



Understanding the Parsha

B'midbar 19:1-22:1 & 22:2-25:9



We will Learn how to

- 1) **interpret the main theme (subject) of a Parsha** (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) **make thematic connections to that Parsha** (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) **learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.**

In this study we will do different parts of Chukat and Balak and comment on them together in one (long) lesson. If, when you study this lesson, Chukat and Balak are double portions, you will need to study the entire lesson in one week. If Chukat and Balak are separate lessons, you'll have two weeks to finish the lesson.

Searching the Parshiot Part I ~ From Generation to Generation

In order to properly understand a passage we must always be aware of context, constantly searching for the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How of the Parshiot. The answers to these questions will help you understand the passage correctly. Last week, we studied the rebellion of Korach, Dathan and Abiram. We were looking at the generation that left Egypt. Let's see how things change within the span of a couple of chapters.

Take a few minutes to read all of Parashat Chukat, Numbers 19:1-22:1. You may remember that last week's sidra described the condemnation of the generation that left Egypt to die in the desert during a period of forty years. Do you

realize that Numbers 20-22 describe the journey of the next generation of Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) towards the Promised Land? That's right. How do we know this? Read Numbers 22:1.

Do you know what important event (concerning the words of the Torah) happened on the plains of Moab?

This was the place M delivered the contents of the book of Deuteronomy.
Moses

Notice, Numbers 22:1 says that Am Yisrael were on the bank of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. Therefore, we know this is the fortieth year after the Exodus when Am Yisrael arrived at the Promised Land. But, wait a minute! In Parashat Korach, we were reading about the sins of the first generation during their second year in the wilderness. Are we supposed to believe that Parashat Chukat happened thirty-eight years later! Yes, you are. Traditionally, the Jewish sages have divided the book of numbers into two primary divisions.

1. The first half of the book of Numbers, Numbers 1:1-18:32 (Parashat Bemidbar — Korach) narrates the trials and tribulations of the generation of the Exodus.

2. The second half of the book, Numbers 19:1-36:13 (Parashat Chukat — Massei) narrates the wars of the second generation as they approached the Promised Land.

So the question you should be asking is, “What happened to those other thirty-eight years?” Or more importantly, “Why did Adonai choose to not record the events of those years?”

What was the tragic consequence of the sin of the spies?

The entire nation was condemned to die in the wilderness over the next 4 years.
40

Perhaps this is the reason for the Torah's silence during the thirty-eight fateful years during which the generation of the Exodus died in the wilderness. It was a period marked by death and tragedy (Numbers 14:33-35)! The generation who had experienced the Exodus was not allowed to possess the land.

How do the deaths of Miriam and Aaron give us a clue that this is a transition from one generation to the next?

Miriam and Aaron might be some of the last individuals to die from the f generation. Their deaths give us a clue that everyone else had a died.
first already

Moses, Aaron and Miriam were the spiritual leaders of Am Yisrael from the beginning. So, we should expect that they would possibly be the last to die. In fact, Moses death is hinted at in Numbers 20:12 when Adonai said that neither he nor Aaron would be allowed to bring Am Yisrael into the Promised Land. Thematically we can see that this chapter shows us a major change in the story! **An entire generation has passed away and a new one has emerged**. Can you think of another verse from another portion of Scripture that clearly points to the events of this sidra (Torah portion) as happening in the fortieth year? **Read Numbers 33:38**.



This verse says that Aaron died on the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Exodus. And, Deuteronomy 1:3 states that Moses delivered the words of the book of Deuteronomy in the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the Exodus. These are more evidence that the events in Parashat Chukat (beginning in Numbers 20:1) happened in the fortieth year after the Exodus.

Read Numbers 19 and think about its general topic/theme. With the understanding that the previous generation has died (Numbers 1-18), and that the new generation is about to go in to possess the Land (Numbers 20:1-Deuteronomy), can you tell why Numbers 19

happenes where it does, hint— look for the general subject/theme of Numbers 19 and compare it to the destiny of the generation that left Egypt?

Numbers 19 teaches us about C cleansing from death. After contact with a corpse, a person must be cleansed

with water containing the ashes of the red heifer. Am Yisrael was condemned to die in the wilderness. Now that the fortieth year has arrived, that generation has almost completely vanished through death. A new generation has arrived, one that was not condemned to death in the wilderness.

