

Doctrine of Balaam the Prophet

1. Balaam is first mentioned in Deu 23:4 when Moses orders Israel to have nothing to do with the Ammonites or Moabites because of their refusal to welcome Israel into the Promised Land. God is especially angry at the Moabite king's plan to hire Balaam to curse the exodus generation.

2. In Deu 23:4 the Scripture describes Balaam as a son of Pethor in Aram Naharaim an area located in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia is a general description of that area located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Deu 23:3 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.

Deu 23:4 For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you.

Deu 23:5 However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you.

Deu 23:6 Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.

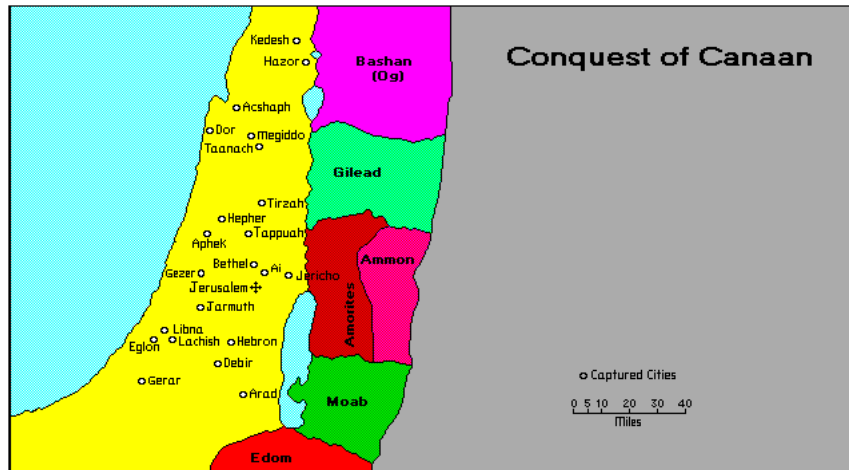


2.1 In Jos 13:22 Balaam is called a “soothsayer” who practiced divination and in 2Pe 2:15 he is called a lover of the wages of wickedness. Elsewhere he is called a prophet of the Lord.

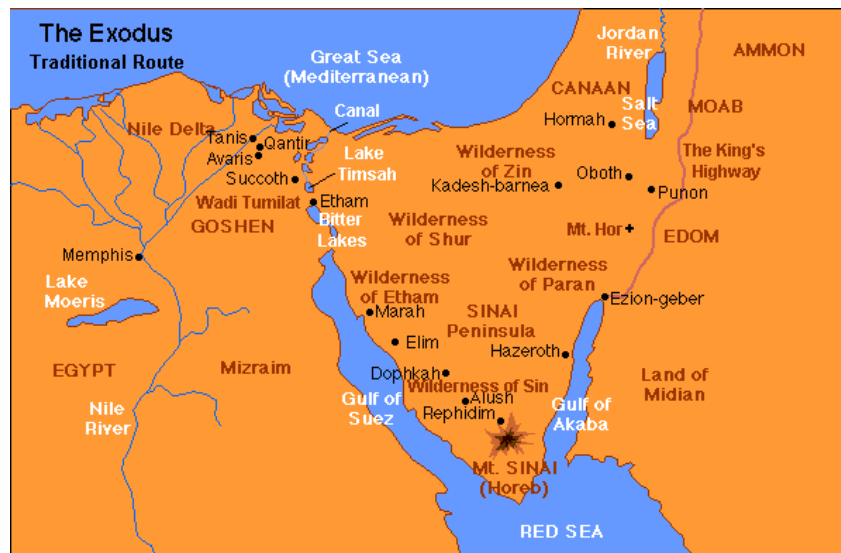
Jos 13:22 In addition to those slain in battle, the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination.

2Pe 2:15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

2.2 The events in the life of Balaam took place just before the Jews of the Exodus crossed the Jordan, entered the Promised Land and sieged the city of Jericho.



Num 22:1 Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.



3. We now introduce a nervous King who has seen a million Jews who had just “mopped-up” on the Ammonites. The king of Moab conjures a plan.

Num 22:2 Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,
 Num 22:3 and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.

Num 22:4 The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,

Num 22:5 sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me.

Num 22:6 Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed."

Num 22:7 The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.

Num 22:8 "Spend the night here," Balaam said to them, "and I will bring you back the answer the LORD gives me." So the Moabite princes stayed with him.

3.1 Three other Old Testament writers speak of Balak king of Moab sending for Balaam.

Jos 24:9 When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.

Jos 24:10 But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

Neh 13:1 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God,

Neh 13:2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.)

Mic 6:4 I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

Mic 6:5 My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

4. God provides an answer to Balaam.

Num 22:9 God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?"

Num 22:10 Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message:

Num 22:11 'A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.'"

Num 22:12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, **because they are blessed.**"

5. Balaam reports to the king's messengers what God had said. The king is not ready to give up. He ups the ante; hoping to motivate Balaam to speak again to God.

Num 22:13 The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's princes, "Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

Num 22:14 So the Moabite princes returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

Num 22:15 Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first.

Num 22:16 They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me,

Num 22:17 because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me."

6. Balaam is not eager to argue with God though the new price offered by Balak tweaks his interest.

Num 22:18 But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God.

Num 22:19 Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me."

Num 22:20 That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you."

7. Now we are ready for the famous "talking donkey story."

Num 22:21 Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.

Num 22:22 But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Num 22:23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

Num 22:24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides.

Num 22:25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again.

Num 22:26 Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left.

Num 22:27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff.

Num 22:28 Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Num 22:29 Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now."

Num 22:30 The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said.

