son of Salu, chief of Simeon's household. **15** The name of the slain Midianite woman was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, a tribal leader of a Midianite household. **16** The LORD spoke to Moses: **17** Go after the Midianites and destroy them **18** because they went after you by the deception they devised for you at Peor with Cozbi, the Midianite chief's daughter and their sister, who was killed on the same day as the plague during the events at Peor. – *Common English Bible*

The Common English Bible told basically the same thing as the others and you may wonder why I added it. There was a reason and we'll get to it soon. Let's look at yet another version.

**25** And Israel dwelleth in Shittim, and the people begin to go a-whoring unto daughters of Moab,

**2** and they call for the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people eat, and bow themselves to their gods,

**3** and Israel is joined to Baal-Peor, and the anger of Jehovah burneth against Israel.

**4** And Jehovah saith unto Moses, `Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them before Jehovah -- over-against the sun; and the fierceness of the anger of Jehovah doth turn back from Israel.'

**5** And Moses saith unto the judges of Israel, `Slay ye each his men who are joined to Baal-Peor.'

**6** And lo, a man of the sons of Israel hath come, and bringeth in unto his brethren the Midianitess, before the eyes of Moses, and before the eyes of all the company of the sons of Israel, who are weeping at the opening of the tent of meeting;

**7** and Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, seeth, and riseth from the midst of the company, and taketh a javelin in his hand,

**8** and goeth in after the man of Israel unto the hollow place, and pierceth them both, the man of Israel and the woman -- unto her belly, and the plague is restrained from the sons of Israel;

**9** and the dead by the plague are four and twenty thousand.

**10** And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

**11** `Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, hath turned back My fury from the sons of Israel, by his being zealous with My zeal in their midst, and I have not consumed the sons of Israel in My zeal.

**12** `Therefore say, Lo, I am giving to him My covenant of peace,

**13** and it hath been to him and to his seed after him a covenant of a priesthood age-during, because that he hath been zealous for his God, and doth make atonement for the sons of Israel.'

**14** And the name of the man of Israel who is smitten, who hath been smitten with the Midianitess, [is] Zimri son of Salu, prince of the house of a father of the Simeonite;

**15** and the name of the woman who is smitten, the Midianitess, [is] Cozbi daughter of Zur, head of a people -- of the house of a father in Midian [is] he.

**16** And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

**17** `Distress the Midianites, and ye have smitten them,

**18** for they are adversaries to you with their frauds, [with] which they have acted fraudulently to you, concerning the matter of Peor, and concerning the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who is smitten in the day of the plague for the matter of Peor.'  
-- *Young's Literal Translation*

Now Let's look at one last version.

### **The Israelites Worship Baal**

**25** While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men had sex with Moabite women. **2** These women then invited the men to ceremonies where sacrifices were offered to their gods. The men ate the meat from the sacrifices and worshiped the Moabite gods.

**3** The LORD was angry with Israel because they had worshiped the god Baal Peor. **4** So he said to Moses, "Take the Israelite leaders who are responsible for this and have them killed in front of my sacred tent where everyone can see. Maybe then I will stop being angry with the Israelites."

**5** Moses told Israel's officials,[a] "Each of you must put to death any of your men who worshiped Baal."

**6** Later, Moses and the people were at the sacred tent, crying, when one of the Israelite men brought a Midianite[b] woman to meet his family. **7** Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron[c] the priest, saw the couple and left the crowd. He found a spear **8** and followed the man into his tent, where he ran the spear through the man and into the woman's stomach. The LORD immediately stopped punishing Israel with a deadly disease, **9** but twenty-four thousand Israelites had already died.

**10** The LORD said to Moses, **11** “In my anger, I would have wiped out the Israelites if Phinehas had not been faithful to me. **12-13** But instead of punishing them, I forgave them. So because of the loyalty that Phinehas showed, I solemnly promise that he and his descendants will always be my priests.”

**14** The Israelite man that was killed was Zimri son of Salu, who was one of the leaders of the Simeon tribe. **15** And the Midianite woman killed with him was Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite clan leader named Zur.

**16** The LORD told Moses, **17-18** “The Midianites are now enemies of Israel, so attack and defeat them! They tricked the people of Israel into worshipping their god at Peor, and they are responsible for the death of Cozbi, the daughter of one of their own leaders.” –  
*Contemporary English Bible*

My apologies for overloading you with different Bible versions. But I felt it needed to be done so you can see why getting a better picture of God's love is difficult.

