

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 Balak son of Zippor saw all that the Israelites had done to the Amorites.

3 And the Moabites were greatly afraid of the people, because they were so numerous. The Moabites were sick with fear because of the Israelites.

4a So the Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “Now this mass of people will lick up everything around us, as the bull devours the grass of the field.

Balak Asks Balaam to Curse Israel

4b Now Balak son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at this time.

5 And he sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is by the Euphrates River in the land of Amaw, to summon him, saying, “Look, a nation has come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth, and they are settling next to me.

6 So now, please come and curse this nation for me, for they are too powerful for me. Perhaps I will prevail so that we may conquer them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.”

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fee for divination in their hand. They came to Balaam and reported to him the words of Balak.

8 He replied to them, “Stay here tonight, and I will bring back to you whatever word the LORD may speak to me.” So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

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

10 Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent a message to me, saying,

11 “Look, a nation has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Come now and put a curse on them for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out.”

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

13 So Balaam got up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, “Go to your land, for the LORD has refused to permit me to go with you.”

14 So the princes of Moab departed and went back to Balak and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

Balak Asks a Second Time

15 Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first.

16 And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak son of Zippor: ‘Please do not let anything hinder you from coming to me.

17 For I will honor you greatly, and whatever you tell me I will do. So come, put a curse on this nation for me.’”

18 Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, “Even if Balak would give me his palace full of silver and gold, I could not transgress the commandment of the LORD my God to do less or more.

19 Now therefore, please stay the night here also, that I may know what more the LORD might say to me.”

20 God came to Balaam that night, and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, get up and go with them; but the word that I will say to you, that you must do.”

21 So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

Balaam’s Talking Donkey

22 Then God’s anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him.

23 And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand, so the donkey turned aside from the road and went into the field. But Balaam beat the donkey, to make her turn back to the road.

24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a path among the vineyards, where there was a wall on either side.

25 And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself into the wall, and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall. So he beat her again.

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

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she crouched down under Balaam. Then Balaam was angry, and he beat his donkey with a staff.

28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?”

29 And Balaam said to the donkey, “You have made me look stupid; I wish there were a sword in my hand, for I would kill you right now.”

30 The donkey said to Balaam, “Am not I your donkey that you have ridden ever since I was yours until this day? Have I ever attempted to treat you this way?” And he said, “No.”

31 Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand; so he bowed his head and threw himself down with his face to the ground.

32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to oppose you because what you are doing is perverse before me.

33 The donkey saw me and turned from me these three times. If she had not turned from me, I would have killed you but saved her alive."

34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood against me in the road. So now, if it is evil in your sight, I will go back home."

35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you may only speak the word that I will speak to you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Balak Meets Balaam

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at a city of Moab which was on the border of the Arnon at the boundary of his territory.

37 Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send again and again to you to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?"

38 Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you. Now, am I able to speak just anything? I must speak only the word that God puts in my mouth."

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

40 And Balak sacrificed bulls and sheep, and sent some to Balaam, and to the princes who were with him.

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

Numbers 22:41–24:24

Balaam's First Oracle

22:41 Then on the next morning Balak took Balaam, and brought him up to Bamoth Baal. From there he saw the extent of the nation.

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

2 So Balak did just as Balaam had said. Balak and Balaam then offered on each altar a bull and a ram.

3 Balaam said to Balak, "Station yourself by your burnt offering, and I will go off; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he reveals to me I will tell you." Then he went to a deserted height.

4 Then God met Balaam, who said to him, "I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

5 Then the LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you."

6 So he returned to him, and he was still standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

7 Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying,

"Balak, the king of Moab, brought me from Aram,
out of the mountains of the east, saying,
'Come, pronounce a curse on Jacob for me;
come, denounce Israel.'

8 How can I curse one whom God has not cursed,
or how can I denounce one whom the LORD has not denounced?

9 For from the top of the rocks I see them;
from the hills I watch them.
Indeed, a nation that lives alone,
and it 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 the end of my life be like theirs."

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but on the contrary you have only blessed them!"

12 Balaam replied, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?"

Balaam's Second Oracle

13 Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you can observe them. You will see only a part of them, but you will not see all of them. Curse them for me from there."

14 So Balak brought Balaam to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

15 And Balaam said to Balak, "Station yourself here by your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD there.

16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a message in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you."

17 When Balaam came to him, he was still standing by his burnt offering, along with the princes of Moab. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"

18 Balaam uttered his oracle, and said,

"Rise up, Balak, and hear;

Listen to me, son of Zippor:

19 God is not a man, that he should lie,
nor a human being, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not make it happen?

20 Indeed, I have received a command to bless;
he has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

21 He has not looked on iniquity in Jacob,
nor has he seen trouble in Israel.

The LORD their God is with them;

his acclamation as king is among them.

22 God brought them out of Egypt.
They have, as it were, the strength of a wild bull.

23 For there is no spell against Jacob,
nor is there any divination against Israel.

At this time it must be said of Jacob

and of Israel, 'Look at what God has done!'