By placing the instructions for cleansing from death between the chapters telling the fate of the first generation (Numbers 1-18) and the hopes for life of the second generation, the Torah teaches that the second generation has been

C cleansed from and/or separated from the defilement that happened because of the death associated with the first generation.

As you can see, there is a deeper meaning why the instructions for the cleansing from death are placed in this location of the Torah. Why wasn't Numbers 19 placed in Leviticus near Parashat Tazria and Metzora, which both taught about defilement because of contact with the realm of death? That would have been the perfect place for it. But, as usual, many times the Torah will record certain teachings in thematic order in order to help us see a connection between two seemingly unrelated passages. By putting Numbers 19 between the stories about the two different generations of Am Yisrael the Torah teaches us that the sins of the first generation were atoned for and that the second generation needed to make a complete break from the death of the first generation.

In summary, we are looking at a new generation of Israelites from Numbers 20 on. The generation of the Exodus has passed away. This sidra is one of transition. First Miriam died, then Aaron. Moses will be the last person to die from the first generation. As we continue to read, we need to allow this understanding to help us with our understanding.

Understanding the Complaints of the Second Generation

As you read about Am Yisrael's complaining in this week's sidra, did you get a feeling that we have already been in this place before? After all that happened to the generation before, especially their condemnation to die in the wilderness, you would think the second generation would have learned enough to keep them from making the same mistakes. Let's study their complaints thematically, by comparing and contrasting them to the complaints of the first generation, to see if we can get a better understanding about the nature of the second generation.

Read Numbers 20:1-6. Doesn't this story sound familiar? Where have we seen a similar story?

This same event happened with the f first generation, read Exodus 17:1-7.

When you compare these two stories, how many things are the same that can you see between them?

In both stories, there was no W water

for the people, the people C complained,

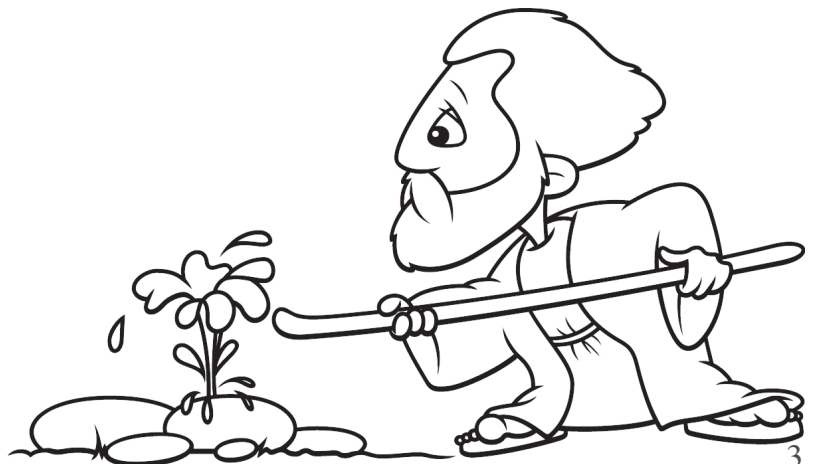
the people complained about having left

C Egypt Adonai presents a solution,

Moses is commanded to take a S staff

and go in view of the people to bring forth water

from a R rock.



Can see, these two stories are almost identical. Or are they?

Read the specific claims of the people in Exodus 17:3. What did the people mean by saying, “why have you brought us up from Egypt?” This was said quite a bit by the first generation. Although it doesn’t say so in this passage, if you just read between the lines, you can tell that Am Yisrael wanted to go BACK to Egypt! We know this because from the very moment Am Yisrael left Egypt, they repeatedly expressed their desire to return there whenever their situation became uncomfortable. In the following passages, Am Yisrael said that they would have been better off back in Egypt—Exodus 14:11-12; 16:3. Implied in their question, “why have you brought us up from Egypt?” is the desire to return.



Read Numbers 20:3-5 carefully. Am Yisrael again ask the question to Moses, “Why did you bring us up from Egypt?” Are the people longing for Egypt as the previous generation had?

N _____.

How can we be sure of this? Pay careful attention to the last part of Numbers 20:5. What are the people longing for?

