

# Numbers 23 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

Click for Numbers Chapters 1-36

- Numbers 23:1
- Numbers 23:2
- Numbers 23:3
- Numbers 23:4
- Numbers 23:5
- Numbers 23:6
- Numbers 23:7
- Numbers 23:8
- Numbers 23:9
- Numbers 23:10
- Numbers 23:11
- Numbers 23:12
- Numbers 23:13
- Numbers 23:14
- Numbers 23:15
- Numbers 23:16
- Numbers 23:17
- Numbers 23:18
- Numbers 23:19
- Numbers 23:20
- Numbers 23:21
- Numbers 23:22
- Numbers 23:23
- Numbers 23:24
- Numbers 23:25
- Numbers 23:26
- Numbers 23:27
- Numbers 23:28
- Numbers 23:29
- Numbers 23:30

Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		

Old Generation	Tragic Transition	New Generation
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out	Participation in the Journey: Moving On	Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>	To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>	At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)	En Route to Nowhere ( <a href="#">Wilderness</a> )	En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)
A Few Weeks to 2 Months	38 years, 3 months, 10 days	A Few Months
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)		
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>		

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

BGT Numbers 23:1 κα ε πεν Βαλααμ τ Βαλακ ο κοδ μησ ν μοι ντα θα πτ βωμο ς κα το μασ ν μοι ντα θα πτ μ σχους κα πτ κριο ς

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

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

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

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

KJV Numbers 23:1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

YLT Numbers 23:1 And Balaam saith unto Balak, 'Build for me in this place seven altars, and make ready for me in this place seven bullocks and seven rams.'

LXE Numbers 23:1 And Balaam said to Balac, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven calves, and seven rams.

ASV Numbers 23:1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

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

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

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

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

NJB Numbers 23:1 Balaam said to Balak, 'Build me seven altars here and prepare me seven bulls and seven rams.'

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

- Build me: Nu 23:29 Eze 33:31 Jude 1:11
- seven altars: Ex 20:24 27:1-8 1Sa 15:22 2Ki 18:22 Ps 50:8,9 Pr 15:8 Isa 1:11-15 Mt 23:14
- seven oxen: Nu 29:32 1Ch 15:26 2Ch 29:21 Job 42:8 Eze 45:23
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THREE SEVENS

**Jensen** - From a purely quantitative standpoint, the words of God are given obvious preeminence in this story of Balak and Balaam, for chapters 23 and 24 for the most part are God's words of blessing on Israel as God revealed these to Balaam. The chapters contain four messages, sometimes called prophecies, delivered to Balak. Three were solicited by Balak; the fourth was given voluntarily by Balaam after he had been severely rebuked by Balak. Chapters 23 and 24 are two of the brightest chapters in the book of Numbers. Scores of wonderful things are said about Israel, mainly prophetic. The dark sins of the past were forgotten; only happy deliverance from Egypt was cited. Israel was about to enter the promised land. The heathen nation of Moab desired to curse it out of existence. Unknown to the Israelites, God gave verbal testimony to this enemy of Israel that His people should not be cursed but blessed manifoldly. How often God has defeated the enemy of a child of His even when that child has been unaware of the opposition! (EvBC-Nu)

**NET Note** - The first part of Balaam's activity ends in disaster for Balak – he blesses Israel. The chapter falls into four units:

1. the first prophecy (Nu 23:1–10),
2. the relocation (Nu 23:11–17),
3. the second prophecy (Nu 23:18–24),
4. a further location (Nu 23:25–30).

Seven was a sacred number not just in the Bible but in the pagan world as well (see Nu 29:1ff; Lev 8:11; 14:7, 16; 16:14, 19; 25:1–55)

**Allen** observes that there are seven "oracles" (also called "discourse") and "Each oracle is introduced in the same manner (Nu 23:7a, Nu 23:18a; Nu 24:3a, Nu 24:15a, Nu 24:20b, Nu 24:21b, Nu 24:23a). The sacrifices here are not the sacrifices of chapters 15 and 28–29. These are pagan actions that contrast with the true worship of God. The number seven was held in high regard among Semitic peoples in general; the many animals would provide abundant liver and organ materials for the diviner from the east. Balaam is in charge; Balak is now his subordinate. (EBC)

**Then** - This continues from Numbers 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." fits with this next section from Nu 23:1-10.

**Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars (Nu 23:4, Nu 23:14, Nu 23:29,30) for me here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here** - Why **seven altars**? Seven altars has the earmarks of pagan rituals and magic for nowhere in Scripture is more than one altar mentioned. Although it was called a burnt offering (Nu 23:3), there is no evidence that Yahweh called for this ritual. In fact it is clear Yahweh is worshipped only at the altar in the Tabernacle as administered by the priests. Balak was not a priest.

**Ronald Allen** - The number seven was held in high regard among Semitic peoples in general; the many animals would provide abundant liver and organ materials for the diviner from the east. Balaam is in charge; Balak is now his subordinate. (EBC)

**Milgrom** - Ibn Ezra points to the frequency of the number seven in the cultic calendar: the seventh day (Sabbath), the seventh week (Shavuot), the seventh month (Tishrei), the seventh year (the Sabbatical for land and remission of debts), seven burnt offering lambs (on festivals, twice seven on Sukkot), seven sprinklings (in the Temple on Yom Kippur and for the purification of the leper). He also points to the sacrificial requirement of seven bulls and seven rams for Job's friends (Job 42:8) and the astrological significance of seven. The magical use of seven is attested in the Bible: leprous Naaman bathes seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:10, 14); Elijah orders his servant to scan the skies seven times for signs of rain (1 Kings 18:43); Joshua's army circuits Jericho seven times on the seventh day (Josh. 6:4, 10). In the Talmud, a medical prescription requires seven twigs from seven trees, seven nails from seven bridges, and so on. (Numbers - JPS)

**George Bush** - A peculiar sanctity did indeed attach to the number **seven** among the Jews, but we nowhere read of **seven altars** in the appointed worship of that people. As they acknowledged but one God, so they had but one altar. Hence the erection of **seven**, by Balaam's order, savored seemingly of the tricks of magic and incantation. The more charitable conjectures of some expositors would refer it, however, to a desire to propitiate the God of the Jews, who had created the world within seven days, and had otherwise signalized this number. This we are inclined to regard as the correct solution of the incident, as otherwise we cannot so well account for the language in v. 3, "peradventure the Lord (Jehovah) will come to me," which implies, we think, that he designed to address his worship to the true God. Yet his conduct was marred as usual by gross inconsistency. **His impiety is here evinced**

by the fact that instead of dissuading Balak from his wicked purpose by citing the authority of God, who had forbidden him to curse Israel, he unites with him in endeavoring to effect this iniquitous end, and that, too, under color of religious service, building altars and offering sacrifices, as if the unchangeable Jehovah could be wrought upon by such ceremonies. Alas, how soon had he forgotten the oracle of God, the sword of the Angel, and the dangers he had so narrowly escaped in the way, and how eagerly was he now “running after the error” of his evil heart, making good the saying of the prophet, “Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.”

Wenham ([TOTC-Nu](#)) has an excellent summary of the time sequence and Balaam's encounters with God

Nu 22:2-14		<b>DAYS 1-2</b>
	Nu 22:2-6	Introduction
	Nu 22:7-14	Balaam's First Encounter with God
Nu 22:15-35		<b>DAYS 3-4</b>
	Nu 22:15-20	Balaam's Second Encounter
	Nu 22:21-35	Balaam's Third Encounter
		Nu 21:22-23 Donkey sees Angel -1
		Nu 21:24-25 Donkey sees Angel -2
		Nu 21:26-35 Donkey sees Angel -3
Nu 22:36-24:25		<b>DAYS 5-6</b>
	Nu 22:36-40	Introduction
	Nu 22:41-23:12	First Blessing of Israel
	Nu 23:13-26	Second Blessing of Israel
	Nu 23:27-24:25	Third Blessing
		Nu 24:3-9 Blessing #3
		Nu 24:15-19 Blessing #4
		Nu 24:20-24 Three

**Numbers 23:2 Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.**

BGT Numbers 23:2 κα πο ησεν Βαλακ ν τρ πον επεν ατ Βαλααμ κα ν νεγκεν μ σchon κα κρι ν π τ ν βωμ ν

NET Numbers 23:2 So Balak did just as Balaam had said. Balak and Balaam then offered on each altar a bull and a ram.

NLT Numbers 23:2 Balak followed his instructions, and the two of them sacrificed a young bull and a ram on each altar.

ESV Numbers 23:2 Balak did as Balaam had said. And Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram.

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

KJV Numbers 23:2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.

YLT Numbers 23:2 And Balak doth as Balaam hath spoken, and Balak -- Balaam also -- offereth a bullock and a ram on the altar,

LXE Numbers 23:2 And Balac did as Balaam told him; and he offered up a calf and a ram on every altar.

ASV Numbers 23:2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.

CSB Numbers 23:2 So Balak did as Balaam directed, and they offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

NKJ Numbers 23:2 And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

NRS Numbers 23:2 Balak did as Balaam had said; and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

NAB Numbers 23:2 So he did as Balaam had ordered, offering a bullock and a ram on each altar. And Balak said to him, "I have erected the seven altars, and have offered a bullock and a ram on each."

NJB Numbers 23:2 Balak did as Balaam said and offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on each altar.

GWN Numbers 23:2 Balak did what Balaam told him, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

- **offered:** Nu 23:14,30
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar**- Seven offerings on seven altars. These were not the sacrifices Yahweh had prescribed in Nu 15:1-3ff+ but were pagan sacrifices.

**Numbers 23:3 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.**

BGT Numbers 23:3 κα̐ επεν Βαλααμ πρ̐ς Βαλακ παρ̐στηθι π̐ τ̐ς θυ̐σας σου κα̐ πορε̐σομαι ε̐ μοι φανε̐ται θε̐ς ν̐ συναντ̐σει κα̐ μα̐ ν̐ μοι δε̐ξ̐ ναγγελ̐ σοι κα̐ παρ̐στη Βαλακ π̐ τ̐ς θυ̐σας α̐το κα̐ Βαλααμ πορε̐θη̐ περωτ̐σαι τ̐ν θε̐ν κα̐ πορε̐θη̐ ε̐ θε̐ον

NET Numbers 23:3 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.

NLT Numbers 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offerings, and I will go to see if the LORD will respond to me. Then I will tell you whatever he reveals to me." So Balaam went alone to the top of a bare hill,

ESV Numbers 23:3 And 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." And he went to a bare height,

NIV Numbers 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.

KJV Numbers 23:3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

YLT Numbers 23:3 and Balaam saith to Balak, 'Station thyself by thy burnt-offering and I go on, it may be Jehovah doth come to meet me, and the thing which He sheweth me -- I have declared to thee;' and he goeth to a high place.

LXE Numbers 23:3 And Balaam said to Balac, Stand by thy sacrifice, and I will go and see if God will appear to me and meet me, and the word which he shall shew me, I will report to thee. And Balac stood by his sacrifice.

ASV Numbers 23:3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt-offering, and I will go: peradventure

Jehovah will come to meet me; and whatsoever he showeth me I will tell thee. And he went to a bare height.

CSB Numbers 23:3 Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here by your burnt offering while I am gone. Maybe the LORD will meet with me. I will tell you whatever He reveals to me." So he went to a barren hill.

NKJ Numbers 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by 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 desolate height.

NRS Numbers 23:3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offerings while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me. Whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height.

NAB Numbers 23:3 Balaam then said to him, "Stand here by your holocaust while I go over there. Perhaps the LORD will meet me, and then I will tell you whatever he lets me see." He went out on the barren height,

NJB Numbers 23:3 Balaam then said to Balak, 'Stand beside your burnt offerings while I go away. Perhaps Yahweh will come and meet me. If he does, I shall tell you whatever he reveals to me.' And he withdrew to a bare hill.