Take a close look at each version and you'll find they tell a different story. Their stories are close enough that a surface reading may not detect it but when you check their details you'll find they are different stories. That alone is enough to allow us to believe that the Bible is real and has a message for us.

But what is that message? Are we really to believe that killing people and exposing them is an act of love? Well, yeah. There are people who believe that and insist that we believe it as well. But how can any thinking person find the harmony here?

I'll tell you now the question that I posed to Elkanah and my dad.

“What does God do when he gets angry?”

The answer is he realizes there's nothing more that he can do and quits trying. In the case of the Israelites in this particular story, they began having illicit sex and worshipping a false god. They became attached to this sex-and-religion worship and it's what they wanted. In that condition God was unable to reach them so he removed his protection and the destroyer stepped in.



The *New Living Translation* does a beautiful job of explaining how God acts when he becomes angry. Let's read it.

## God's Anger at Sin

**18** But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.[i] **19** They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. **20** For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

**21** Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. **22** Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. **23** And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

**24** So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. **25** They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. **26** That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. **27** And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

**28** Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. **29** Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. **30** They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. **31** They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. **32** They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die,

yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. – Romans 1:18-32 *The New Living Translation*

According to the apostle Paul, when God gets angry he steps back and allows you to do what you are intending to do. Separating yourself from God is a dangerous thing to do. The Israelites became involved in a sex-and-religion cult and chose it over following their Creator. God stepped back and allowed them to do what they wanted.

But there are other things in that passage that should be noted.

In his book, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, Dr. Boyd claimed that the woman and man who were killed by Phinehas were lovers. This isn't what Elkanah, my dad or I had been taught.

I paid close attention to that part of the story when reading through the different passages. What I found is that the people who translated the different versions had different ideas about what actually happened. Most say that they were stabbed in the belly, though I found one version that said they were both stabbed in the privates. Some versions said that they stabbed the man then stabbed the woman in the belly without actually telling where the man was stabbed.

Many of the versions stated that the man was taking this woman home to his brethren while some said that he took her home to meet his family.

Let's get the order of events correctly. The Israelite men had illicit sexual relations with Moabite women. God became angry and told Moses to have all the elders killed and hung up in broad daylight for everyone to see. By doing that then God would no longer be angry. THEN he told Moses to tell the leaders to go kill all who had become involved in that sex-and-religion cult.

After everyone is dead and the people are weeping and mourning, another Israelite man brings a Midianite woman into his tent to meet his family. Phinehas blows a fuse, picks up a spear or something then goes into the man's tent and murders both him and his girlfriend. God is pleased with this murder and rewards Phinehas. Then God commands Moses to go and wipe out all the Midianites.

Basically that's what we were taught and basically it's what the Bible appears to say. But remember that God's anger is letting go. So the plague that consumed the Israelites was a plague of self-serving.

What about us? Have we not been busy self-serving? Are we not in the midst of a plague where thousands of people are dying? God is not the one responsible for this. And it brings much grief to hear that people are demanding that social-distancing be dropped. Yes, our economy is threatened, but do we really want to be able to purchase things at the cost of people's lives?

Sorry, I seem to have pulled out my soapbox.

One thing that puzzled me is that God ordered the death of the elders then after they were dead he ordered that the leaders go and kill those who were involved in that cult. I'm puzzled because I don't know the difference between the elders and the leaders. It's like the dead bodies were ordered to kill those who were left. For me that's a dose of cognitive dissonance.

But let's take another look at *Young's Literal Translation*.

**25** And Israel dwelleth in Shittim, and the people begin to go a-whoring unto daughters of Moab,

**2** and they call for the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people eat, and bow themselves to their gods,

**3** and Israel is joined to Baal-Peor, and the anger of Jehovah burneth against Israel.

Remember that God simply stepped back and allowed the Israelites to do what they were wanting to do.

**4** And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them before Jehovah -- over-against the sun; and the fierceness of the anger of Jehovah doth turn back from Israel.'

In this version God didn't explicitly command that the leaders be killed, instead he told Moses to hang them, or expose them, in broad open daylight. By exposing them the Israelites would know that they had some responsibility in what they were doing. And by simply exposing them they were still alive to carryout out verse 5.

**5** And Moses saith unto the judges of Israel, 'Slay ye each his men who are joined to Baal-Peor.'

Verse 5 says that MOSES told the judges to kill the men who were involved in that sex-and-religion cult. God isn't mentioned here. And since God is the giver of life, not the destroyer, I like this version much better than the others.