A place of s _____, g _____, p _____ and f _____.

What place do they desire? Do you think it’s Egypt? If you thought Egypt, read Numbers 13:21-25 and Deuteronomy 8:7-9. According to these passages, which land has pomegranates, figs and grapes— Egypt or Canaan (the Promised Land)?

The P _____ L _____, not Egypt!

Now, notice the amazing similarity between the words— pomegranate, figs, grapes— in Numbers 20:5 and Numbers 13:23 and Deuteronomy 8:7-9. I ask again, is the second generation longing for Egypt or the Promised Land?

Am Yisrael’s usage of the words grapes, pomegranates and figs— which we know are characteristics used to describe

Canaan, not Egypt— proves that they were longing for the P _____ L _____.

By comparing Numbers 20:1-6 with Exodus 17:1-7 we see how the complaint is the same by both generations. The fact that the second generation complained in the same way as their forefathers under identical circumstances would lead us to believe that the second generation had learned nothing from the deaths of their ancestors and their forty years of wandering. And, the comparison between the two passages could also make you think that the second generation also wanted to return to Egypt. However, through looking closer, we were able to see that although the second generation complained, as did their forefathers, their complaints were from a strong desire to finally get to the Promised Land, not in a desire to return to Egypt! We see that all is not lost. This simple comparison has shown us that their hearts are set on Eretz Yisrael, not Egypt like their forefathers! This new generation is ready to take the land. They were born and raised in the desert and do not have the slave mentality that characterized their ancestors. Although they are still impatient like their forefathers— this is why they complain— they are ready to get on with the inheritance. **Spiritually speaking, the desire to return to Egypt is always seen as a negative characteristic, and the desire to enter the Promised Land is seen as virtuous.**

Let’s look at the other complaint of this new generation. Read Numbers 20:14-21:9. Pay close attention to Numbers 21:5. In which passage of the Torah did Am Yisrael desire food before?

Read Numbers 11:4-6, paying particular attention to their complaint. In Parashat Beha’alotkha, we discovered the real reason why Am Yisrael craved the food. The issue was much deeper than just a desire for food. Adonai knew the people had rejected Him. The complaint about the food was just an excuse to draw away from Him and His command- 4

ments. Notice how the people said that they ate “freely” in Egypt. What? They were slaves! But think about this; in Egypt, they were free from the commandments of Adonai, whereas now, they must carefully obey His words in order just to eat! Remember, they could only gather the manna at a specified time, etc. Also, the people are longing for Egypt! Egypt is where their hearts were located. This view that the complaint against the food was just an excuse to pull away from Adonai is the opinion of the great RASHI. His commentary on Numbers 11:4 reads as follows:

"Complaining" means without cause, for they sought a pretext for drawing away from God, as for their cries to eat flesh, is it the case that they had none? The verse has already told us that "a great mixed multitude went out with them, also sheep and cattle, VERY NUMEROUS HERDS" (Shemot 12:38)! But perhaps they had already consumed them? (This cannot be for) at the time of their entry into the land, the verse states that "the tribes of Reuven and Gad had numerous flocks, very large." (BeMidbar 31:1). Rather, they only sought a pretext.

Although the new generation also complains about the manna, their complaint is different. Explain why the second generation was more “justified” in complaining about the manna than the first?

The second generation had been eating manna for f _____ years! The first generation had only just begun eating the manna.

But there's a deeper issue here, which relates to a point brought up in the previous section concerning Am Yisrael's eagerness to finally enter the land.

What words were used to tell you about Am Yisrael's attitude before they complained in Numbers 21:5—hint: read Numbers 21:4?

The translations say that Am Yisrael grew i _____ along the way, or that they were d _____ along the way.

Why were they impatient? Read Numbers 20:14-21 & 21:4. Do you realize that if Edom had allowed Am Yisrael to pass through their land they would have been in Eretz Yisrael? They were that close! After forty years their goal was in sight, only to have their hopes dashed to pieces when Edom refused to allow them pass through. Now, according to Numbers 21:4, they had to go around Edom, which meant going back into the desert, retracing their journey! Can you feel their discouragement? As we've already seen, Am Yisrael are eager to make it into the Promised Land. Unfortunately, they expressed their impatience by complaining.

