



Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Numbers – Part 2

Interpreting the Text:

1. What stood out to you in what you just read? Was there anything that seemed unusual, surprising or bothersome in what you just read?
2. Who are the main characters? Where are they from? How are they described? Does the text characterize Israelites vs non-Israelites differently? How?
3. Do you think it is significant that Balaam was a “foreign,” non-Israelite prophet? Why or why not?

Applying the Text:

1. Given that the book of Numbers expresses hostility toward non-Israelites, why do you think it features a non-Israelite protagonist? What rhetorical purpose might this choice have served? How might this lesson be used when thinking about our own diverse communities?
2. What is a religious “zealot?” What inspires zealotry? Can religious zeal ever be positive? At what point does religious zeal become dangerous?
3. Toward the end of the video [14:30], Dr. Collins points out that a kind of religious zeal similar to Phinehas’ “can be found in all religions.” Reflect on this idea. Do you agree? What might this look like in your own religious practice?