GWN Numbers 23:3 Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offering while I'm gone. Maybe the LORD will come and meet with me. I will tell you whatever he reveals to me." Then Balaam went off to a higher place where there were no trees.

- **Stand:** Nu 23:15
- **burnt:** Ge 8:20 22:2,7,8,13 Ex 18:12 Lev 1:1
- **perhaps:** Nu 23:15 22:8,9,31-35 24:1
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand** (command) **beside your burnt offering** - The Hebrew verb for stand beside "means "to take a stand, station oneself." It is more intentional than simply standing by something. He was to position himself by the sacrifice as Balaam withdrew to seek the oracle." (NN).

**UBS** - The Hebrew verb for **Stand** suggests more than a casual standing nearby the altars and their sacrificial animals; rather, a more deliberate stance is in view, so this verb may be rendered "Station yourself" (NET, Alter) or "Stand watch" (so Noordtzij, page 215). Balaam expects Balak to wait by his sacrifice, while he goes off to receive a message from the LORD (not at the site of the sacrifice).

**and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me**(Lit - and the word of what he shows me) **I will tell you."** - Balaam is saying that the word will consist of divine revelation.

**Bush** - I will go. That is, will go by myself into some private place, where I can perform those additional secret rites which are necessary to complete success. This may be inferred from Nu 24:1, "When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go **as at other times** to seek omens..."

**So he went to a bare hill** - **NET** = " Then he went to a deserted height." A bare hill, a barren height, Young's Literal = "a high place."

**UBS** - Balaam had to go to a high place to be closer to God (so NET footnote), from where he could see the people of Israel, the object of the curse or blessing. Otherwise the curse or blessing would not be effective (**ED**: OR SO THEY SURMISED IN THEIR FUTILE SPECULATIONS!)

**NN** - "He went up to a bald spot, to a barren height. The statement underscores the general belief that such tops were the closest things to the gods. On such heights people built their shrines and temples."

**Bush - And he went to an high place** Heb. va-yēlek shephi, of which the true sense is not easily ascertained. "Solitary," or "to a solitary place;" "a valley;" "a cliff of a rock;" "a bare hill," are the various renderings ascribed to it by critics and lexicographers. Chald. "He went alone." Gr. "He went straight forward." Vulg. "When he was gone with speed." A satisfactory choice from among these conflicting senses is scarcely possible, but as the current of authority inclines to the signification of "hill" or "summit," we, on the whole, abide in that as the most probable. Hengstenberg, with much confidence, adopts "bare hill" as the rendering, as the verb shâphâh, from which shephi is derived, has for its primary signification to plane or smooth off. The altars were probably erected on a summit or summits shaded with trees, which intercepted the prospect; the hill to which Balaam went may be supposed to have been a bare or naked eminence, giving him an unobstructed view of the neighboring regions. Prof. Lee translates it, "An elevated and conspicuous place, having an extensive view."

**Jensen** - Balaam by profession was an augur, foretelling the future on the basis of omens or signs which he would see from phenomena of nature. This was a common heathen practice. And so it was that when the moment came for him to seek the first message from God, he sought out a "bare height" (23:3) where he might see omens.

**Numbers 23:4 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."**

BGT Numbers 23:4 κα φ νη θε ς τ Βαλααμ κα ε πεν πρ ς α τ ν Βαλααμ το ς πτ βωμο ς το μασα κα νεβ βασα μ σχον κα κρι ν π τ ν βωμ ν

NET Numbers 23:4 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."

NLT Numbers 23:4 and God met him there. Balaam said to him, "I have prepared seven altars and have sacrificed a young bull and a ram on each altar."

ESV Numbers 23:4 and God met Balaam. And Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

NIV Numbers 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."

KJV Numbers 23:4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.

YLT Numbers 23:4 And God cometh unto Balaam, and he saith unto Him, 'The seven altars I have arranged, and I offer a bullock and a ram on the altar;'

LXE Numbers 23:4 And Balaam went to enquire of God; and he went straight forward, and God appeared to Balaam; and Balaam said to him, I have prepared the seven altars, and have offered a calf and a ram on every altar.

ASV Numbers 23:4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar.

CSB Numbers 23:4 God met with him and Balaam said to Him, "I have arranged seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar."

NKJ Numbers 23:4 And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram."

NRS Numbers 23:4 Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar."

NAB Numbers 23:4 and God met him.

NJB Numbers 23:4 God came to meet Balaam, who said to him, 'I have prepared the seven altars and offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on each altar.'

GWN Numbers 23:4 God came to him, and Balaam said, "I have set up seven altars, and I offered a bull and a ram on each altar."

- **God:** Nu 23:16 22:9,20
- I have prepared: Nu 23:1 Isa 58:3,4 Mt 20:12 Lu 18:12 Joh 16:2 Ro 3:27 Eph 2:9
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOD MEETS WITH BALAAM**

**Now God met Balaam** - "Gr. "God **appeared** ([phaino](#)) to Balaam." Chald. "The Word from before the Lord met (or came unto) Balaam." Samaritan Pentateuch = "The Angel of God found Balaam." The "meeting" was probably by a visible manifestation in the form of an angel, as on a former occasion. Although Balaam now sought the Lord, both from **wrong motives** and in **wrong methods**, so far as **enchancements** were employed, yet He (God) was pleased to meet him and put a word in his mouth, in which He

acted with a view to the good of His people (ED: IN OTHER WORDS BALAAM WOULD END UP PRONOUNCING A BLESSING ON ISRAEL), rather than to the personal gratification of the prophet." (Bush [Numbers 23](#))

**Bishop Hall** - "But will God meet with a sorcerer? Will he make a prophet of a magician? O man, who shall prescribe God what instruments he shall use! He knows how to employ, not only saints and angels, but wicked men, beasts, devils, to his own glory. He that puts words into the mouth of the donkey, puts words into the mouth of Balaam: **the words do but pass from him; they are not polluted, because they are not his.**"

**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."** Seven pagan altars set up and Balaam expects these to be acceptable to God. God makes no comment on this proliferation of altars.

**Ronald Allen** - "The most arresting element of the introductory section is in the words 'God met with him' (v. 4) and 'the LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth' (v. 5). Despite the pagan and unsavory actions of this ungodly man, the Lord deigns to meet with him and to speak through him. This is utterly remarkable. We often say that God will never use an unclean vessel. This is not quite accurate. God may use whatever vessel he wishes; the issue concerns what happens to an unclean vessel when God has finished using it for his purposes. It appears that such vessels are tossed aside, dashed on the road. (see Nu 38:8+) (EBC)

**Bush - I have prepared**, etc. Heb. "I have set in order." Balaam here recites his doings before the Lord, as if he did not know how many altars he had made, and how many sacrifices he had offered, or as if he would be pleased with such a magnificent show of devotion. Well might the reproof have now been addressed to Balaam which was afterwards given to Saul: "Hath the Lord as much delight in sacrifices and offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord: behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs." (1 Sa 15:22)

To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

-- Proverbs 21:3

**Numbers 23:5 Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus."**

BGT Numbers 23:5 καὶ ἐβόλεν θεὸς μῆνσιν τὴν Βαλαάμ καὶ εἶπεν πιστράφει πρὸς Βαλακ ὁ τῶς λαλῶν

NET Numbers 23:5 Then the LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you."

NLT Numbers 23:5 The LORD gave Balaam a message for King Balak. Then he said, "Go back to Balak and give him my message."

ESV Numbers 23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

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

KJV Numbers 23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

YLT Numbers 23:5 and Jehovah putteth a word in the mouth of Balaam, and saith, 'Turn back unto Balak, and thus thou dost speak.'

LXE Numbers 23:5 And God put a word into the mouth of Balaam, and said, thou shalt return to Balac, and thus shalt thou speak.

ASV Numbers 23:5 And Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

CSB Numbers 23:5 Then the LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak and say what I tell you."

NKJ Numbers 23:5 Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

NRS Numbers 23:5 The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you must say."



NAB Numbers 23:5 When he had put an utterance in Balaam's mouth, the LORD said to him, "Go back to Balak, and speak accordingly."

NJB Numbers 23:5 Yahweh then put a prophecy into his mouth and said to him, 'Go back to Balak, and that is what you must say to him.'

GWN Numbers 23:5 The LORD told Balaam, "Go back to Balak, and give him my message."

- Nu 23:16 Nu 22:35 De 18:18 Pr 16:1,9 Isa 51:16 59:21 Jer 1:9 Lu 12:12 Joh 11:51
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## YAHWEH GIVES A MESSAGE

**Then the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth-** Even as He had done with the donkey (Nu 22:28)! As noted elsewhere this indicates that one who speaks a Word from God is not necessarily holy!

**Guzik** - We might be surprised that God spoke to and through someone as obviously wicked as Balaam. But this shows us that spiritual giftedness does not equal spiritual maturity or holiness of life. God spoke through a donkey in the previous chapter and **now He spoke through a bigger donkey.**

**And said, "Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus** - This was the same as the Angel's instruction in Nu 22:35 that **"you shall speak only the word which I tell you."**

**Bush** - And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth. Paying no attention to Balaam's pompous parade of his hypocritical worship, which was in fact an abomination to him, Pr 15:8 ( "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight."), he sends him back with a burden of blessing instead of cursing, though contrary to his own and to Balak's desire.

The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.  
-- Proverbs 16:1

**Matthew Henry** - "This (Pr 16:1) speaks comfort to God's witnesses, whom at any time he calls out to speak for him; if God put a word into the mouth of Balaam, who would have defied God and Israel, surely he will not be wanting to those who desire to glorify God and edify his people by their testimony; but 'it shall be given them in that same hour what they should speak.' "

**Mattoon** applies this - God meets with Balaam and puts His Word in his mouth. We are reminded again of the truth of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. There are 66 separate books in the Bible bound into one volume called the Bible. These books were written by forty writers over a period of almost 1600 years, separated by a distance of some 1500 miles. The writers were of different classes, from kings to fishermen. These men wrote down what God instructed them to write, yet their personality comes through what they wrote. In spite of a variety of books, writers, locations, and time, the Bible is one book that bears witness of one God. It tells us of one continuous story of God's redemption of man through Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood. The harmony of the writers who wrote down God's Word is perfect. The original manuscripts that were written were absolutely, infallibly perfect because holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21+). The Bible is the Word of God, no matter what language it is in. It is God's love letter to us. Let's treat it this way. God put His message in Balaam's lips. The Lord can use anyone He wishes to use to spread forth His message. Balaam was not a clean vessel, yet He still used him because He chose to do so. He had a purpose for using this greedy prophet. **When God's purpose was done, Balaam was done.** (Nu 31:8+) Balaam's determination to do his own will led to his destruction. God wants to use all of us. His desire is that we be a clean and holy vessel, not for a moment, but for a life time. (2 Ti 2:20-21+).

**Numbers 23:6** So he returned to him, and **behold**, he was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab.

BGT Numbers 23:6 κα πεστρφη πρς ατν κα δε φεισκει π τν λοκαυωμ των ατο κα π ντες ο ρχοντες Μωαβ μετ ατο

NET Numbers 23:6 So he returned to him, and he was still standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

NLT Numbers 23:6 So Balaam returned and found the king standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab.

ESV Numbers 23:6 And he returned to him, and behold, he and all the princes of Moab were standing beside his burnt offering.

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

KJV Numbers 23:6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

YLT Numbers 23:6 And he turneth back unto him, and lo, he is standing by his burnt-offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

LXE Numbers 23:6 And he returned to him, and moreover he stood over his whole-burnt-offerings, and all the princes of Moab with him; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

ASV Numbers 23:6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he was standing by his burnt-offering, he, and all the princes of Moab.