Once again, by being aware of the context of Am Yisrael's situation, we see that the complaints of the second generation were totally different than those of the first generation who longed to **return** to Egypt. The complaints of Numbers 20-21 are totally different than those from Exodus-Numbers 18. Although not perfect, the generation of Numbers 20-21 had improved beyond the attitude of their ancestors.

The Courageous Spirit of the Second Generation

We have seen how the second generation had overcome some of the character flaws of the first generation (but not all of them). Let's see another example of how the second generation was more prepared to take on the task of entering the Promised Land.

In Numbers 11:1, beginning in Parashat Shelach, we learned the reason why the first generation began to openly show a bad attitude. They feared war. If you will remember, when Am Yisrael actually began journeying towards the land from Mount Sinai, they also began to openly complain. We also saw that those complaints were without a real cause, for they sought a pretext for drawing away from Adonai (Rashi). In other words, they



were trying to slow down the journey to the Promised Land for some reason. Why? They didn't want to have to struggle. As long as Adonai fed them and took care of them at the mountain they were happy. But when they needed to journey towards Eretz Yisrael to fight and struggle, they wanted to return to Egypt. However, the real reason was not that they feared war. The real reason was that they didn't trust Adonai's faithfulness to cause their enemies to flee before them as they went into battle.

Do you remember why Adonai took the first generation through the wilderness to reach Canaan instead of the way of the Philistines?

When Am Yisrael first began their exodus from Egypt, Adonai did not lead them by way of the Philistines, because He said they may change their minds when they see W_____ and return to Egypt—Read Exodus 13:17.
JEM

He knew their hearts would melt. The Torah teaches us that the first generation of Am Yisrael that left Egypt was extremely afraid of war.

Let's compare them to the second generation. Read Numbers 21:1-3. This passage is a perfect contrast of the two generations. This generation is extremely proactive. They took it upon themselves to make a vow requiring that they fight King Arad! As you can see, these guys are not afraid of war! They're ready! LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE, is the order of the day! If you read further, you will see that the second generation went on to defeat Sihon, King of the Amorites and Og, King of Bashan!

Comparing and contrasting stories that are clearly thematically similar opens a treasure chest of wisdom and understanding for you if you are patient. We have seen that the second generation, although still human, has learned from the mistakes of their ancestors. A quick reading of Numbers 20-21 would lead one to believe that they were just like their ancestors. But we have seen, that that's clearly not the case. They long for Canaan, not Egypt. They're ready to take the Kingdom with violence instead of cower in fear.

Searching the Parshiot Part II ~ The Doctrine of Balaam

Read Numbers 25:1-9. It seems that the Moabites and the Midianites discovered Israel's weak spot. They knew they couldn't defeat Am Yisrael in military conquest, so they decided to cause Israel to sin before Adonai. This was very successful, as twenty-four thousand Israelites lost their lives by turning to the women and gods of the Midianites and Moabites. As a result of this incident, Adonai commanded Am Yisrael to destroy the Midianites. **This event is recorded for us in Numbers 31:1-16 which you will read now.**

In Numbers 31:8, it mentions that Israel slew Balaam along with all of the male inhabitants of Midian. Did you notice the new information given in Numbers 31:16 concerning Balaam? It says that the "doctrine of Balaam" caused Am Yisrael to commit betrayal against Adonai in the matter of Baal Peor! Remember, Balaam had unsuccessfully tried to curse Am Yisrael for the Moabites and Midianites. He was hired to curse Am Yisrael by Balak, King of the Moabites. So how is Balak united with the Midianites? **Read Numbers 22:2-7.** It appears that the Midianites were also involved in the plot of