**6** And lo, a man of the sons of Israel hath come, and bringeth in unto his brethren the Midianitess, before the eyes of Moses, and before the eyes of all the company of the sons of Israel, who are weeping at the opening of the tent of meeting;

This Israelite man brought home this Midianite woman after the 24,000 had been killed. People were weeping and mourning. Again, she may have been a girlfriend and he brought her home to meet his family. Perhaps he had hopes of finding favor so he could marry her.

**7** and Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, seeth, and riseth from the midst of the company, and taketh a javelin in his hand,

**8** and goeth in after the man of Israel unto the hollow place, and pierceth them both, the man of Israel and the woman -- unto her belly, and the plague is restrained from the sons of Israel;

When Phinehas saw the two of them, he flew into a rage, grabbed a weapon then went into the man's tent and murdered the couple. God did not command Phinehas to commit this act of violence, he did it on his own.

**9** and the dead by the plague are four and twenty thousand.

**10** And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

**11** `Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, hath turned back My fury from the sons of Israel, by his being zealous with My zeal in their midst, and I have not consumed the sons of Israel in My zeal.

**12** `Therefore say, Lo, I am giving to him My covenant of peace,

**13** and it hath been to him and to his seed after him a covenant of a priesthood age-during, because that he hath been zealous for his God, and doth make atonement for the sons of Israel.'

Did God really reward Phinehas for his act of violence? Seriously? No. He didn't.

Back then the Israelites were barbarians. The sanctity of life meant nothing to them. They killed and ordered others to kill for very little reason. Violence was their way of life. Phinehas probably believed that killing the couple would please God.

What pleased God was the zeal Phinehas had for his (God's) honor. And it was this zealousness that was rewarded, not the act of violence. When Phinehas killed the couple he scared the wits out of the Israelites who decided to follow God rather than be killed. This isn't a proper motive, nevertheless, because of the level of morality at which they were functioning, it stopped the Baal worship.

**14** And the name of the man of Israel who is smitten, who hath been smitten with the Midianitess, [is] Zimri son of Salu, prince of the house of a father of the Simeonite;

**15** and the name of the woman who is smitten, the Midianitess, [is] Cozbi daughter of Zur, head of a people -- of the house of a father in Midian [is] he.

**16** And Jehovah speaketh unto Moses, saying,

**17** `Distress the Midianites, and ye have smitten them,

**18** for they are adversaries to you with their frauds, [with] which they have acted fraudulently to you, concerning the matter of Peor, and concerning the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who is smitten in the day of the plague for the matter of Peor.'

-- *Young's Literal Translation*

This last part of the chapter is a little tricky because it appears that God told Moses to go and commit genocide. But since that isn't an act of Love then something is wrong with the teaching or the translating. Let's do some research and see what happens.

I checked a lot of different translations that are available on [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com). There are a lot of different versions and I didn't check them all but I promise I checked more than the few I've listed above.

*Young's Literal Translation* was the only one that said to do something to the Midianites other than to kill them all. Young's used the word "distress."

So how about we examine the word “kill.” There are more uses for the word kill than to end someone's life. Examples are:

Killing time  
Kill the lights  
Kill the rumor  
Killing your affection  
Killed my hopes  
You kill me (said jokingly while laughing)  
Kill the engine

Those are only a few examples. According to dictionary.com the first known use of the word “kill” was somewhere between the years of 1175 – 1225. This was well after the Bible had been written.

So, I'll revert to the King James Version and go with what they say.

**17** Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

Young's Literal Translation used the word Distress where the King James uses the word Vex. Dictionary.com indicates that the word “smite” has more meanings than to kill. It means to injure or harm, but not necessarily kill.

So, rather than telling Moses to commit genocide, perhaps God was telling him that it wasn't healthy for the Israelites to mingle with Midianites and they should avoid them.

And this is a God that exudes Love and Goodness. We've been so programmed to believe in a god with satanic characteristics but that's the master deception we've been warned about. Just remember, if it makes God look anything less than Loving or Compassionate, that teaching is wrong and needs to be restudied.

Love to all,

Hannah

I had a difficult time writing the above because things kept happening to get in the way. The time finally came when I could breathe a sigh of relief and end the article. The only thing left was for Elkanah to proofread it and give me his

thoughts.