CSB Numbers 23:6 So he returned to Balak, who was standing there by his burnt offering with all the officials of Moab.

NKJ Numbers 23:6 So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

NRS Numbers 23:6 So he returned to Balak, who was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab.

NAB Numbers 23:6 So he went back to Balak, who was still standing by his holocaust together with all the princes of Moab.

NJB Numbers 23:6 So Balaam went back to him, and found him still standing beside his burnt offering, with all the chiefs of Moab.

GWN Numbers 23:6 So he went back to Balak and found him standing beside his burnt offering with all the princes of Moab.

- Nu 23:3
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **BALAK IS ANTICIPATING A GOOD "CURSE" WORD!**

**So he returned to him, and behold, ([hinneh](#)) he was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab** -Just as Balaam had requested in Nu 23:3.

**UBS** - The Hebrew word [hinneh](#) rendered lo introduces what is seen from Balaam's perspective. It highlights the fact that Balaam came back to find Balak doing what he had told him to do in Nu 23:3.

**Guzik** quips "When Balaam returned, Balak and all the princes of Moab were ready. They were ready to learn what their money bought them from Balaam."

**Allen** - They (Balak and the leaders of Moab) were standing by the altar, hoping for a word from heaven that would destroy their presumed foe. They received a word from heaven, all right; but it was far from what they expected.

**Mattoon** - God had put a restraint in Balaam's heart, mind, and mouth. This unwilling prophet was forced to say what God put into his mouth. We ought to ask God to restrain us too. (Ps 19:13, Ps 141:3).

**Numbers 23:7** 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!'"

BGT Numbers 23:7 κα γενθη πνεμα θεο πατ κα ναλαβ ν τ ν παραβολ ν α το επεν κ Μεσοποταμ ας μετεπ μψατ με Βαλακ βασιλε ς Μωαβ ξ ρων π νατολ ν λ γων δε ρο ρασα μοι τ ν Ιακωβ κα δε ρο πικατ ρασα μοι τ ν Ισραηλ

NET Numbers 23:7 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.'

NLT Numbers 23:7 This was the message Balaam delivered: "Balak summoned me to come from Aram; the king of Moab brought me from the eastern hills. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me! Come and announce Israel's doom.'

ESV Numbers 23:7 And Balaam took up his discourse and said, "From Aram Balak has brought me, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains: 'Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel!'

NIV Numbers 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.'

KJV Numbers 23:7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

YLT Numbers 23:7 And he taketh up his simile, and saith: 'From Aram he doth lead me -- Balak king of Moab; From mountains of the east: Come -- curse for me Jacob, And come -- be indignant with Israel.

LXE Numbers 23:7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balac king of Moab sent for me out of Mesopotamia, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and Come, call for a curse for me upon Israel.

ASV Numbers 23:7 And he took up his parable, and said, From Aram hath Balak brought me, The king of Moab from the mountains of the East: Come, curse me Jacob, And come, defy Israel.

CSB Numbers 23:7 Balaam proclaimed his poem: Balak brought me from Aram; the king of Moab, from the eastern mountains: "Come, put a curse on Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel!"

NKJ Numbers 23:7 And he took up his oracle and said: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!'

NRS Numbers 23:7 Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying: "Balak has brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains: 'Come, curse Jacob for me; Come, denounce Israel!'

NAB Numbers 23:7 Then Balaam gave voice to his oracle: From Aram has Balak brought me here, Moab's king, from the Eastern Mountains: "Come and lay a curse for me on Jacob, come and denounce Israel."

NJB Numbers 23:7 He then declaimed his poem as follows: Balak has brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the hills of Kedem: 'Come and curse Jacob for me, come and denounce Israel!'

GWN Numbers 23:7 Then Balaam delivered this message: "Balak brought me from Aram. The king of Moab summoned me from the eastern mountains. 'Come, curse Jacob for me,' he said. 'Come, condemn Israel.'

- **He took up his discourse:** Nu 23:18 24:3,15,23 Job 27:1 29:1 Ps 78:2 Eze 17:2 20:49 Mic 2:4 Hab 2:6 Mt 13:33,35 Mk 12:12
- **discourse:** The word {mashal,} which as a verb is to rule, have authority, and also to compare, as a noun signifies whatever is expressed in parabolic or figurative language. All these oracular speeches of Balaam are in hemistich metre in the original. They are highly dignified and sublime; and may be considered as immediate poetic productions of the Spirit of God. (Nu 24:2.)
- Aram: Nu 22:5 Ge 10:22 28:2,7 De 23:4
- Come: Nu 22:6,11,17 Pr 26:2
- defy Israel: 1Sa 17:10,25,26,36,45 2Sa 21:21 23:9
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BALAAM'S FIRST ORACLE TO ISRAEL

Note that **He took up his discourse** occurs 7 times in Nu 23-24 - Num. 23:7; Num. 23:18; Num. 24:3; Num. 24:15; Num. 24:20; Num. 24:21; Num. 24:23; Job 29:1

**TECHNICAL NOTE:** The Septuagint is very interesting here for it describes "the Spirit of God upon him."

Brenton's translation of the Lxx does not translate this literally but the Lexham English Septuagint does "**the Spirit of God came upon him.**" This is different from the Hebrew here although later we do read that **the Spirit of God came upon him.**" (Nu 24:2). Considering the fact that Balaam is beginning to speak the Word God had put in his mouth, it is logical to attribute his discourse to the Spirit of God upon him. One is reminded of Peter's words telling us that "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21) While I think Peter is primarily speaking of men who were righteous, and were likely true prophets, God is still able to speak through a man like Balaam even though he is not a genuine prophet like the OT prophets.

**Bush** - And he took up his parable. Heb. mîshâl, comparison, similitude. The term is applied to any kind of allegorical or figurative speech of a more solemn and weighty import than usual. Under this head come such sayings as the proverbs and apophthegms of wise men, and such prophetic utterances as those here recorded, of which the style is somewhat elevated and majestic. We do not find it, however, a designation of prophecy in general, but only of that species which partakes of the sententious and oracular. Targ. Jon. "He took up the parable of his prophecy." By "taking up" is denoted uttering or pronouncing in a somewhat elevated tone of voice, such as would be calculated to command particular attention.

**Allen** - The theme of this first oracle is centered on the notion of the blessing of Israel. This blessing is unique. It is altogether different than anything Balaam (or Balak) had ever experienced. It is an irrevocable blessing; hence, any attempt to curse Israel is ineffective. Israel is a nation that is distinct from all others. Her uniqueness is to be found in her God. (EBC)

**He took up his discourse** (KJV - parable) - **Discourse** is the Hebrew word [mashal](#) usually translated as "proverb" (21/41x); here the translation "oracle" is appropriate. By this word the distinctive nature of the prophecies of Balaam is established; none of the prophecies of the true prophets of Israel is described by this term. **Allen** makes a good point regarding mashal noting that "By this word the distinctive nature of the prophecies of Balaam is established; none of the prophecies of the true prophets of Israel is described by this term." (EBC)

**Discourse** (04912) ([mashal](#) from the verb **mashal** - to rule e.g., Ge 1:18 or more generally indicates idea of comparison, likeness) usually conveys the meaning of a wise saying, but in two occurrences of the connotation of **parable** or **allegory** (as defined above) is clearly evident (viz. Ezek 17:2ff = a parable centering on two eagles, Ezek 17:12 representing Babylon and Ezek 17:15 representing Egypt, as well as centering on a vine Ezek 17:6), both in indictments against Israel for her sin. In Nu 23: 7, 18, 24:3ff. **mashal** refers not to a popular or common saying but to Balaam's prophetic oracles (the first 7 uses in Scripture). In Isa 14:4 the context is after Israel's return to the land and the song is one of contempt or taunting (mashal) directed at the king of Babylon. A proverb is a truth expressed in brief and striking words, like "Pride cometh before a fall." **John Phillips** noting that the root verb means **to rule** says "**Mashal** therefore are words and sayings that are supposed to rule and govern life. The book of Proverbs then is not simply a collection of bits of human wisdom. It contains God's rules." (Proverbs Commentary)

**UBS** - The Hebrew term for **discourse** is mashal, which normally refers to a brief proverb, wisdom saying, artistically structured poetic expression (formulated in parallelisms; see 1 Kgs 4:32). It can also refer to a longer discourse (see Job 27:1). Here in Num 23–24 it may be rendered "prophecy," "oracle," or "oracle speech

**Mashal** - 40v - Num. 23:7; Num. 23:18; Num. 24:3; Num. 24:15; Num. 24:20; Num. 24:21; Num. 24:23; Deut. 28:37; 1 Sam. 10:12; 1 Sam. 24:13; 1 Ki. 4:32; 1 Ki. 9:7; 2 Chr. 7:20; Job 13:12; Job 27:1; Job 29:1; Ps. 44:14; Ps. 49:4; Ps. 69:11; Ps. 78:2; Prov. 1:1; Prov. 1:6; Prov. 10:1; Prov. 25:1; Prov. 26:7; Prov. 26:9; Eccl. 12:9; Isa. 14:4; Jer. 24:9; Ezek. 12:22; Ezek. 12:23; Ezek. 14:8; Ezek. 17:2; Ezek. 18:2; Ezek. 18:3; Ezek. 20:49; Ezek. 24:3; Joel 2:17; Mic. 2:4; Hab. 2:6

and said, "From [Aram](#) (region of Mesopotamia) Balak has brought me, Moab's king from the mountains of the East,

**Bush** - **brought me from Aram.** That is, Aram-Naharaim, Aram of the two rivers (Tigris and Euphrates), to which answers the ancient Mesopotamia, or region between the rivers. Compare Deuteronomy 23:4 "because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you **Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia**, to curse you." This region is for the most part flat, but the northern part of it is mountainous, and from that quarter came Balaam, as he here declares that he was called out of "the mountains of the east."

**'Come curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!** - Balaam begins with truth Balak was aware of.

**Bush- denounce Israel!** Heb. [zoamâh](#), implying to execrate with violent threats and indignant rage—a word of peculiar intensity of meaning. It occurs Dan. 11:30, "Therefore shall he be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant." Hengstenberg remarks, "The sense of being angry will appear quite appropriate to this passage, if it be considered that the curse

can only be the result of the most violent inward excitement against the object of it, and that any one would strive, before pronouncing it, to arouse himself to rage in every way, upon the intensity of which the efficacy of the curse depended."

**UBS** - The Hebrew words for **curse** and **denounce** have almost the same meaning, except that the second one refers more explicitly to anger, so NLT renders it "announce ... doom," and NCV has "call down evil on."

**NN** - The opening lines seem to be a formula for the seer to identify himself and the occasion for the oracle. The tension is laid out early; Balaam knows that God has intended to bless Israel, but he has been paid to curse them.

## Numbers 23:8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?"

BGT Numbers 23:8 τ ρ σωμαί ν μ καταρ ται κ ριος τ καταρ σωμαί ν μ καταρ ται θε ς

NET Numbers 23:8 How can I curse one whom God has not cursed, or how can I denounce one whom the LORD has not denounced?

NLT Numbers 23:8 But how can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I condemn those whom the LORD has not condemned?

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

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

KJV Numbers 23:8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?

YLT Numbers 23:8 What -- do I pierce? -- God hath not pierced! And what -- am I indignant? -- Jehovah hath not been indignant!

LXE Numbers 23:8 How can I curse whom the Lord curses not? or how can I devote whom God devotes not?

ASV Numbers 23:8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I defy, whom Jehovah hath not defied?