Balak, King of Moab. We know that Balaam greatly desired the money he was offered because He tried to resist Adonai's will by cursing Am Yisrael three times before he finally gave up. Or did he? It appears that Balaam didn't give up. Although Balak may have written him off as useless, it seems as if the Midianites may have been able to pay Balaam for another matter. According to Numbers 31:16, the incident involving the Moabite and Midianite women was masterminded by Balaam. Knowing that he could not curse Israel, he took another strategy. He knew that Adonai would punish Am Yisrael if they turned against Him; so, he told the Moabites and Midianites to send their daughters to commit fornication with Am Yisrael and to introduce Am Yisrael to their gods. Why? In this way, Am Yisrael would lose their distinctiveness (to be TOTALLY different from

everyone else). Through intermarriage with the Midianites and Moabites, it would be easier to turn Am Yisrael's hearts away from Adonai. And, by connecting the three countries through blood relationships, Moab and Midian would possibly be protected from attack by Israel. You know, you can't exactly attack family. At the same time, Moab and Midian would introduce the worship of their gods to Am Yisrael. We know what the end result would have been. **Am Yisrael would fail in their mission to be witnesses of the one and only true Elohim (God)**! So, we see this is a well thought out plan to totally mess up Adonai's plan given to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, whereby Am Yisrael would be a blessing to the nations! This is called **the sin of assimilation** (to become like everyone else), where Adonai's people lose their distinctiveness! Whenever a person mixes **the commandments and worship of YHVH, the one and only true Elohim** with the ways of the pagan; **it is the same as mixing good with evil.**

It seems as if Midian and Moab were extremely interested in stopping Am Yisrael from fulfilling their Divine destiny. Why was this so. Why did Moab and Midian want to pay Balaam to curse Israel?

Because they were in mortal fear of Am Yisrael.

Read Numbers 22:3-4, and 6. They feared for their lives! They had already seen what Am Yisrael did to Amalek, the Amorites and Bashan. Out of fear, they tried to have Am Yisrael cursed since they knew they couldn't defeat them on their own. Having failed in that matter, they decided, "if you can't beat them, join them!"

Read Exodus 23:27 and Numbers 10:35. As you can see, it was Adonai's original plan to go before Am Yisrael and cause their enemies to quake in fear. As we've read, this truly is happening. **Now read Joshua 2:8-11.** Once again, we have testimony that the inhabitants of the land are quaking in fear as Am Yisrael approached!

Searching the Parshiot Part III ~ Back to the Future

Throughout the lessons, you have been shown that the Torah is a prophetic document. The stories in the Torah are not just historical events of the past. Each and every story contains prophetic and Messianic meaning! It is through thematic analysis that these deeper levels of understanding and application will come out. Amongst the Jewish Torah scholars, it is pretty much an established principle that the events which happened in the lives of the Patriarchs were prophetic foreshadows of future events in the lives of their descendants. For example, in hindsight, we know that the story of the binding of Isaac (the Akeida) is a perfect picture of our heavenly Father who offered His only beloved son as an olah (whole burnt offering)—Genesis 22. Therefore, we understand that the story in Genesis 22 had Messianic meaning.

Well, did you know that the entire story of Am Yisrael's going down into Egypt, slavery and deliverance are taught BEFORE the book of Exodus even starts? That's right. **Please read Genesis 12:10-20**—the account of Abram's going down (hint) into Egypt. Why was this story recorded? Although this story stands alone as a true historical event of the past, it also had prophetic meaning. This event in the life of Abram was 1) a prophetic picture of the future going down of his descendants into the land of Egypt, 2) their enslavement and 3) their redemption. To see this revelation, you need to study its major themes. If you simply view Abram as a Torah Picture of the Holy One and Sarai as a Torah Picture of Am Yisrael, you will easily be able to see this prophetic picture.

Just as Abram is married to Sarai, Adonai is married to Am Yisrael.

A famine in Canaan caused Abram to descend with Sarai into Egypt. In Genesis 42:5 it is a famine in

Canaan that led Jacob to send his sons to Egypt, and which ultimately caused the entire family to descend into Egypt.

Abram went to Egypt to sojourn there. The children of Israel "sojourn" in Egypt.

The famine of Genesis 12 and Genesis 42 were both characterized as very severe.

Before arriving in Egypt Abram convinced Sarai to change her identity. Thus, when they arrive, the

Egyptians do not know Sarai is Abram's wife. In the story of the Exodus, the Egyptians do not

know that Am Yisrael are the people of God, married to Him.

Just as P
Pharaoh tried to take Sarai for his own possession by forcing her to marry him, it was also
P
Pharaoh who took the Am Yisrael as his possession by enslaving them.