Num 22:31 Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

Num 22:32 The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

Num 22:33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her."

8. Balaam is now "somewhat repentant." He gets further instruction from God and speaks to the king.

Num 22:34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back."

Num 22:35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Num 22:36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory.

Num 22:37 Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?"

Num 22:38 "Well, I have come to you now," Balaam replied. "But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth."

9. Balak and Balaam travel north to Kiriath Huzoth (a Moabite city origin unknown) to apparently try to persuade God to let him curse the Jews. Balaam still would like to get the money and fame offered by Balak. Perhaps if the two men look down from the heights of Kiriath Huzoth at the 2,000,000 Jews and a "better sacrifice" is made--just maybe God will be convinced.

Num 22:39 Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. It is a city earlier visited by Balak and Balaam when they first discussed the nefarious plan of cursing Israel.

Num 22:40 Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and gave some to Balaam and the princes who were with him.

Num 22:41 The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there he saw part of the people.

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

Num 23:2 Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Num 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you." Then he went off to a barren height.

Num 23:4 God met with him, and Balaam said, "I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram."

10. The Lord answers Balaam. Balaam is sent back to Balak with that answer.

Num 23:5 The LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this message."

Num 23:6 So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the princes of Moab.

Num 23:7 Then Balaam uttered his oracle: "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.'

Num 23:8 How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?

Num 23:9 From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations.

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like theirs!"

11. The king is angry and thinks maybe Balaam can convince God to curse just a part of them.

Num 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!"

Num 23:12 He answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

Num 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will see only a part but not all of them. And from there, curse them for me."

Num 23:14 So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Num 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there."

Num 23:16 The LORD met with Balaam and put a message in his mouth and said, "Go back to Balak and give him this message."

Num 23:17 So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the princes of Moab. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

Num 23:18 Then he uttered his oracle: "Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor.

Num 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Num 23:20 I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it.

Num 23:21 "No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them.

Num 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox.

Num 23:23 There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'See what God has done!'

Num 23:24 The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey and drinks the blood of his victims."

Num 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!"

Num 23:26 Balaam answered, "Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?"

12. The Moabite king is desperate: he thinks "maybe another change of venue will make a difference." He takes Balaam to the top of Mount Peor and there another sacrifice is offered but to no avail. God will just not budge and this makes Balak angry and no doubt Balaam is sad. After all, he had done his best so I suspect the prophet wanted some remuneration for his work.

Num 23:27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there."

Num 23:28 And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

Num 23:29 Balaam said, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

Num 23:30 Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

13. God sticks with his plan to bless Israel and a major discourse takes place.

Num 24:1 Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to sorcery as at other times, but turned his face toward the desert.

Num 24:2 When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him

Num 24:3 and he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly,

Num 24:4 the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

Num 24:5 "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!

Num 24:6 "Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.

Num 24:7 Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.

"Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted.

Num 24:8 "God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces; with their arrows they pierce them.

Num 24:9 Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness -- who dares to rouse them? "May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!"

Num 24:10 Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times.

Num 24:11 Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded."

Num 24:12 Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell the messengers you sent me,

Num 24:13 'Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD -- and I must say only what the LORD says'?"

14. Balaam has failed and Balak is favored with a prophecy of various future victories and blessings to Israel. Not only will the Moabites be defeated but many other nations will feel the sting of the Jewish sword.

Num 24:14 Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come."

Num 24:15 Then he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly,

Num 24:16 the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:

Num 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.

Num 24:18 Edom will be conquered; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, but Israel will grow strong.

Num 24:19 A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city."

Num 24:20 Then Balaam saw Amalek and uttered his oracle: "Amalek was first among the nations, but he will come to ruin at last."

Num 24:21 Then he saw the Kenites and uttered his oracle: "Your dwelling place is secure, your nest is set in a rock;

Num 24:22 yet you Kenites will be destroyed when Asshur takes you captive."

Num 24:23 Then he uttered his oracle: "Ah, who can live when God does this?"

Num 24:24 Ships will come from the shores of Kittim; they will subdue Asshur and Eber, but they too will come to ruin."

Num 24:25 Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way.

15. There is a sequel to this story beginning with Num 25:1-15 and Num 31:1-18.

16. Let me summarize the events of these two chapters by way of introduction.

16.1 A review of those living in Moab reveals there were both Kenites and Moabites under the rule of Balak. Num 25:7, 14 and 15. Also in Numbers chapter 31 this is quite evident. In Numbers chapter 25 we find a story of lust, "romance" and the execution by a Jewish hero named Phinehas. It seems Jewish men were known or desired to visit the camp of the Moabites where lovely Midianite women dwelled.

16.2 As a result there was a great deal of sexual intimacy. Soon the men were worshipping the idols of the Moabite/Midianites. It would seem also from Numbers chapter 31 that Balaam had planted the idea that such conduct on the part of the red blooded Jewish males would provoke God to curse Israel.

Num 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

Num 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

Num 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

Num 25:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

Num 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

Num 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Num 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

Num 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

Num 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

Num 25:10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Num 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

Num 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

Num 25:13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

Num 25:14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

Num 25:15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

16.3 When Moses learned of the predicament he waged war against the Midianites and from Num 31:8 we find Balaam was also killed.

Num 31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Num 31:2 Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

Num 31:3 And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.

Num 31:4 Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.

Num 31:5 So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

Num 31:6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

Num 31:7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

Num 31:8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: **Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.**

Num 31:9 And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.

Num 31:10 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

Num 31:11 And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

Num 31:12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

Num 31:13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.

Num 31:14 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.

Num 31:15 And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

Num 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Num 31:17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

Num 31:18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.