CSB Numbers 23:8 How can I curse someone God has not cursed? How can I denounce someone the LORD has not denounced?

NKJ Numbers 23:8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

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

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

NJB Numbers 23:8 How shall I curse someone whom God has not cursed, how denounce someone God has not denounced?

GWN Numbers 23:8 How can I curse those whom God hasn't cursed? How can I condemn those whom the LORD hasn't condemned?

- Nu 23:20,23 Isa 44:25 47:12,13
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ALL ATTEMPTS TO CURSE ISRAEL WILL BE FUTILE

**How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?** This is rhetorical. This is the first time Balak is specifically told Balaam cannot curse Israel because God had not cursed Israel. "The figure is erotesis, a rhetorical question. He is actually saying he cannot curse them because God has not cursed them." (NN)

How may I imprecate  
whom God has not imprecated?  
How may I execrate  
whom Yahweh has not execrated?

In Numbers 23:20 Balaam reiterated this truth as it applied to him declaring "Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it."

**Wenham** comments that "In Genesis 12:1–3, and subsequent passages, Abraham was promised three things: land, descendants and a covenant relationship. Balaam's first oracle mentions Israel's special relationship with God and her great population (Nu 23:8; cf. Gen. 12:3. Num. 22:17; cf. Gen. 13:16; 12:2–3)." ([TOTC-Nu](#))

**Bush** - How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, etc. I am required, says Balaam, to curse Israel, but how can I, when God, the true author and sole lord of blessing and cursing, does not curse, but blesses him? This was honestly acknowledging that his tongue was tied, so that he could utter nothing except as he was prompted by a divine impulse. The fundamental import of the declaration is, that as God hath not cursed, so Balaam cannot. **Blessed are they whom the Lord himself will not curse, and upon whom he pronounces a blessing, even in the presence of them that would curse. This is the privilege of all the Israel of God, and of every single believer in Christ. To every secret or open enemy the Lord says, "Thou shalt not curse whom I have blessed."** This was a clear demonstration of the vanity of the compliment paid him by Balak, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

**And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?**- This is rhetorical. Clearly Balaam as human had no power to curse what Yahweh **had not denounced**.

**Numbers 23:9 "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.**

BGT Numbers 23:9 τι π κορυφ ρ ων ψομαι ατν κα π βουν ν προσνο σω ατν δο λας μ νος κατοικ σει κα ν θνεσιν ο συλλογισθ σεται

NET Numbers 23:9 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.

NLT Numbers 23:9 I see them from the cliff tops; I watch them from the hills. I see a people who live by themselves, set apart from other nations.

ESV Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the crags I see him, from the hills I behold him; behold, a people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations!

NIV Numbers 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.

KJV Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

YLT Numbers 23:9 For from the top of rocks I see it, And from heights I behold it; Lo a people! alone it doth tabernacle, And among nations doth not reckon itself.

LXE Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the mountains I shall see him, and from the hills I shall observe him: behold, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

ASV Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him: lo, it is a people that dwelleth alone, And shall not be reckoned among the nations.

CSB Numbers 23:9 I see them from the top of rocky cliffs, and I watch them from the hills. There is a people living alone; it does not consider itself among the nations.

NKJ Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

NRS Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the crags I see him, from the hills I behold him; Here is a people living alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations!



NAB Numbers 23:9 For from the top of the crags I see him, from the heights I behold him. Here is a people that lives apart and does not reckon itself among the nations.

NJB Numbers 23:9 Yes, from the top of the crags I see him, from the hills I descry him: a people that dwells on its own, not to be reckoned among other nations!

GWN Numbers 23:9 I see them from the top of rocky cliffs, I look at them from the hills. I see a nation that lives by itself, people who do not consider themselves to be like other nations.

- **people:** They shall ever be a distinct nation. This prophecy has been literally fulfilled, through a period of 3,300 years, to the present day.
- dwell alone: Ex 19:5,6 33:16 De 33:28 Es 3:8 2Co 6:17 Tit 2:14 1Pe 2:9
- shall not: De 32:8 Ezr 9:2 Jer 46:28 Am 9:9 Ro 15:8-10 Eph 2:12-14
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL WAS DISTINCT FROM THE GENTILE NATIONS

**As I see him (Israel) from the top of the rocks, And I look at him from the hills-** "His elevated position on the rocks gave him a commanding view of the encampment of Israel, but the words have a reach of meaning beyond what was embraced in the mere external vision. Though as seen from the great distance at which he stood they must have been diminished to a dwarflike size, yet they portended something great and formidable. In the spirit of prophecy he sees far more in the people of God than struck the outward eye. In fact, we are no doubt to consider that Balaam's ecstatic vision throughout out was not merely corporeal, but that with the seeing of the bodily eye there was combined the penetration of the spiritual eye which pierces into the depths and essences of invisible things. This is evident from the subsequent prophecy, ch. 24:5, when, with open eyes he depicts the loveliness of the tents of Israel in a manner which shows that the outward beholding is introduced only as a basis for the inward." (Bush)

### Related Passage

Deuteronomy 32:8-10 "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. 9 "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. 10 "He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

**Behold (hinneh** - another emphatic marker), **a people who dwells apart** - The [hinneh](#) highlights what Balaam sees both visually and in the sense of a vision. Israel was separate from all the people of the earth. In Exodus 19:5-6 Yahweh declared "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." Dwells apart is not speaking of Israel's literal physical location as Balaam observes the ordered camp, but speaks of their status as God's chosen people (Dt 7:6-8).

**NN** - Balaam reports his observation of the nation of Israel spread out below him in the valley. Based on that vision, and the LORD's word, he announces the uniqueness of Israel—they are not just like one of the other nations. He was correct, of course; they were the only people linked with the living God by covenant.

**Jensen** - Israel was a distinct and unique nation, separated from heathen ways, with a unique destiny.

**Mattoon** - Balaam saw God's people as a separated people (vs. 9). The Jews have remained a distinct, separated people even while they dwelled among the nations of the world. They are to be separated unto the Lord. As God's people, Christians are to be a separated people too. They are not to live wickedly and worldly like heathens. Our dress, talk, and entertainment are not to be sensual, suggestive, carnal, or filthy. We are to be holy and separate in our lifestyles and relationships. (2 Cor 6:14-18).

**And will not be reckoned among the nations**- In other words Israel was separate from the nations.

**Numbers 23:10 "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!"**

BGT Numbers 23:10 τ ς ξηκριβ σατο τ σπ ρμα Ιακωβ κα τ ς ξαριθμ σεται δ μου ς Ισραηλ ποθ νοι ψυχ μου  
ν ψυχ ς δικ αων κα γ νοιτο τ σπ ρμα μου ς τ σπ ρμα των

NET Numbers 23:10 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."

NLT Numbers 23:10 Who can count Jacob's descendants, as numerous as dust? Who can count even a fourth of Israel's people? Let me die like the righteous; let my life end like theirs."

ESV Numbers 23:10 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!"

NIV Numbers 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!"

KJV Numbers 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

YLT Numbers 23:10 Who hath counted the dust of Jacob, And the number of the fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of upright ones, And let my last end be like his!

LXE Numbers 23:10 Who has exactly calculated the seed of Jacob, and who shall number the families of Israel? let my soul die with the souls of the righteous, and let my seed be as their seed.

ASV Numbers 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 let my last end be like his!

CSB Numbers 23:10 Who has counted the dust of Jacob or numbered the dust clouds of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright; let the end of my life be like theirs.

NKJ Numbers 23:10 "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

NRS Numbers 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the dust-cloud of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!"

NAB Numbers 23:10 Who has ever counted the dust of Jacob, or numbered Israel's wind-borne particles? May I die the death of the just, may my descendants be as many as theirs!

NJB Numbers 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob? Who can number the cloud of Israel? May I die the death of the just, and may my future be like theirs!

GWN Numbers 23:10 The descendants of Jacob are like specks of dust. Who can count them or number even one-fourth of the people of Israel? Let me die the death of innocent people. Let my end be like theirs."

- can count: Ge 13:16 22:17 28:14
- the dust: i.e. The posterity of Jacob, which was to be so numerous as to resemble the dust.
- the fourth: Nu 2:9,16,24,31
- the death: Ps 37:37 116:15 Pr 14:32 Isa 57:1,2 Lu 2:29,30 1Co 3:21,22 1Co 15:53-57 2Co 5:1 Php 1:21-23 2Ti 4:6-8 2Pe 1:13-15 Rev 14:13
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL WAS MIGHTY IN NUMBER

**Who can count the dust of Jacob** - Rhetorical of course, no one! They are innumerable! This was a partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 13:16 "I will make your descendants **as the dust of the earth**, so that if anyone can number **the dust of the earth**, then your descendants can also be numbered."



Note Four "Parts"

**Or number the fourth part of Israel?** - "The "fourth part of Israel" refers to that quarter of the camp (see depiction above) that was closest to Balaam as he prophesied. He could not even count the quarter of the nation that was closest to him. This is another indication, besides the number of Israelite males counted in each tribe, that Israel was about two million strong at this time." (Constable)



**Let me die the death of the upright, And let my end** (Lit “my latter end.”) **be like his!”** - **NLT** = “Let me die like the righteous; let my life end like theirs.” He seems insightful enough to realize that to be identified with Israel was a blessing. Does he wish he was an Israelite? Perhaps. **My end** refers to the end of his life, but he is sorely deceived! Balaam would not get his wish of dying as one who was upright! In fact he died the diametric opposite, the death of one unrighteous! (See Nu 31:8+)

**NN** - Here the seer’s words link with the promise of Gen 12:3, that whoever blesses Israel will be blessed. Since the blessing belongs to them, the upright (and not Balak), Balaam would like his lot to be with them.

**Guzik** - Balaam was one of the many who long to die the death of the righteous, yet have no desire to live the life of the righteous. The two go together.

**Mattoon** laments how many vainly make Balaam's plea - As Balaam looked upon Israel's blessings, he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!" Balaam wanted this, but was not willing to live the life of the righteous. People today want to die the death of the righteous, they want to go to Heaven, but they are unwilling to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. What does the Bible say about the death of the righteous?

**Numbers 23:11 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!"**

BGT Numbers 23:11 κα ε πεν Βαλακ πρ ς Βαλααμ τ πεπο ηκ ς μοι ε ς κατ ρασιν χθρ ν μου κ κληκ σε κα δο ε λ γηκας ε λογ αν

NET Numbers 23:11 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!"

NLT Numbers 23:11 Then King Balak demanded of Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies. Instead, you have blessed them!"

ESV Numbers 23:11 And Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them."

NIV Numbers 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!"

KJV Numbers 23:11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

YLT Numbers 23:11 And Balak saith unto Balaam, 'What hast thou done to me? to pierce mine enemies I have taken thee -- and lo, thou hast certainly blessed;'

LXE Numbers 23:11 And Balac said to Balaam, What hast thou done to me? I called thee to curse my enemies, and behold thou hast greatly blessed them.

ASV Numbers 23:11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

CSB Numbers 23:11 "What have you done to me?" Balak asked Balaam. "I brought you to curse my enemies, but look, you have only blessed them!"

NKJ Numbers 23:11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!"

NRS Numbers 23:11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them."

NAB Numbers 23:11 "What have you done to me?" cried Balak to Balaam. "It was to curse my foes that I brought you here; instead, you have even blessed them."

NJB Numbers 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, 'What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, and you have heaped blessings on them!'

GWN Numbers 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies, but all you've done is bless them!"

- Nu 23:7,8 22:11,17 24:10 Ps 109:17-20
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BALAK IS ABASHED!

