

**Bemidbar 31** tells the story of the **last battle** that the **children of Israel** will **fight** as a **unified body** **before** they prepare themselves for the **final speeches and blessings from Moshe**. What was the **significance** of the **war with Midian**? The war with Midian was **not defensive** and it was **not a war of conquest** such as when they battled with Sihon and Og (Bemidbar 21). Instead, it was **fulfilling a divine order** given to the Israelites after the **disastrous encounters** between **Midianite/Moabite women and men of Israel**:

*Bemidbar 25:16 Then יהוה spoke to Moshe, saying:<sup>17</sup> "Harass the Midianites, and attack them;<sup>18</sup> for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."*

From **Bemidbar 25**, we **skip six chapters** to see how this **command** from יהוה is **carried out**. Because this **war is linked with Ba'al Peor**, we will first attempt to understand that incident more fully.

First of all...**who was Ba'al Peor**? **Ba'al Peor** was a **Moabite/Midianite god**. The name **Ba'al Peor** consists of **two words**: first, the word **Ba'al** means **"owner"** or **"husband"**. The second word, **Peor**, means **"open wide"**. Hence, history tells us that **intimacy** with this **"husband" god** consisted of whatever had anything to do with **"opening wide"** any **orifices of the body**. In addition to **sexual encounters** and **defecating** before **Ba'al Peor**, they also **"made openings"** by **cutting the body**. The **Hebrew Scriptures** abound with **warnings** against this **disgusting Ba'al worship**.

Does this **ancient god** have anything to do with **us today**? Could we also be **guilty of serving Ba'al**, the **wrong "husband"**? What is **true worship** of our **true "husband"**? Notice what the **prophet Elijah** links with **worshipping Ba'al**:

*1 Kings 18:17 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"<sup>18</sup> And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of יהוה and have followed the Ba'als.*

Just **prior to the exile** of the **northern tribes**, יהוה gave a **final warning**:

*2 Kings 17:13 Yet יהוה testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the Torah which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in יהוה their Elohim.<sup>15</sup> And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom יהוה had charged them that they should not do like them.<sup>16</sup> So they left all the commandments of*

***וַיַּעַבְדוּ* their Elohim, made for themselves a molten image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.**

From reading the above verses, we see that **Ba'al worship** is associated with **rejecting His commandments**. We even see that the **northern tribes** made **molten images of two calves**, reminiscent of **golden calf worship on Mount Sinai**. On the other hand, **Judah's good king, Josiah**, after reading the Torah, determined to **"keep His commandments"**. He attempted to **rid the land of Ba'al**:

***2 Kings 23:3*** Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before *וַיַּעַבְדוּ*, to follow *וַיַּעַבְדוּ* and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant. <sup>4</sup> And the king commanded **Hilkiah the high priest**, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of *וַיַּעַבְדוּ* all the articles that were made for Ba'al, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. <sup>5</sup> Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Ba'al, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

So we can deduce that the **opposite of Ba'al worship**, is **"to keep His commandments"** with **"all our hearts and with all our souls"**. Sounds exactly like what **Yeshua taught**, doesn't it?!! **Keep His commandments** with all your heart and soul because **he is our husband** and we obey Him because we love Him!!

**Bemidbar 31** begins with the **command for the war with Midian**:

***Bemidbar 31:1*** And *וַיַּעַבְדוּ* spoke to Moshe, saying: <sup>2</sup> "Execute vengeance against the Midianites..."

The **war against Midian** was **not fought** in order to **conquer territory**, but rather to **"execute vengeance"**. Thus the **war was not fought** for **earthly reasons**, but rather it was solely an act of **obeying וַיַּעַבְדוּ**. Although the **battle was fought** in the **physical realm**, it had **spiritual implications**. This is not surprising as we consider this is a **battle against** those who are **worshipping** the **"wrong husband"**, **rebelling against the commandments** of *וַיַּעַבְדוּ*, and even **reverting back to golden calf worship** (2 Kings 17:16). We find support for the **spiritual battle** in the use of one particular **Hebrew word**:

***Bemidbar 31:3*** So Moshe spoke to the people, saying, "**Arm** (*chalats* - *חָלָט*) some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for *וַיַּעַבְדוּ* on Midian.

The **Hebrew חָלָט** (*chalats*) is the **precise word** that is chosen to illustrate the **"armed"** men in **two special battle scenarios** that include **obvious divine intervention**. The **first battle** is when **Yehoshua** was given **strategic instructions** concerning how to take the city of **Jericho**:

*Yehoshua 6:7* And he said to the people, "Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is **armed** (chalats -  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$ ) advance before the ark of יהוה."

In the **second battle**, Jehoshaphat appoints **praise warriors** to be at the "**head of the army**" as they **march towards an enormous enemy army**:

*2 Chronicles 20:21* And when he had consulted with the people, **he appointed those who should sing to יהוה**, and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the **army** (chalats -  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$ ), saying: "Give thanks to יהוה, for His mercy endures forever."

We know that in **both of these battles**, יהוה used **supernatural methods to defeat the enemy**. It was **obedience** to what we would define as **unusual instructions** that brought about **victory in both cases**. In the case of **Yehoshua a wall**, that was large enough for chariots to ride on top of, **simply collapsed**. Concerning **Jehoshaphat**, the army marching against him was estimated by scholars to be close to a **million armed men**. The **Almighty simply caused the army to turn upon itself**. There was so much plunder left over that it took Judah three days to gather it all!

