

[Numbers 21:4-9](#)

From Mount Hor the children of Israel set out on the Red Sea road, to bypass the land of Edom. But with their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!"

In punishment the Lord sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died. Then the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned in complaining against the Lord and you. Pray the Lord to take the serpents away from us." So Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses, "Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and whoever looks at it after being bitten will live." Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

[John 8:21-30](#)

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come." So the Jews said, "He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, 'Where I am going you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins." So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "What I told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you in condemnation. But the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world." They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father. So Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him." Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.

This isn't the first time the Israelites have complained in the desert, but this sounds different. Before, when they cried out in hunger, they were given manna from heaven. Now they are complaining about wretched food. It sounds like they're whining. They aren't satisfied with God's provisions. God seems to have taken it the same way because instead of sending food, snakes came a-biting.

The people repented, but it's interesting that the snakes didn't stop biting. God provided a means of healing from the bites. The consequences of sin were still present. The people were forced to look at the symbol of their sin mounted on a pole and then they were healed.

Does this trigger any Passion images for you? We sin. We and our loved ones have to deal with the consequences of our sin. Where do we look for our healing? During Lent, our gaze is constantly directed towards the cross and resurrection. That's the pole we can be healed by.

This passage from Numbers helps me to look towards Jesus in a clearer light. Clearer, at least, than the Pharisees who can not (or will not) understand Jesus revealing Himself to them. The Pharisees missed Jesus identifying himself with the great I AM (what we translate to Yahweh: I AM WHO I AM, the name Moses was given at his calling at the Burning Bush.)

God has provided for His people through all times. We haven't been spared pain and the consequences of sin, but He has always provided for us and offered us healing. During Lent we refocus on His healing gift of the Passion and Resurrection. It is with gratitude we have come to believe in the one who was sent, in the one that was taught, in the one who is always with the Father, in the one who always does what is pleasing to Him, our saving Lord, Jesus Christ.