[Abashed](#) means uneasy, disconcerted, ill at ease, confused, etc

**Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold (hinneh - to stress the contrast), you have actually blessed them!"** - This recalls Balak's belief that "whom you (Balaam) bless is blessed." (Nu 22:6). He was not yet aware of the Angel of the LORD'S words to Balaam in Pethor (Nu 22:12). He did not fully understand that Balaam had no power to curse what God had blessed (cf Nu 23:8ff).

**Wenham** - Balaam is thus trapped between the demands of Balak and the commands of God.

**Mattoon** - King Balak is suffering from the Backfired Plans Syndrome. He is a very upset and confused man, but also a man who did not pay attention to Balaam's warning. The king asked, "What have you done to me?" He scolded Balaam, "I hired you to curse my enemies and you bless them!" Balaam warned the king, however, that he would speak what God told him to speak. King Balak is upset because Balaam did not fulfill his expectations. We will respond the same way when we put our expectations in people. Our expectations make people our prisoners. If they are not fulfilled, then we become angry. If they are fulfilled, we are ungrateful because we say, "It's their duty to us. They owe us." God wants us to learn to put our expectations in Him.

**Numbers 23:12 He replied, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"**

BGT Numbers 23:12 κα ε πεν Βαλααμ πρ ς Βαλακ ο χ σα ν μβ λ θε ς ε ς τ στ μα μου το το φυλ ξω λαλ σαι

NET Numbers 23:12 Balaam replied, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?"

NLT Numbers 23:12 But Balaam replied, "I will speak only the message that the LORD puts in my mouth."

ESV Numbers 23:12 And he answered and said, "Must I not take care to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

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

KJV Numbers 23:12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

YLT Numbers 23:12 and he answereth and saith, 'That which Jehovah doth put in my mouth -- it do I not take heed to speak?'

LXE Numbers 23:12 And Balaam said to Balac, Whatsoever the Lord shall put into my mouth, shall I not take heed to speak this?

ASV Numbers 23:12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which Jehovah putteth in my mouth?

CSB Numbers 23:12 He answered, "Shouldn't I say exactly what the LORD puts in my mouth?"

NKJ Numbers 23:12 So he answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?"

NRS Numbers 23:12 He answered, "Must I not take care to say what the LORD puts into my mouth?"

NAB Numbers 23:12 Balaam replied, "Is it not what the LORD puts in my mouth that I must repeat with care?"

NJB Numbers 23:12 Balaam replied, 'Am I to depart from what Yahweh puts into my mouth?'

GWN Numbers 23:12 Balaam answered, "I must say what the LORD tells me to say."

- Nu 23:20,26 22:38 24:13 Pr 26:25 Ro 16:18 Tit 1:16
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He replied, "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"**- This is of course rhetorical and clearly the answer is affirmative (as it should be for every genuine pastor and teacher of the Lord).

**NN on be careful** - The verb שָׁמַר (shamar) means "to guard, watch, observe" and so here with a sense of "be careful" or even "take heed" (so KJV, ASV).

**Bush - Must I not take heed to speak that, etc.** Or, Heb. "Shall I not observe to speak?" Although the proud king, in the preceding verse, reproaches Balaam as though he had fairly purchased the authority to control his utterances as he pleased, yet the prophet here represses his arrogance by pleading the divine command, and assuring him that he could announce only what the Lord had put into his mouth. It is clear, however, from the whole narrative, that the inclination of his heart was towards Balak and his rewards, and that if he had been left to himself, he would have yielded without reserve to the wishes of his royal employer. But being inwardly withheld from cursing, he speaks as if he would make a virtue of his obedience to the necessity laid upon him, which probably went to deepen the self-deception that he was all along practising upon himself.

**Numbers 23:13 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."**

BGT Numbers 23:13 κα ε πεν πρ ς α τ ν Βαλακ δε ρο τι μετ μο ε ς τ πον λλον ξ ν ο κ ψ α τ ν κεθεν λλ  
μ ρο ς τι α το ψ π ν τ α ς δ ο μ δ ς κα κατ ρ α ς α μοι α τ ν κεθεν

NET Numbers 23:13 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."

NLT Numbers 23:13 Then King Balak told him, "Come with me to another place. There you will see another part of the nation of Israel, but not all of them. Curse at least that many!"

ESV Numbers 23:13 And Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me from there."

NIV Numbers 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."

KJV Numbers 23:13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

YLT Numbers 23:13 And Balak saith unto him, 'Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, whence thou dost see it, only its extremity thou dost see, and all of it thou dost not see, and pierce it for me thence;'

LXE Numbers 23:13 And Balac said to him, Come yet with me to another place where thou shalt not see the people, but only thou shalt see a part of them, and shalt not see them all; and curse me them from thence.

ASV Numbers 23:13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them; thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

CSB Numbers 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place where you can see them. You will only see the outskirts of their camp; you won't see all of them. From there, put a curse on them for me."

NKJ Numbers 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there."

NRS Numbers 23:13 So Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only part of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there."

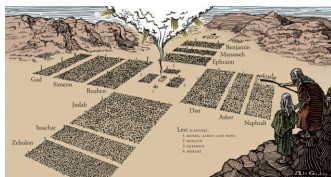
NAB Numbers 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you can see only some and not all of them, and from there curse them for me."

NJB Numbers 23:13 Balak then said, 'Please come somewhere else. From here you can see only the fringe of them, you cannot see them all. Curse them for me over there.'

GWN Numbers 23:13 Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place, where you can see the

Israelites. You will see only some of them, not all of them. Curse them for me from there."

- **to:** 1Ki 20:23,28 Mic 6:5
- **extreme end :** Nu 22:41
- **and curse :** Jos 24:9 Ps 109:17 Jas 3:9,10
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Looking at Israel from top of Pisgah

## BALAK'S SECOND ATTEMPT TO SECURE A CURSE

**Then Balak said to him** - Balak is saying since the first time did not work let's try again at a different location.

**Please come with me to another place from where you may see them** - Superstitious ancients thought you had to be able to see those you would curse.

**Although you will only see the extreme end of them and will not see all of them; and curse them for me from there** - If you can see them, you should be able to curse them.

**Spurgeon** - The king thought that the number, beauty, and order of Israel might have influenced the prophet, and therefore he would only let him see apart of them. The trick was in vain. God does not love his people because of their number. If there were but two or three he would be quite as sure to bless them.

**Bush** - **Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, etc.** Balaam having now declared to Balak the reason of his failure, the infatuated king strangely imagines that the locality was in fault, and that the Most High would be more propitious to him in another situation, and would look more graciously upon fresh sacrifices. He therefore proposes to him to shift his position, with a view to gain a better prospect of the objects of his anathemas, as if a change of place with man could produce a change of purpose in God! The proposal implies a confidence in some magical power exercised by the eye, as if this organ contributed somewhat to the efficacy of the imprecation. That the clear, fixed gaze of the enchanter had a decided effect upon his art, is the unequivocal testimony of ancient writers who have described the superstitions of their age. Balak accordingly determines, if possible, to bring him to such a stand-point on the mountains that he shall not be dismayed by a view of the whole body of the people en masse, but shall see only such a portion of them as shall be most favorable to the effect of his malediction.

**Allen** - Trying to cover all the angles, Balak attempted to reduce the power of the people by selecting a point where their immense numbers would be obscured. Alas for Balak, the oracle that followed exceeded the first in its blessing on Israel. Again, we sense the idea of numbers in this text. There is a power in numbers in the ancient world. If one is confronted only with a small percentage of the whole, Balak reasoned, then the enormity of the nation will not cause the gods to bless when they were requested to curse Israel.(EBC)

**Mattoon** - King Balak is trying to get Balaam to do his will instead of God's will. This is the conflict we face every day. Our will vs. God's will. What is your attitude concerning God's will?

---

### When God Intervenes

Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm. Psalm 105:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: Numbers 23:13–23

In a poem titled "This Child Is Beloved," Omawumi Efueye, known affectionately as Pastor O, writes about his parents' attempts to end the pregnancy that would result in his birth. After several unusual events that prevented them from aborting him, they decided to welcome their child instead. The knowledge of God's preservation of his life motivated Omawumi to give up a lucrative career in favor of full-time ministry. Today, he faithfully pastors a London church.

Like Pastor O, the Israelites experienced God's intervention at a vulnerable time in their history. While traveling through the wilderness, they came within sight of King Balak of Moab. Terrified of their conquests and their vast population, Balak engaged a

seer named Balaam to place a curse on the unsuspecting travelers (Numbers 22:2–6).

But something amazing happened. Whenever Balaam opened his mouth to curse, a blessing issued instead. “I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it,” he declared. “No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them; . . . God brought them out of Egypt” (Numbers 23:20–22). God preserved the Israelites from a battle they didn’t even know was raging!

Whether we see it or not, God still watches over His people today. May we worship in gratitude and awe the One who calls us blessed. By: Remi Oyedele

How often do you stop to consider the daily protection God extends over you? What does the knowledge that He saves you from unseen dangers mean to you?

Father in heaven, forgive us for the many times we take Your care and protection for granted. Give us eyes to see how much You bless us. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Numbers 23:14 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.**

BGT Numbers 23:14 κα παρ λαβεν α τ ν ε ς γρο σκοπι ν π κορυφ ν λελαξευμ νου κα κοδ μησεν κε πτ βωμο ς κα νεβ βασεν μ σχον κα κρι ν π τ ν βωμ ν

NET Numbers 23:14 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.

NLT Numbers 23:14 So Balak took Balaam to the plateau of Zophim on Pisgah Peak. He built seven altars there and offered a young bull and a ram on each altar.

ESV Numbers 23:14 And 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.

NIV Numbers 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.

KJV Numbers 23:14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

YLT Numbers 23:14 and he taketh him to the field of Zophim, unto the top of Pisgah, and buildeth seven altars, and offereth a bullock and a ram on the altar.

LXE Numbers 23:14 And he took him to a high place of the field to the top of the quarried rock, and he built there seven altars, and offered a calf and a ram on every altar.

ASV Numbers 23:14 And he took him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar.

CSB Numbers 23:14 So Balak took him to Lookout Field on top of Pisgah, built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

NKJ Numbers 23:14 So he brought 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.

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

NAB Numbers 23:14 So he brought him to the lookout field on the top of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered a bullock and a ram on each of them.

NJB Numbers 23:14 He led him to the Lookouts' Field on the top of Pisgah. There he built seven altars and offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on each altar.

GWN Numbers 23:14 So he took him to the Field of Zophim on top of Mount Pisgah, where he built seven altars. He offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

- Pisgah: or, the hill, Nu 21:20 De 3:27 \*marg: De 4:49 34:1 \*marg:

- built seven: Nu 23:1,2,29 Isa 1:10,11 46:6 Ho 12:11
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Mt Pisgah Near Mt Nebo

## SEVEN MORE ALTARS AT MOUNT PISGAH

**So he took him to the field of Zophim** (means "watchers" or "spies"), **to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar** - **CSB** renders it "Lookout Field on top of Pisgah." **Zophrim** is from tsaphah which means to look out or about, spy or keep watch. The Septuagint translates Zophim with the Greek noun skopia (from [skopeo](#)) which Liddell-Scott defines as "a lookout-place, a mountain-peak, Hom.: of the Trojan acropolis, Eur.: cf. skopelos. 2. metaphorically, the height or highest point of anything, Pind. II. a watchtower, Lat. specula, Hdt., Plat. III. a look-out, watch, skopien echein = to have watch or to keep watch, Od., Hdt."

**Allen** - "Again, sevens are used in the offerings. These are the uses of magical charms, not true worship." (EBC)

**NN** - Some scholars do not translate this word as "Pisgah," but rather as a "lookout post" or an "elevated place."

**Spurgeon** on **Pisgah** - Moses and Balaam both stood on the same hill, but with very different objects. Places cannot change character.)