In our parasha, the **war against Midian** was also a **miraculous battle**:

*Bemidbar 31:49* and they said to Moshe, "Your servants have taken **a count of the men of war** who are under our command, and **not a man of us is missing**."

While  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$  (chalats) is used to illustrate an "**armed**" soldier ready for battle, it also means to **provide** with "**strength**". Our gracious **Abba prepares His children to carry out His Spirit-led battles** if we will only be **obedient to His commands**. He **ensures the victory!** Notice another way that  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$  (chalats) is translated:

*Psalm 34:7* The angel of יהוה encamps all around those who fear Him, and **delivers** (chalats -  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$ ) them.

Be sure to take in this **promise**:

*Isaiah 58:11* יהוה will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And **strengthen** (chalats -  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$ ) your bones; **You shall be like a watered garden**, And like a spring of water, **whose waters do not fail**.

Now we can see that  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$  (chalats) does not just point to **physically "arming"**, but it alludes to **more** when translated as "**delivers**" and "**strengthen**". He "**arms**" and equips us to fight **whatever battle we are in!** Friend, are you in a **battle** that you need to be "**delivered**" from or "**strengthened**" to **endure**?

*Job 36:15* But those who suffer he **delivers** (chalats -  $\gamma^{\prime}\zeta\eta$ ) in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction.

From following the **thread** of  $\text{חָלַט}$ , it appears that **sometimes we are “delivered”** (chalats -  $\text{חָלַט}$ ) quickly out of our situation, but other times he **“strengthens”** (chalats -  $\text{חָלַט}$ ) as **He prepares us to walk through difficult times.**

*Psalm 91:15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver (chalats -  $\text{חָלַט}$ ) him and honor him.*

*Psalm 108:6 That Your beloved may be delivered (chalats -  $\text{חָלַט}$ ), Save with Your right hand, and hear me.*

It is interesting that the **first time** we find  $\text{חָלַט}$  (chalats) in the **Torah** it is in reference to the **mildew regulations** for a **home**:

*Vayikra 14:39 "And the priest shall come again on the seventh day and look; and indeed if the plague has spread on the **walls of the house**,<sup>40</sup> "then the priest shall command that they take away (chalats -  $\text{חָלַט}$ ) the stones in which is the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city.*

Here the meaning of  $\text{חָלַט}$  (chalats) is to **“take away”** or to **“tear out”** the **unclean or contaminated “stones” of the “house”**. If you **continue** reading in Vayikra, you will see that **if the contamination continues**, the **entire house** must be **removed from its foundation** and completely **destroyed**.

Now, can we tie all these meanings together? We have a **variety of meanings** of  $\text{חָלַט}$ . We've seen it defined as:

- **Armed**
- **Strengthened**
- **Delivered**
- **Take away**

Could it be that we are **“armed”** and **“strengthened”**, and thus put in a situation to be **“delivered”** when the unclean thing is **“taken away”** from **His house**? When the **contaminated stones** were **“removed”**, the **house** would be **“strengthened”** or **made clean** (assuming no other contamination within). **People** are referred to **“stones”**, i.e. **those who make up His spiritual house**:

*1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a **spiritual house**, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Yah through Yeshua the Messiah.*

Are the **removed “stones”** from **His “house”** those who **refuse to keep the commandments of יהוה**? We know that, as in **Bemidbar 31**, it is **His “vengeance”** that **“judges” us**:

*Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says Adonai. And again, "יהוה will judge His people."*

We also know that **our battle** is **“spiritual”**:

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

And while He “**arms**” (chalats - אָרַמְתִּי) us, He “**disarms**” the enemy:

**Colossians 2:15** Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

A pictographic look at אָרַמְתִּי is also interesting:

- א - picture of a **fence**
- ר - picture of a **shepherd's rod**
- י - picture of **righteousness**

Putting together the three letters – Yeshua is our righteous shepherd who protects us within the fence of His **commandments**. Continuing with the **concept** of אָרַמְתִּי - He arms, provides for, and strengthens us as the sheep of His pasture. He will remove everything **contaminated** from **within the house** (sheep fold) as He provides for our deliverance!

Okay, now it seems that we have drifted far from our Torah reading. Not really, though. There is a **battle** to be **fought**. It is **against Ba'al Peor**...or anything and everything that stands **contrary to the Word**. We find **ourselves equipped, strengthened, and delivered** when we **keep His commandments**. It's also a **spiritual battle** and **He promises He will remove all stones** that are **contaminated** from His **House**.

**Psalms 119:153** Consider my affliction and deliver (chalats - אָרַמְתִּי) me, For I do not forget Your Torah.

**Vengeance belongs** to our **Elohim** and the **final battle** to be fought will also **be His**. We are well aware of **His victory** at the **end** of the **tribulation**. And **He promises** that **some will also be “delivered”** (chalats - אָרַמְתִּי) from that **time of “trouble”** (tsarah - צָרָה)!

**Proverbs 11:8** The **righteous is delivered** (chalats - אָרַמְתִּי) from trouble (tsarah - צָרָה)... through knowledge the righteous will be delivered (chalats - אָרַמְתִּי).

**Zephaniah 1:15** That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble (tsarah - צָרָה) and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

**Shabbat Shalom!**

**Ardelle**

**Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!**

חֹזֵק חֹזֵק וְנִתְחַזַּק