24 Indeed, the people will rise up like a lioness,
and like a lion raises himself up;
they will not lie down until they eat their prey,
and drink the blood of the slain."

25 Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!"

26 But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the LORD speaks, I must do'?"

Balaam's Third Oracle

27 Balak said to Balaam, "Come, please; I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there."

28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that looks toward the wilderness.

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

30 So Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered 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 the other times to seek for omens, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

2 When Balaam lifted up his eyes, he saw Israel camped tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

3 Then he uttered this oracle:

"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor;

the oracle of the man whose eyes are open;

4 the oracle of the one who hears the words of God,
who sees a vision from the Almighty,
although falling flat on the ground with eyes open:

5 'How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob,
and your dwelling places, O Israel!

6 They are like valleys stretched forth,
like gardens by the river's side,
like aloes that the LORD has planted,
and like cedar trees beside the waters.

7 He will pour the water out of his buckets,
and their descendants will be like abundant water;

their king will be greater than Agag,
and their kingdom will be exalted.

- 8 God brought them out of Egypt.
They have, as it were, the strength of a young bull;
they will devour hostile people
and will break their bones
and will pierce them through with arrows.
- 9 They crouch and lie down like a lion,
and as a lioness, who can stir him?
Blessed is the one who blesses you,
and cursed is the one who curses you!”

10 Then Balak became very angry at Balaam, and he struck his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have done nothing but bless them these three times!

11 So now, go back where you came from! I said that I would greatly honor you; but now the LORD has stood in the way of your honor.”

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

13 ‘If Balak would give me his palace full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD to do either good or evil of my own will, but whatever the LORD tells me I must speak’?

14 And now, I am about to go back to my own people. Come now, and I will advise you as to what this people will do to your people in the future.”

Balaam’s Fourth Oracle

15 Then he uttered this oracle:

“The oracle of Balaam son of Beor;
the oracle of the man whose eyes are open;

- 16 the oracle of the one who hears the words of God,
and who knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees a vision from the Almighty,
although falling flat on the ground with eyes open:

- 17 ‘I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not close at hand.
A star will march forth out of Jacob,
and a scepter will rise out of Israel.
He will crush the skulls of Moab,
and the heads of all the sons of Sheth.

- 18 Edom will be a possession,
Seir, his enemies, will also be a possession;
but Israel will act valiantly.

- 19 A ruler will be established from Jacob;
he will destroy the remains of the city.”

Balaam’s Fifth Oracle—Against the Amalekites

20 Then Balaam looked on Amalek and delivered this oracle:

“Amalek was the first of the nations,
but his end will be that he will perish.”

Balaam’s Sixth Oracle—Against the Kenites

21 Then he looked on the Kenites and uttered this oracle:

“Your dwelling place seems strong,
and your nest is set on a rocky cliff.

- 22 Nevertheless the Kenite will be consumed.
How long will Asshur take you away captive?”

Balaam’s Seventh Oracle—Against Assyria

23 Then he uttered this oracle:

“O, who will survive when God does this!
24 Ships will come from the coast of Kittim,
and will afflict Asshur, and will afflict Eber,
and he will also perish forever.”

Balaam Teaches Balak How to Corrupt Israel (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 24:25	Numbers 31:16a	Revelation 2:14
25 Balaam got up and departed and returned to his home, and Balak also went his way.	16a Look, these people through the counsel of Balaam caused the Israelites to act treacherously against the LORD in the matter of Peor—	14 But I have a few things against you: You have some people there who follow the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.

Israel Worships Baal of Peor (September–December 1407 BC)

Numbers 25

Israel Worships Baal of Peor and a Plague Strikes the People

- 1 When Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab.
- 2 These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
- 3 When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, the anger of the LORD flared up against Israel. [cf. [Num 31:16b](#)]

Yahweh Tells Moses How to Stop the Plague

- 4 The LORD said to Moses, “Arrest all the leaders of the people, and hang them up before the LORD in broad daylight, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.”
- 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you must execute those of his men who were joined to Baal-peor.”

Phinehas Obeys Moses’ Command

- 6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the plain view of Moses and of the whole community of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting.
- 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up from among the assembly, took a javelin in his hand,
- 8 and went after the Israelite man into the tent and thrust through the Israelite man and into the woman’s abdomen. So the plague was stopped from the Israelites.
- 9 Those that died in the plague were 24,000. [[1 Cor 10:8](#)]
- 10 The LORD spoke to Moses:
- 11 “Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites, when he manifested such zeal for my sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in my zeal.
- 12 Therefore, announce: ‘I am going to give to him my covenant of peace.
- 13 So it will be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he has been zealous for his God, and has made atonement for the Israelites.’”
- 14 Now the name of the Israelite who was stabbed—the one who was stabbed with the Midianite woman—was Zimri son of Salu, a leader of a clan of the Simeonites.
- 15 The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur. He was a leader over the people of a clan of Midian.

Yahweh Initiates a War of Vengeance Against the Midianites

- 16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses:
- 17 “Bring trouble to the Midianites, and destroy them,
- 18 because they bring trouble to you by their treachery with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague that happened as a result of Peor.”

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