**Bush** - **Brought him into the field of Zophim**. That is, to the field of the spies or watchers. Gr. "He took him to a watch-tower of the field." It was probably some lofty position commanding a wide view of the adjacent country, and such as was usually chosen for a place of espial by those appointed to watch the approach of enemies.

**MacDonald** - Balak then took Balaam to a different vantage point in hopes that the prophet would see them in a less favorable light (BBC)

**Holman Bible Dictionary** on **PISGAH** - Place name perhaps meaning, "the divided one." Mountain in the Abarim range across the Jordan River from Jericho. Some Bible scholars believe it was part of Mount Nebo; others think it could have been a separate rise, either en-Neba or near modern Khirbet Tsijaga. God allowed Moses to view the Promised Land from the heights of Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34:1 ) but would not let him cross into Canaan. Israel had camped near Pisgah (Numbers 21:20 ). Balak took Balaam to its height so the prophet could see Israel and curse them (Numbers 23:14 ). It was a limit of Sihon's kingdom (Joshua 12:23 ); Ashdod-pisgah in KJV) and also for the tribe of Reuben (Joshua 13:20 ).

**Mattoon** - King Balak is not getting his own way. His solution to the problem is to change the location. He takes Balaam to the top of Pisgah. The summit of Mt. Pisgah is Mt. Nebo. On a clear day the entire land of Canaan can be seen for 150 miles North to South, from Dan to Beersheba; and 40 miles from East to West, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. It is at Pisgah, that Balaam meets with the Lord again. King Balak thought a change in scenery might change Balaam's mind. Beloved, changing your location will not necessarily change God's will for you. It will not solve your problems either. If you are in a difficult situation, learn to face your problem and work them out. Moving to get your own way or to escape problems makes them more difficult and leads to further problems. Problems in us will not be corrected with a new location. Changing locations clouds the need to change the heart.

### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Pisgah](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Pisgah](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Pisgah](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Pisgah](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Pisgah](#) (Hill; eminence; fortress)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Pisgah](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Pisgah](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Pisgah](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Pisgah](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Pisgah](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Pisgah](#)

**Numbers 23:15** And he said to Balak, **'Stand** here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet the LORD over there."

---

BGT Numbers 23:15 κα ε πεν Βαλααμ πρ ς Βαλακ παρ στηθι π τ ς θυσ ας σου γ δ πορε σομαι περωτσαι τ ν θε ν

NET Numbers 23:15 And Balaam said to Balak, "Station yourself here by your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD there.

NLT Numbers 23:15 Then Balaam said to the king, "Stand here by your burnt offerings while I go over there to meet the LORD."

ESV Numbers 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD over there."

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

KJV Numbers 23:15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder.

YLT Numbers 23:15 And he saith unto Balak, 'Station thyself here by thy burnt-offering, and I -- I meet Him there;'

LXE Numbers 23:15 And Balaam said to Balac, Stand by thy sacrifice, and I will go to enquire of God.

ASV Numbers 23:15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt-offering, while I meet Jehovah yonder.

CSB Numbers 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here by your burnt offering while I seek the LORD over there."

NKJ Numbers 23:15 And he said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the LORD over there."

NRS Numbers 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offerings, while I meet the LORD over there.

NAB Numbers 23:15 Balaam then said to Balak, "Stand here by your holocaust, while I seek a meeting over there."

NJB Numbers 23:15 Balaam said to Balak, 'Stand here beside your burnt offerings while I wait over there.'

GWN Numbers 23:15 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offering while I meet with God over there."

- Nu 23:3 Nu 22:8
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BALAAM REPEATS THE ROUTINE

**And he said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet the LORD over there-** Nu 24:1 says Balaam "did not go as at other times to seek omens." Presumably when he separated himself from Balak, he was going to seek omens.

**Bush** - The phrase "going to meet" was probably technical with prophets and diviners.

**Numbers 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."**

BGT Numbers 23:16 κα συν ντησεν θε ς τ Βαλααμ κα ν βαλεν μα ε ς τ στ μα α το κα ε πεν ποστρ φητι πρ ς Βαλακ κα τ δε λαλ σεις

NET Numbers 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a message in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you."

NLT Numbers 23:16 And the LORD met Balaam and gave him a message. Then he said, "Go back to Balak and give him my message."

ESV Numbers 23:16 And the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and



thus shall you speak."

NIV Numbers 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."

KJV Numbers 23:16 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

YLT Numbers 23:16 and Jehovah cometh unto Balaam, and setteth a word in his mouth, and saith, 'Turn back unto Balak, and thus thou dost speak.'

LXE Numbers 23:16 And God met Balaam, and put a word into his mouth, and said, return to Balac, and thus shalt thou speak.

ASV Numbers 23:16 And Jehovah met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus shalt thou speak.

CSB Numbers 23:16 The LORD met with Balaam and put a message in his mouth. Then He said, "Return to Balak and say what I tell you."

NKJ Numbers 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

NRS Numbers 23:16 The LORD met Balaam, put a word into his mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you shall say."

NAB Numbers 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam, and having put an utterance in his mouth, he said to him, "Go back to Balak, and speak accordingly."

NJB Numbers 23:16 God came to meet Balaam, he put a prophecy into his mouth and said to him, 'Go back to Balak, and that is what you must say to him.'

GWN Numbers 23:16 The LORD came to Balaam and told him, "Go back to Balak, and give him my message."

- Nu 23:5 22:35 24:1
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then the LORD met Balaam** - This is amazing to me. Yahweh deigns to meet with Balaam again.

**and put a word in his mouth** - Just as stated earlier, Yahweh put the word in Balaam's mouth. Now normally when one speaks for the LORD we call them a prophet and so on face value you could call Balaam a prophet since he is speaking the word from Yahweh. But that does not make Balaam a true prophet of God in the classic sense because then we could say the donkey was a "prophet" of God for clearly God put the words in his mouth to speak!

**and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak** - Balaam was divinely constrained to speak the very words God gave him.

**Numbers 23:17 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?"**

BGT Numbers 23:17 κα πειστρ φη πρς ατν κα δε φεισκει π τς λοκαυτ σεως ατο κα π ντες ο ρχοντες Μωαβ μετ ατο κα επεν ατ Βαλακ τ λησεν κ ριος

NET Numbers 23:17 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?"

NLT Numbers 23:17 So Balaam returned and found the king standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab. "What did the LORD say?" Balak asked eagerly.

ESV Numbers 23:17 And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"

NIV Numbers 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?"



KJV Numbers 23:17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

YLT Numbers 23:17 And he cometh unto him, and lo, he is standing by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him, and Balak saith to him: 'What hath Jehovah spoken?'

LXE Numbers 23:17 And he returned to him: and he also was standing by his whole-burnt-sacrifice, and all the princes of Moab with him; and Balac said to him, What has the Lord spoken?

ASV Numbers 23:17 And he came to him, and, lo, he was standing by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath Jehovah spoken?

CSB Numbers 23:17 So he returned to Balak, who was standing there by his burnt offering with the officials of Moab. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

NKJ Numbers 23:17 So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"

NRS Numbers 23:17 When he came to him, he was standing beside his burnt offerings with the officials of Moab. Balak said to him, "What has the LORD said?"

NAB Numbers 23:17 So he went back to Balak, who was still standing by his holocaust together with the princes of Moab. When Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

NJB Numbers 23:17 So Balaam went to him and found him still standing beside his burnt offering and all the chiefs of Moab with him. 'What did Yahweh say?' Balak said to him.

GWN Numbers 23:17 He came to Balak and found him standing beside his burnt offering with the princes of Moab. Balak asked him, "What did the LORD say?"

- What: Nu 23:26 1Sa 3:17 Jer 37:17
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the leaders of Moab with him-** This is the same scene as in Nu 23:6.

**And Balak said to him, "What has the LORD spoken?"** - This time Balak asks before Balaam begins to speak (contra Nu 23:6-7). Notice that Balak uses the covenant Name Yahweh just as Balaam had done, also indicating that use of this memorial Name is no indication that they belong to Yahweh or that they are true worshippers of Yahweh.

**Spurgeon on what has the LORD spoken** - An enquiry which we all should raise, and search the Scriptures to find the reply.

**Numbers 23:18 Then he took up his discourse and said, "Arise, O Balak, and hear; Give ear to me, O son of Zippor!"**

NET Numbers 23:18 Balaam uttered his oracle, and said, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; Listen to me, son of Zippor:

NLT Numbers 23:18 This was the message Balaam delivered: "Rise up, Balak, and listen! Hear me, son of Zippor.

ESV Numbers 23:18 And Balaam took up his discourse and said, "Rise, Balak, and hear; give ear to me, O son of Zippor:

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

KJV Numbers 23:18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

YLT Numbers 23:18 And he taketh up his simile, and saith: 'Rise, Balak, and hear; Give ear unto me, son of Zippor!

LXE Numbers 23:18 And he took up his parable, and said, rise up, Balac, and hear; hearken as a witness, thou son of Sepphor.

ASV Numbers 23:18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; Hearken unto me, thou

son of Zippor:

CSB Numbers 23:18 Balaam proclaimed his poem: Balak, get up and listen; son of Zippor, pay attention to what I say!

NKJ Numbers 23:18 Then he took up his oracle and said: "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor!

NRS Numbers 23:18 Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying: "Rise, Balak, and hear; listen to me, O son of Zippor:

NAB Numbers 23:18 Balaam gave voice to his oracle: Be aroused, O Balak, and hearken; give ear to my testimony, O son of Zippor!

NJB Numbers 23:18 Balaam then declaimed his poem, as follows: Stand up, Balak, and listen, give ear to me, son of Zippor.

GWN Numbers 23:18 Then Balaam delivered this message: "Stand up, Balak, and listen! Hear me, son of Zippor!

- **Arise:** Jdg 3:20
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DISCOURSE #2

**Then he took up his discourse and said, "Arise, O Balak, and hear; Give ear to me, O son of Zippor! - Balaam gives 3 quick commands to arrest Balak's full attention!**

**Bush** on **Arise, O Balak**, - Hengstenberg well remarks: "He calls upon the king to rise mentally, as the importance of the prophecy he was about to utter demanded. This 'Rise up' is applicable not to Balak only, but to all who approach the holy Scripture. Whoever would understand God's Word, must free himself from his natural sloth and mental dissipation—must gird himself up and collect his mental powers." Such an internal state would, however, ordinarily express itself by suitable outward gestures; the words are therefore equivalent to an intimation that he should hearken with every token of becoming reverence to a message brought from God, even as Ehud, Judg. 3:20, told Eglon that he had brought him such a message; it is said that "he arose out of his seat."....The authoritative tone which Balaam here assumes, in commanding Balak's attention, is to be referred to the same general afflatus or impulse under which he speaks throughout. The words are a fit preface to the solemn enunciation that follows, which, in point of style, rises to the highest pitch of sublimity and grandeur.

**Mattoon** - When Balaam returned from his meeting with the Lord, Balak wanted to know what the Lord said. King Balak got an ear-full. God is not a man and His Word is sure. What He says will happen because He keeps His promises. God's message is the same for the world today.

**Numbers 23:19 "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?"**

BGT Numbers 23:19 ο χ ς νθρωπος θε ς διαρτηθ ναι ο δ ς υ ς νθρ που πειληθ ναι α τ ς ε πας ο χ ποι σει λαλ σει κα ο χ μμενε

NET Numbers 23:19 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?

NLT Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

ESV Numbers 23:19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

NIV Numbers 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?

KJV Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

YLT Numbers 23:19 God is not a man -- and lieth, And a son of man -- and repenteth! Hath He said -- and doth He not do it? And spoken -- and doth He not confirm it?

