

King Balak of Moab Asks Balaam to Curse Israel (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 22:2–40

King Balak of Moab and the Elders of Midian Conspire to Destroy Israel

2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

4a Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.”

Balak Asks Balaam to Curse Israel

4b And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.

5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, *in* the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, “Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.

6 Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the *fees for* divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak’s words to him.

8 He said to them, “Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me.” And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?”

10 Balaam said to God, “Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent *word* to me,

11 ‘Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them out.’”

12 God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.”

13 So Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak’s leaders, “Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.”

14 The leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

Balak Asks a Second Time

15 Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and more distinguished than the former.

16 They came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, ‘Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me;

17 for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse this people for me.’”

18 Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.

19 Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will speak to me.”

20 God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, rise up *and* go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.”

21 So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab.

Balaam’s Talking Donkey

22 But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him.

23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way.

24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, *with* a wall on this side and a wall on that side.

25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again.

26 The angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left.

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

29 Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now."

30 The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me.

33 But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live."

34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back."

35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you." So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

Balak Meets Balaam

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border.

37 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not urgently send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?"

38 So Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak."

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth.

40 Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and the leaders who were with him.

Balaam's Seven Oracles (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 22:41–24:24

Balaam's First Oracle

22:41 Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, and he saw from there a portion of the people.

23:1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here."

2 Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a bare hill.

4 Now God met Balaam, and he said to Him, “I have set up the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.”

5 Then the LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus.”

6 So he returned to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab.

7 He took up his discourse and said,

“From Aram Balak has brought me,
Moab’s king from the mountains of the East,
‘Come curse Jacob for me,
And come, denounce Israel!’

8 “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

9 “As I see him from the top of the rocks,
And I look at him from the hills;
Behold, a people *who* dwells apart,
And will not be reckoned among the nations.

10 “Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the upright,
And let my end be like his!”

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed them!”

12 He replied, “Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?”

Balaam’s Second Oracle

13 Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from where you may see them, although you will only see the extreme end of them and will not see all of them; and curse them for me from there.”

14 So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on *each* altar.

15 And he said to Balak, “Stand here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet *the LORD* over there.”

16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.”

17 He came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the leaders of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?”

18 Then he took up his discourse and said,

“Arise, O Balak, and hear;
Give ear to me, O son of Zippor!
19 “God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

20 “Behold, I have received *a command* to bless;
When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it.

21 “He has not observed misfortune in Jacob;
Nor has He seen trouble in Israel;
The LORD his God is with him,

And the shout of a king is among them.

- 22 “God brings them out of Egypt,
He is for them like the horns of the wild ox.
- 23 “For there is no omen against Jacob,
Nor is there any divination against Israel;
At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob
And to Israel, what God has done!
- 24 “Behold, a people rises like a lioness,
And as a lion it lifts itself;
It will not lie down until it devours the prey,
And drinks the blood of the slain.”

25 Then Balak said to Balaam, “Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!”

26 But Balaam replied to Balak, “Did I not tell you, ‘Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do’?”

Balaam’s Third Oracle

27 Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God that you curse them for me from there.”

28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the wasteland.

29 Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here.”

30 Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on *each* altar.

24:1 When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek omens but he set his face toward the wilderness.

2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

3 He took up his discourse and said,

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened;

- 4 The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered,
- 5 How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
Your dwellings, O Israel!
- 6 “Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens beside the river,
Like aloes planted by the LORD,
Like cedars beside the waters.
- 7 “Water will flow from his buckets,
And his seed *will be* by many waters,
And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.
- 8 “God brings him out of Egypt,
He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
He will devour the nations *who are* his adversaries,
And will crush their bones in pieces,
And shatter *them* with his arrows.
- 9 “He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him?”

Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
And cursed is everyone who curses you.”

10 Then Balak’s anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times!

11 Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor.”

12 Balaam said to Balak, “Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying,

13 ‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the LORD speaks, that I will speak’?

14 And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, *and* I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come.”

Balaam’s Fourth Oracle

15 He took up his discourse and said,

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

16 The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered.

17 “I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

18 “Edom shall be a possession,
Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.

19 “One from Jacob shall have dominion,
And will destroy the remnant from the city.”

Balaam’s Fifth Oracle—Against the Amalekites

20 And he looked at Amalek and took up his discourse and said,

“Amalek was the first of the nations,
But his end *shall be* destruction.”

Balaam’s Sixth Oracle—Against the Kenites

21 And he looked at the Kenite, and took up his discourse and said,

“Your dwelling place is enduring,
And your nest is set in the cliff.

22 “Nevertheless Kain will be consumed;
How long will Asshur keep you captive?”

Balaam's Seventh Oracle—Against Assyria

23 Then he took up his discourse and said,

“Alas, who can live except God has ordained it?

24 “But ships *shall come* from the coast of Kittim,
And they shall afflict Asshur and will afflict Eber;
So they also *will come* to destruction.”

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