With that done here I sit attempting to clarify something. Elkanah said I wrote the article without telling what I thought the plague was. You can find where I named what I thought the plague was on the bottom of page 18. Apparently I wasn't clear enough and he didn't see it so I'll try again.

The Bible is filled with illustrations, stories and thoughts that aren't literal but are instead told to prove a point.

For the living know that they will die,  
but the dead know nothing;  
they have no further reward,  
and even their name is forgotten. – Ecclesiastes 9:5 NIV

Now compare it with this:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” – Revelation 6:9 & 10 NIV

Since this appears to be a discrepancy then one must be an illustration. When Jesus raised people from the dead he referred to them as sleeping. People don't carry on lucid conversations while they sleep. This text in Revelation must be an illustration, not a reality.

How about the lake of fire? We've been taught that there is a place of burning where the wicked are thrown to live throughout eternity or until they have paid the penalty for their sins (depending on which church is teaching it). This is supposedly a place of eternal torment. Even Jesus referred to it when telling the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Some people call this place hell and some call it Hades.

The Bible identifies what this lake of fire is.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. – Revelation 20:14 NIV

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers the

sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” – Revelation 21:8 NIV

Revelation defines the lake of fire as the second death. Hades was thrown into the lake of fire. The second death is a death from which there is no resurrection. Put this information together and you have Hades being thrown into a death from which there is no return. In other words, death will no longer exist.

What I believe the “plague” in Numbers 25 to have been is simply an **ILLUSTRATION** for the condition that the Israelites had reached. They had chosen to separate themselves from the One who gave them life and that is a dangerous place to be. They chose to serve self. When you pick a flower it is no longer attached to it's source of life. It withers and dies.

Revelation 21:8 specifically says those who are sexually immoral will be tossed into the second death.

After reading through all those different versions of the Bible and tossing out any reference to God acting in ways that were malevolent, I pieced together what I am satisfied shows God to have acted within the boundaries of love.

Israel had been seduced by Moabite women. They had joined them in their sex-and-religion cult and by doing so they chose to separate themselves from their source of life. By their actions they became even more degraded than they already were. And that was the “plague.” To illustrate it, they were withering and dying.

In his concern for his children, God acted to stop this behavior. And please understand that when God acts, he does so in ways that we are able to understand what is happening. He stoops down to our level.

To stop this behavior he told Moses to take the leaders of this sexual revolt and expose them; make sure everyone knew they were responsible for bringing this sex-and-religion worship into the Israelite community.

Again, the Bible used language to illustrate a point. It was hyperbole.

After the leaders of the revolt had been exposed, Moses, not God, told the elders to go and kill all those who had participated in this sex-and-religion cult. Because of Moses' command, 24,000 people were murdered. Remember, Moses was a trained fighter with blood on his hands. And they lived in a time



when killing was a way of life.

While the people were mourning and weeping because so many had been slaughtered, an Israelite brought a Midianite woman, who may have been his girlfriend, to his home to meet his family. If that's what he was doing it was bad timing on his part because when Phinehas saw this he blew a gasket and took it upon himself to go and murder both the man and the woman.

When the Israelites witnessed this blatant murder that was committed by one of their priests, they realized that if they didn't stop their behavior they too would be murdered. Essentially Phinehas stopped the "plague," the self-serving by scaring the bedoules out of the Israelites. Fear is not a proper way to convert someone but, considering their level of morality, it worked – temporarily.

God then rewarded Phinehas with the promise that his descendants would have a lasting priesthood. God did not reward the act of murder. He rewarded the zeal Phinehas showed by acting to uphold God's honor. In our culture we see it as an act of barbarism but those people had little to no regard for human life and God stooped to reach them at their level.

I hope that makes things clear for you. And as I wrote this I couldn't help thinking about the times we are living in. We are in a culture where many of us have chosen to put God out of our lives. When you stop and consider the things we've been taught about God, things that show him to have satanic characteristics, then it's no wonder people don't want to have anything to do with him.

We may well have reached the point that God is removing his protection because there is nothing more that he can do. Because that protection is gone the destroyer has stepped in and people are dying by the thousands.

My prayer is that people will recognize what a sinful place this is and that God is not the bully who is responsible for all this. Instead, he's doing everything he can to rescue us.

Please, Lord, find a way to reach your children and let this misery that exists on this planet come to an end. It isn't just us humans that are in distress, the animals, vegetation, atmosphere, even the earth itself groans under the weight of this separation from you. Please, prepare your children and come get us. Soon.

Hannah

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