LXE Numbers 23:19 God is not as man to waver, nor as the son of man to be threatened; shall he say and not perform? shall he speak and not keep to his word?

ASV Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, Neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and will he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?

CSB Numbers 23:19 God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does He speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?

NKJ Numbers 23:19 "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? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

NRS Numbers 23:19 God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

NAB Numbers 23:19 God is not man that he should speak falsely, nor human, that he should change his mind. Is he one to speak and not act, to decree and not fulfill?

NJB Numbers 23:19 God is no human being that he should lie, no child of Adam to change his mind. Is it his to say and not to do, is it his to speak and not fulfil?

GWN Numbers 23:19 God is not like people. He tells no lies. He is not like humans. He doesn't change his mind. When he says something, he does it. When he makes a promise, he keeps it.

- **God:** 1Sa 15:29 Ps 89:35 Hab 2:3 Mal 3:6 Lu 21:33 Ro 11:29 Titus 1:2 Heb 6:18 Jas 1:17
- or hath he: 1Ch 17:17 Mic 7:20
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE NON-LYING GOD

**God is not a man, that He should lie-** Jensen writes that "As an answer to Balak's hope that God had changed His mind, the message was not a man, that He should lie, etc." And so Balaam begins with this immutable attribute of God. He is always truthful. He has said he would bless Israel (Ge 12:3) and He would not lie (See His attribute [Truth](#))

**FSB** - Indicates that God will not change something He has decreed or promised. See 1 Sam 15:29, 35; Ex 32:9–14; Jonah 3:10. The message for Balak is that nothing he does will induce God to permit Balaam to curse Israel.

**Bush - God is not a man that he should lie** etc. The rendering of the Chald. is here peculiar: "The word of God is not like the speeches of the sons of man, (for) the sons of man do say and lie." The language implies a virtual reproach, as much as to say, "Wouldst thou make God a liar?" No more fearful mistake is made than when we judge the Lord from ourselves. Men change their minds, and therefore break their word; they lie, because they repent. But God does neither. He never changes his mind, and therefore never recalls his promises. His very name, "Jehovah," implies the unchangeable as well as the eternal. "He is of one mind; and who can turn him?" This immutability makes it "impossible for him to lie," and consequently he can never swerve from his purpose of preservation and benediction towards his people.

**Ronald Allen** - The words "God is not a man, that he should lie" describe the immutability of the Lord and the integrity of his word. Balaam is himself a foil (ED: a person or thing that gives contrast to another) for God. Balaam is constantly shifting, prevaricating, equivocating, changing—he is himself the prime example of the distinction between God and man. (EBC)

**Spurgeon** - The immutability of the divine counsel is the safety of the saints. No entreaties of our foes can move the heart of God away from us: we are his chosen, and we shall be so evermore. Every promise is yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and not one single word of the Lord shall ever fall to the ground. Men shift like quicksand, but the Lord is firm as a rock.

**Nor a son of man, that He should repent** - NET, ESV, NIV = "nor a son of man, that he should change his mind." Here is His attribute of unchangeableness (see [Immutable](#))

**Constable** - The point is that God is not fickle. No one can induce Him to curse those whom He has chosen to bless.

**Has He said, and will He not do it?** - Rhetorical. GWN is a good paraphrase "When he says something, he does it." Indeed is not His attribute of [Faithfulness](#).

**Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good** - Another rhetorical question - of course He will follow through. GWN = "When he makes a promise, he keeps it." NLT - "Has he ever promised and not carried it through? Why? Because He has cut a covenant with the Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as He declared in Genesis 17:7 (Ge 48:4) "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and to your descendants after you." which is why "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, [El Olam: Everlasting God](#)." (Ge 21:33)

**Allen** - All others may change; God—even with all his power—cannot change, for he cannot deny himself (cf. 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 89:35–37). God must fulfill his promise, for he has bound his character to his word. (EBC)

## Does God Change His Mind?

From notes on Exodus 32:14 (see commentary).

**John MacArthur** helps understand what seems to be somewhat at odds with God's attribute of immutable writing that "Moses' appeal for God to change His mind, to relent, succeeded because God had only threatened judgment, not decreed it. **A divine intention is not an unchangeable divine decree**. Decrees or sworn declarations (cf. Ge 22:16–18; Ps 110:4) or categorical statements of not changing or relenting (cf. Jer 4:28; Eze 24:14; Zec 8:14, 15) are **unconditional** and bind the speaker to the stated course of action regardless of the circumstances or reactions of the listeners. **Intentions** retain a conditional element and do not necessarily bind the speaker to a stated course of action (cf. Jer 15:6; 18:8–10; 26:3, 13, 19; Joel 2:13; Jon 3:9, 10; 4:2)." (MSB-bolding added)

**Robert Chisholm** - The article then argues that if God has issued a **decree**, He will not change His mind or deviate from it. However, the majority of God's statements of intention are not **decrees**. And God can and often does deviate from such announcements. In these cases He "changes His mind" in the sense that He decides, at least for the time being, not to do what He had planned or announced as His intention. (See full article "[Does God 'Change His Mind'?](#)" Bibliotheca Sacra 152).

**Excerpt from Chisholm's article** - When God saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, He angrily announced to Moses His intention to destroy the people and raise up a new nation through Moses. "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation" (Exod. 32:10). The form of the statement (imperative + jussive + cohortative + cohortative) indicates that it is not a decree, but an expression of God's frustration with His people. The implication is that Moses, if he did not leave God alone, might be able to persuade Him to change His mind. In fact this is exactly what happened (vv. 11-14). Moses appealed to God's reputation ("What will the Egyptians think?"), asked Him to relent from His stated course of action (v. 12), and reminded Him of His unconditional decree to the patriarchs (v. 13). Verse 14 states that God did indeed change His mind. Moses was able to succeed because God had only threatened judgment, not decreed it.

**Numbers 23:20 "Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it.**

NET Numbers 23:20 Indeed, I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

NLT Numbers 23:20 Listen, I received a command to bless; God has blessed, and I cannot reverse it!

ESV Numbers 23:20 Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.

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

KJV Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

YLT Numbers 23:20 Lo, to bless I have received: Yea, He blesseth, and I can not reverse it.

LXE Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: I will bless, and not turn back.

ASV Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: And he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

CSB Numbers 23:20 I have indeed received a command to bless; since He has blessed, I cannot change it.

NKJ Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

NRS Numbers 23:20 See, I received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.

NAB Numbers 23:20 It is a blessing I have been given to pronounce; a blessing which I cannot restrain.

NJB Numbers 23:20 The charge laid on me is to bless, I shall bless, and I cannot reverse it.

GWN Numbers 23:20 I have received a command to bless. He has blessed, and I can't change it.

- **He has blessed** Nu 22:12 Ge 12:2 22:17
- **I cannot:** Nu 22:18,38 Joh 10:27-29 Ro 8:38,39 1Pe 1:5
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Behold, I have received a command to bless** - The Hebrew text simply has "I have received [to] bless." (NN)

**When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it** - Balaam has enough sense to realize that there is nothing he can do to reverse what God has said. "No, nor all the devils in hell. The promise is not **yea and nay**, but **yea, yea**." (Spurgeon)

**Allen** - Since the Lord is unlike fickle people, the command to bless is not subject to change at all.

**NN on revoke** - The verb is the Hiphil of שׁוּב (shuv), meaning "to cause to return." He cannot return God's word to him, for it has been given, and it will be fulfilled.

**Bush** - And I cannot reverse it. Or, Heb. "I shall not turn it away, or turn it back." Chald. "And I shall not turn my blessing from them." Our version, however, conveys the correct sense. Balaam would not reverse the divine decree because he could not; and what he says of himself holds true of all others and in all ages. The divine purposes insure to the members of the true church the performance of the divine promises. Not an iota of all that the Lord hath said shall fail. No power in heaven, earth, or hell, can avail to turn aside the Most High from his fixed purpose of bestowing the blessings of eternal life upon his genuine people. Is. 14:27, "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" How cheering the thought amidst the mutabilities of life—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever!" How great the consolation to the Lord's followers, that none can reverse what he has said; none turn the blessing into a curse!

**Numbers 23:21 "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."**

BGT Numbers 23:21 ο κ σταί μ χθος ν Ιακωβ ο δ φθ σεται π νος ν Ισραηλ κ ριος θε ς α το μετ α το τ νδοξα ρχ ντων ν α τ

NET Numbers 23:21 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.

NLT Numbers 23:21 No misfortune is in his plan for Jacob; no trouble is in store for Israel. For the LORD their God is with them; he has been proclaimed their king.

ESV Numbers 23:21 He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.

NIV Numbers 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.

KJV Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

YLT Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, Nor hath He seen perverseness in Israel; Jehovah his God is with him, And a shout of a king is in him.

LXE Numbers 23:21 There shall not be trouble in Jacob, neither shall sorrow be seen in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, the glories of rulers are in him.

ASV Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: Jehovah his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them.

CSB Numbers 23:21 He considers no disaster for Jacob; He sees no trouble for Israel. The LORD their God is

with them, and there is rejoicing over the King among them.

NKJ Numbers 23:21 "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them.

NRS Numbers 23:21 He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob; nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, acclaimed as a king among them.

NAB Numbers 23:21 Misfortune is not observed in Jacob, nor misery seen in Israel. The LORD, his God, is with him; with him is the triumph of his King.

- hath not: Ps 103:12 Isa 1:18 38:17 Jer 50:20 Ho 14:2-4 Mic 7:18-20 Ro 4:7,8 6:14 8:1 2Co 5:19
- the Lord: Ex 13:21 29:45,46 33:14-16 34:9 Jud 6:13 2Ch 13:12 Ps 23:4 Ps 46:7,11 Isa 8:10 12:6 41:10 Eze 48:35 Mt 1:23 2Co 6:16
- the shout: Ps 47:5-7 89:15,18 97:1 118:15 Isa 33:22 Lu 19:37,38 2Co 2:14
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He has not observed misfortune in Jacob - NET** = "He has not looked on iniquity in Jacob" **NKJV** = "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob." **TWOT** says that **misfortune** (âven; Lxx = mochthos = hardship, strenuous toil) "seems to have two facets: a stress on trouble which moves on to wickedness, and an emphasis on emptiness which moves on to idolatry." **Bush** on **misfortune** (iniquity) - Heb. âven, iniquity, a term of large import, denoting all the various kinds of sin or iniquity which cause pain, sorrow, and misery, and applied in particular to idolatry, as it is rendered 1 Sam. 15:23, while in Is. 66:3, it is rendered an idol. Bush goes on to reason that "The purport, then, of the passage, we take to be, that God had not seen in Israel that degree of iniquity and perverseness which should be a sufficient ground for inflicting upon them a curse, which was Balaam's desire and Balak's design."

If "**iniquity**" (rather than misfortune) is the main intention **MacDonald** makes the point that this "describes the nation's position, not its practice. The people were reckoned righteous through faith. So believers today stand before God in all the perfections of His beloved Son."

**Spurgeon** says "Not such **iniquity** as to lead him to put them away. Balaam knew that nothing but sin could separate God from Israel, and he saw that by some means or other the Lord had not seen iniquity in his people. We know, what he did not, that a Mediator came between, otherwise Israel's sins had long before been her destruction. No doubt compared with the Moabites and especially the filthy Canaanites, the people in the wilderness were remarkably pure to Balaam's judgment; but it would have fared very ill with them if this had been their only righteousness."

**Allen** adds that "At first blush the wording of this verse is nearly incredible. The whole course of Israel's experience in the desert was one evil after another, one trouble on another. Yet it is evidently the standing of Israel that is in view here, rather than her state. It is also possible that the words "evil" and "trouble" in this verse are not used to refer to moral issues but to mantic concerns. That is, God does not look on his people with "an evil eye" or a hostile glance." (EBC)

**NN** - The line could mean that God has regarded Israel as the ideal congregation without any blemish or flaw. But it could also mean that God has not looked on their iniquity, meaning, held it against them.