Adonai sent p
plagues on Pharaoh and his household because of his possession of Sarai. In the exodus account, the Holy One used p
plagues against Pharaoh and the land of Egypt because he possessed [through slavery] Am Yisrael. In both cases, the result was the release of the bride.

When Abram left Egypt, he left with much W
wealth that he had gotten because of Sarai. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they left with much W
wealth that they had taken from the Egyptians.

The thematic connections between Genesis 12:10-20 and the story of the Exodus are so clear and complete that they are virtually irresistible and conclusive—the story of the Exodus was foreshadowed in Abram's descent into Egypt. Let's see how an event in the life of our Patriarch, Jacob, was a prophetic picture of future events in the lives of his descendants!

Read Genesis 34:1-35:7. Concentrate on two main events in this passage. The first event concerns the proposal of Hamor— Genesis 34:8-10. The second event concerns Jacob's travels to Bethel— Genesis 35:5.

Do you see a thematic connection between the proposal Hamor made after the incident with Dinah and our reading in Balak?

In both instances, the pagans were trying to get Am Yisrael to a
assimilate with them!

See how many more connections you can make before reading the list below. Hint, compare Genesis 34 to Numbers 25:1-9 and Numbers 31:1-20.

In both stories, the pagans tried to i
intermarry with Am Yisrael.

Both stories tell us about an Israelite and a pagan who are l
living together.

In both stories, the pagan men were d
destroyed. destroyed.

In both stories, the pagan W
women and

C
children, as well as the booty

from the slaughter, were kept by Am Yisrael.

Now, do you think this is all a mere coincidence?

Do you see the thematic connection between Jacob's travels to Bethel, Genesis 35:1-7 and Numbers 22:1-6?

In both cases, the inhabitants of the land of Canaan are gripped with f
fear as Am Yisrael travel to the Land!

Did you also notice that the two events



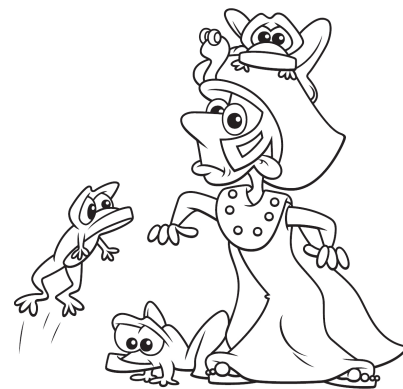
The threat of assimilation and the fear of the Canaanites when they see Am Yisrael enter the land, are near to each other in these two separate books?

In other words, it's not a coincidence that those two events are recorded together when Jacob brought his family into Eretz Yisrael and when Am Yisrael approached Eretz Yisrael from the wilderness!

You have just witnessed another example of how the lives of the Patriarchs were prophetic foreshadows of the future events of their descendants. The threat of assimilation presented by Hamor was a prophetic picture of how Am Yisrael would face this same threat when they entered the Promised Land! Also, the fear that fell upon the Canaanites when Jacob entered Eretz Yisrael was a prophetic foreshadow of the fear that would one day grip the inhabitants of Canaan when Am Yisrael came to take away the Land as their inheritance! Once again, we can see that the stories of the Torah have as much to do with the future as they do with the past. Baruch HaShem YHVH!!!
(Praise the Name YHVH!)



Can you find the words from this Parsha?



C	E	B	E	M	I	R	I	A	M	G	H
H	A	M	G	O	D	S	M	R	A	E	I
U	S	T	I	A	A	R	O	N	N	N	G
K	A	L	A	B	E	N	D	D	N	E	H
A	M	H	E	K	I	S	E	P	A	R	G
T	Y	O	P	N	O	M	A	A	L	A	B
F	I	G	S	N	A	I	D	I	M	T	I
H	S	S	S	E	N	R	E	D	L	I	W
S	R	K	O	E	S	T	G	C	O	O	A
C	A	N	A	A	N	E	Y	I	H	N	R
W	E	S	N	A	G	A	P	L	T	S	R
S	L	W	O	M	A	N	T	R	P	E	H

CHUKAT
BALAK
AM YISRAEL
MOSES
MOAB
AARON
MIRIAM
CANAAN
WILDERNESS
GENERATIONS
EGYPT
GRAPES
FIGS
MANNA
EDOM
WAR
BALAAM
MIDIAN
GODS
WOMEN
PAGANS