

## Psalm 106:19-27

The Torah reading for this week in **Numbers 33** recalls Israel's trek from Egypt to their preparation for entering the Promised Land. God further swears that if they don't drive out the Canaanites and their idolatry He will "do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."

This section of **Psalm 106** emphasizes that they rebelled by making the Golden Calf and despising the Promised Land through the report of the spies.

**Psalm 106:19** - "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image."

Idolatry is forbidden by the second commandment (**Exodus 20:4-5**).

"Horeb" is another name for Mt. Sinai, used exclusively in Deuteronomy (except in **Deuteronomy 33:2**). Probably **Deuteronomy 9:8** was in the Psalmist's mind:

- **Deuteronomy 9:8** - "Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you."

The golden calf was made from the golden earrings of the people. Was this a reference to their not being able to "hear under" as the Shema demands?

- **Deuteronomy 6:4** - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD"

"hear" = *shama* - to hear and obey, with the implied understanding and perception

Worship of the Golden Calf was so heinous a sin, that the Jews say it is not expiated to this day, and that there is no punishment comes upon them but there is an ounce of the golden calf in it (T. Hieros. Taanith, fol. 80. 4.).

**Psalm 106:20** - "Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass."

Or, they "exchanged" their glory (the Shekinah Glory, the pillar of fire and cloud that declared that God dwelt with them in the Holy of Holies and went before them) for the likeness (or the pattern, model or image) of an ox eating grass.

Targum: "They changed the glory of the Lord into the similitude of an ox that eats grass and makes dung."

Rashi - There is nothing as disgusting and repugnant as an ox. When it eats grass, it emits much dung, with which it sullies itself.

- **Jeremiah 2:11** - "Has a nation ever changed its gods? (though they were no gods at all!) Yet My people have exchanged their Glory for idols that are useless."

Paul uses the phrase in **Romans 1:23** - "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

NOTE: The reading "their glory" in this verse is reckoned as one of the eighteen *Tiqqûnç Sôpherîm* or "corrections of the scribes," and is said to stand for "his glory" as reflected in the LXX and the Targum.

"Their glory" and "His glory" actually both make sense.

**Psalm 106:21-22** - "They forgot God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea."

"Wondrous works" - the ten plagues on the Egyptians, and the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage.

"By the Red Sea" = "in the Red Sea" - the drowning of Pharaoh's army.

**Psalm 106:23** - "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them."

"breach" - literally, "in the breaking" as if through of a wall

Or "Had not Moses stood before him (i.e., submissively) at the point of the breaking forth of God's anger"

Targum: "...unless Moses his chosen had rose up and strengthened, or prevailed in his prayer before him to turn away his wrath from destroying."

Moses acted as mediator and intercessor for Israel, a type of Christ, "who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (**Romans 8:34**) and is our advocate with the Father (**1 John 2:1-2**), seeing He "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (**Hebrews 7:25**).

Moses says in **Deuteronomy 18:15**, "The LORD your God will raise up a prophet like me." Interceding like Moses, only perfectly, Christ absorbed God's wrath in Himself.

Christ in His atonement on the cross took away the sin that separated us from God, quelled God's wrath and with the Holy Spirit refers our prayers to the Father, acting as our legal advocate so that no charge can be brought against us.

Despite God's chastisement...

**Psalm 106:24** - "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD."

Rejecting the Promised Land when God offering it to you is simply rebellion.

Restated here:

- **Deuteronomy 1:26-27** - "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God: And ye murmured in your tents..."

The children of Israel murmured when the water was bitter (**Exodus 15:24**). They murmured again when the water was lacking (**Exodus 17:3**). They murmured for want of bread and because they had left their fleshpots in Egypt (**Exodus 16:2**). The whole congregation murmured after the evil report of the spies (**Numbers 14:3-6**). And they murmured after God's judgment swallowed up Korah and his companions. (**Numbers 16**)

How do we avoid the same fate?

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (**I Timothy 6:6**).

**Psalm 106:26-7** - "Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands."

"lifted up His hand" - to swear, make an oath, that this would happen to them (as related in the Torah reading in **Numbers 33:56** - "Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.")

Rashi - From that time, the destruction of the Temple was decreed upon them, for on the night of the ninth of Av they went, and the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "They wept for nothing, and I shall establish for them weeping for generations."

Rashi is quoting the Gamara...

"Rabbah said in the name of Rebbe Yochanan: That night was the night of the Ninth of Av. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: You wept needlessly that night, and I will, therefore, establish for you a true tragedy over which there will be weeping in future generations."

This refers to Israel's reaction to the earlier report of the spies in **Numbers 14:1-2** - "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!"

That generation perished in the wilderness.

But a similar "oath" by God was now pronounced on the new generation, warning them

to dispossess the Canaanites and root out idolatry.

It's amazing that God keeps putting all this in front of Israel's face, reminding them, warning them and beseeching them to listen and obey Him. Not just once or twice, but through these Torah readings as well as the Psalms and Haftarah passages.

It's for our instruction and admonition - so we don't balk at God's command, or grumble within ourselves.

- **Hebrews 3:6-13** - "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."