

“Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. Numbers 21:6 NIV

lectio // Numbers 21:4-9

So, let me get this straight. Israelites are complainers, whiners and negative. Is it generic? Maybe. Is it cultural? Probably. Look at what they had been through - 400 years of slavery, I'd be pretty negative if I were, and all my grandparents were slaves. But now they are free, but they don't know how to be free. They had a hard life, but now, in many ways, it's harder - because it required something they had not developed. Faith and trust in a God. Moses is clear about one thing. God sent the snakes! God sent the snakes to kill Israelites. And, they quit complaining. Then in a shocker twist in the story, God doesn't just tell the snakes to leave. No, the snakes stay. And, they keep biting the Israelites. God's remedy, have Moses make a snake statue on a stick. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." You get bit, you get sick, just look at the stick! WHAT the crazy? There is so much symbolic, object lesson stuff in this story, I just don't know if I understand it all. I know that the snake represents sin, and it's deadly. I know that much later, Jesus became sin and was hung up on a stick. And, I know that all who look to him for salvation will be saved, and in this case healed. What did this object lesson mean to the people at that time, coming out of slavery, their world filled with ancient symbols of all kinds of strange statues in their former slave days.

oratio

pray as responding to the words, phrase, sentence that God has stirred within you

Dad,
 Ok, I know this isn't what I'm supposed to get out of this story, but I feel sorry for the Israelites! In my own slow, stubborn, selfishness I can see myself complaining about freedom and living in the top 1% of the humans on the planet. I am filled with doubts, fears and even ungratefulness at times, should I look for snakes coming my way? Should I get a snake stick because I'm just an idiot? I do not learn my lessons very well, that's why I feel sorry for the Israelites, they didn't either.

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root