

## **Midian: Origins and Destiny By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

Chapter 31 of Sefer Bamidbar is devoted to the war that Bnai Yisroel waged against Midian as a punishment for what Midian did to Am Yisroel. Midian actively led us into sin. There was a clear hatred for Am Yisroel and all that Am Yisroel represents. Therefore there was a need to take revenge. Furthermore, we are told in Bamidbar 25:17-18 to hate the Midianim and smite them for they harassed us in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Kozbi the daughter of Tzur, one of the kings of Midian. The Ohr Hachaim states that there was more than a call for revenge in the above-mentioned verses. He explains that the worship of Baal Peor, so animalistic by nature, created an extraordinary desire for immoral pleasures. Once the desires reach such high levels, they become very hard to fight. The only way to combat these desires is by seeing them as a total enemy, a very real threat. Am Yisroel had to see Midian as a source of pure evil that no good could possibly be learned from. It is also noteworthy that Midian had introduced this immorality to us as an act of pure hatred rather than fear, as Rashi points out in Bamidbar 31:2.

Who was Midian? Genealogically, the people of Midian were cousins to us. We are told in Bereishis 25:2 that Midian was one of the sons that Avraham had from Keturah. Interestingly, some of our greatest enemies have been our own cousins, as we find today that among our greatest enemies are the descendants of Yishmael. Both the descendants of Yishmael and the descendants of Midian were involved in the sale of Yosef down to Mitzrayim. [Bereishis 37:28 and 36]. By the time the Bnai Yisroel were enslaved in Mitzrayim, Midian had already been more established as a nation as we know Moshe Rabbeinu ran away from Mitzrayim to Midian to escape punishment from Paroh. He then married Tziporah, the daughter of Yisro, the priest of Midian.

Historians believe Midian to have been on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aquaba, the northern Gulf where the Red Sea splits into two. This Gulf of Aquaba forms the western border even though they often came into the Sinai Peninsula across the Gulf by way of land further north. Their land extended inward from the Gulf bordering on Edom and Moav. The eastern border was not really fixed but believed to extend to the Crystal Plate in the Arabian Peninsula.

We are told in Shoftim 8:28 that after Midian's armies were defeated by Gidon, they were no longer a threat to Am Yisroel. It does not state that they ceased to exist as a nation but we do get that impression from Sefer Yehsaya. At the very least, they were far less important and less powerful. In Yeshaya 9:3 and 10:26, Midian is used as an example of defeat. On both of these verses, Rashi says that Yehsaya Hanavi is

referring to their defeat from Gidon.

Midian is, however, singled out for something special at the end of time. As Midian was known in the ancient world for its swift camels, Midian is also singled out as the source for transportation for gold and other valuable materials that the nations will send to Am Yisroel as gifts at the end of days. In Chapter 60 of Sefer Yeshaya, Am Yisroel is told to rise and shine because their light has come and Hashem's light will shine on them. The nations will be led by Am Yisroel in paying homage to Hashem, their king and creator. In verse 6, we read that an abundance of camels will surround us, the dromedaries [one humped camels] of Midian, Epha, and all from Shevaa will come bearing gold and frankincense to praise Hashem . Am Yisroel will be restored to its rightful place in the world order and even Midian, the lowliest of nations will use their camels or other resources to pay the proper respect to Am Yisroel. All of the immoral ideologies of the world will crumble and submit to the worship of Hashem and all nations of the world will see that Hashem's name is called upon us. May we be Zoche to see this speedily in our day. Amen.