**Nor has He seen trouble in Israel - Trouble** (amal; Lxx = ponos = hard labor, distress of difficult circumstances) "means "wrong, misery, trouble." It can mean the idea of "disaster" as well, for that too is trouble. Here it is parallel to "iniquity" and so has the connotation of something that would give God reason to curse them."(**NN**) **Gilbrant** adds that **amal** "may also be translated "wickedness" (cf. Nu. 23:21; Isa. 10:1), which conveys the emotion of vexation and anguish associated with sinful behavior, especially by those who are the recipients of such evil acts."

**The LORD his God is with him - Bush** "These words point directly to the source of their peculiar blessedness. It was from the divine presence dwelling in the midst of them, sustaining and protecting them. This prerogative was a sign of the gracious state of those to whom it pertained, as otherwise the privilege of communion with Him could not have been enjoyed, according to the intimation 1 John 1:6, 7. So also Ex. 33:3, "For I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way." The Lord was indeed symbolically and typically with the Israelites in the wilderness and in Canaan, but the fulness of the declaration is to be realized only in that Israel which is after the spirit and not after the flesh.

**And the shout of a king is among them** - One wonders if Balaam was able to visualize the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) in the center of the camp?

**Merrill** - The shout of the King must be understood as a militaristic threat, implying that the Lord is a Warrior who leads His hosts to victory (cf. Josh. 6:5, 20; Ps. 47:5; Jer. 4:19; 49:2). (BKC)



**Bush** on "among them" - Heb. "In him," i. e. in Jacob or Israel, spoken of collectively. The original term for "shout" (teruath) is used to denote the alarm-sound made by the silver trumpets described Nu 10:5, 6. It is employed also to denote a shouting of joy and exultation, as when a king or conqueror returns in triumph from war, and his coming is hailed with jubilant acclamations on the part of the people. "When people pass along the road, if they hear a great noise of joy or triumph, they say, 'This is like the shout of a king.' 'What a noise there was in your village last evening! Why, it was like the shout of a king.' "—Roberts. It implies, in its ulterior reference, that the Lord's true people should be victorious in their divine Head over all enemies."

**FSB** on **a king** - Refers to God Himself ruling in Israel (Exod 15:18; Deut 33:5; 1 Sam 8:7; 12:12; Ps 68:24).

**NN** on **the shout** - The people are blessed because God is their king. In fact, the shout of acclamation is among them—they are proclaiming the LORD God as their king. The word is used normally for the sound of the trumpet, but also of battle shouts, and then here acclamation. This would represent their conviction that Yahweh is king.

### Numbers 23:22 "God brings them out of Egypt, He is for them like the horns of the wild ox.

BGT Numbers 23:22 θες εξαγαγει αυτους εξ αιγυπτου και ο εξαμονος ωτος αυτου

NET Numbers 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt. They have, as it were, the strength of a wild bull.

NLT Numbers 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; for them he is as strong as a wild ox.

ESV Numbers 23:22 God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild ox.

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

KJV Numbers 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

YLT Numbers 23:22 God is bringing them out from Egypt, As the swiftness of a Reem is to him;

LXE Numbers 23:22 It was God who brought him out of Egypt; he has as it were the glory of a unicorn.

ASV Numbers 23:22 God bringeth them forth out of Egypt; He hath as it were the strength of the wild-ox.

CSB Numbers 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; He is like the horns of a wild ox for them.

NKJ Numbers 23:22 God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.

NRS Numbers 23:22 God, who brings them out of Egypt, is like the horns of a wild ox for them.

NAB Numbers 23:22 It is God who brought him out of Egypt, a wild bull of towering might.

NJB Numbers 23:22 God has brought him out of Egypt, is like the wild ox's horns to him.

GWN Numbers 23:22 The God who brought them out of Egypt has the strength of a wild bull.

- God: Nu 22:5 24:8 Ex 9:16 14:18 20:2 Ps 68:35
- the strength: De 33:17 Job 39:10,11 Ps 22:21
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT

**God brings them out of Egypt** - This was the supreme example of God's power and provision for His people and one that Balak was likely very familiar.

**Allen** - The verbal form (**brings them out**) is a participle, describing ongoing action. God is in the process still of bringing his people from Egypt; he will complete his work soon by bringing them into his land. And along the way he is their strength. They are not empowered by magic but by his person, not by potion but by his presence.

**Bush** - Heb. "Is bringing them," implying a continuous act. We learn from ch. 22:5, that Balak sent word to Balaam, "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt." This would seem to imply that in his view they had come forth from Egypt of their own motion. But Balaam now informs him that such is not the fact; that they were brought out by the hand of God himself, and that he was still bringing them; that he had not relinquished his guiding and guardian care towards them; and consequently that, to endeavor to oppose them, to contend with them, or to visit them with imprecations, would be no less than a foolish fighting with God—a vain conflict of weakness against Omnipotence. Viewed in this light the use of the Participle in the present connection is peculiarly

significant. "The fruitlessness of his undertakings against Israel is here proved to Balak, not from the fact that God had brought them out of Egypt, but that he is bringing them out. The idea is, whoever has God for a leader or companion on his way, the world with all its power can do nothing against him."—Hengstenberg.

God makes his saints so strong that they astound their adversaries  
-- Spurgeon

**He is for them like the horns of the wild ox** - A wild ox with horns was fierce and formidable which is a powerful picture of Jehovah's provision and protection of Israel.

**Bush** - He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn (**wild ox**). The "he" in this passage we take to refer to Israel, and not to God, although Ains worth recognizes an allusion to both, the Most High as the head of his people possessing this strength in himself, and then imparting it to them, according to the words of the Psalmist, Ps. 68:35, "The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people."

**NN** - The expression is "the horns of the wild ox" (KJV "unicorn"). The point of the image is strength or power. Horns are also used in the Bible to represent kingship (see Pss 89 and 132).

**Constable** - Israel would be victorious in battle as well as enjoy God's blessing (v. 24; cf. Gen. 49:9; Mic. 5:8). This was the opposite of what Balak wanted to hear.

**Numbers 23:23 "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!"**

BGT Numbers 23:23 ο γ ρ σπιν ο ωνισμ ς ν Ιακωβ ο δ μαντε α ν Ισραηλ κατ καιρ ν ηθ σεται Ιακωβ κα τ Ισραηλ τ πιτελ σει θε ς

NET Numbers 23:23 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!'

NLT Numbers 23:23 No curse can touch Jacob; no magic has any power against Israel. For now it will be said of Jacob, 'What wonders God has done for Israel!'

ESV Numbers 23:23 For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, 'What has God wrought!'

NIV Numbers 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!'

KJV Numbers 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

YLT Numbers 23:23 For no enchantment is against Jacob, Nor divination against Israel, At the time it is said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought!

LXE Numbers 23:23 For there is no divination in Jacob, nor enchantment in Israel; in season it shall be told to Jacob and Israel what God shall perform.

ASV Numbers 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment with Jacob; Neither is there any divination with Israel: Now shalt it be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

CSB Numbers 23:23 There is no magic curse against Jacob and no divination against Israel. It will now be said about Jacob and Israel, "What great things God has done!"

NKJ Numbers 23:23 "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'

NRS Numbers 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, 'See what God has done!'

NAB Numbers 23:23 No, there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor omen against Israel. It shall yet be said of Jacob, and of Israel, "Behold what God has wrought!"

NJB Numbers 23:23 There is no omen whatever against Jacob, no augury at all against Israel. Well may



people say of Jacob, of Israel, 'What has God achieved?'

- **no omen against** : Nu 22:6 24:1 Ge 3:15 Mt 12:25,27 16:18 Lu 10:18,19 Ro 16:20 Rev 12:9
- **At the proper time**: Ps 44:1-3 136:13-20 Isa 63:9-12 Da 9:15 Mic 6:4,5 7:15
- **what God has done**: Ps 31:19 64:9 126:2,3 Isa 41:4 Joh 11:47 Ac 4:16 5:12,14 Ac 10:38 15:12 Ga 1:23,24 1Th 1:8,9
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## NO CURSE ON ISRAEL

**For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination**(see notes on Nu 22:7) **against Israel** - NLT = "No curse can touch Jacob; no magic has any power against Israel." No curse for Israel. Here Balaam can speak from his own personal experience!

Even if there were any truth in witchcraft and omens, they could not affect the people of the Lord.

Those whom God blesses devils cannot curse

-- Spurgeon

**NN** - The words describe two techniques of consulting God; the first has to do with observing omens in general ("enchantments"), and the second with casting lots or arrows of the like ("divinations" [Ezek 21:26]).

**Spurgeon** - No plan of men or devils can succeed against the elect of God. We have no cause to fear evil omens, in fact, it would be sinful to do so. It is wicked to feel the superstitious fear of the old heathen. No magical arts, Satanic devices, or malicious plottings can really injure the beloved of the Lord

**Allen** - The reason for Israel's eventual triumph is given in a new way in this verse: there is "no sorcery against Jacob." Balaam speaks here from his frightful experience. He had no means in his bag of tricks to withstand the blessing of Israel. Instead of the tricks of the sorcerer, it will be said of Israel: "See what God has done!" (EBC)

**Omen** (05173) [nachash](#) from verb [nachash](#) - see above) means divination, enchantment. Only found in [Nu 23:23](#) and [Nu 24:1](#).

The [Septuagint](#) translates [nachash](#) with the noun **oionos** which Liddell-Scott says literally means "a large bird, bird of prey, such as a vulture or eagle, and so distinguished from a common bird, Homer, etc. II. a bird of omen or [augury](#), Homer, etc.:the flight to (not from) the right, i.e. towards the East, was fortunate, and vice versa. 2. an **omen**, presage, drawn from these birds, Lat. auspiciu or augurium, according as taken from seeing their flight or hearing their cry, II., etc.; dechomai ton oionon = accept the omen, hail it as favourable,

**Divination** (07081)(**qesem**) described the cultic practice of foreign nations that was prohibited in Israel (Deut. 18:10); and considered a great sin (1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Kgs. 17:17). False prophets used divination to prophesy in God's name, but God identified them as false (Jer. 14:14; Ezek. 13:6); and pledged to remove such practices from Israel (Ezek. 13:23). Several verses give some insight into what this actual practice looked like: it was compared to a kingly sentence (Prov. 16:10); and was used to discern between two choices (Ezek. 21:21[26], 22[27] **Divination**, which was outlawed by God in Israel, involved using illegitimate means to attempt to gain knowledge of such things as the future. Ezekiel 21:21 includes using arrows, consulting teraphim and examining livers as methods of divination

**Qesem** - Num. 22:7; Num. 23:23; Deut. 18:10; 1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Ki. 17:17; Prov. 16:10; Jer. 14:14; Ezek. 13:6; Ezek. 13:23; Ezek. 21:21; Ezek. 21:22

**At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done!**- NLT - For now it will be said of Jacob, 'What wonders God has done for Israel!' Bush says "It is extremely difficult to affix a precise idea to these words (**the proper time it shall be said**)."

**Jensen** says the idea is "direct revelation of His ways and means ("At a proper time it shall be stated to Jacob, yes, to Israel what God has brought about," 23:23, Berkeley Version) rather than communication through sorcery or witchcraft."

**NN on shall be said** - The Niphal imperfect here carries the nuance of obligation—one has to say in amazement that God has done something marvelous or "it must be said."

**Spurgeon** - **HOW this should cut up root and branch all silly, superstitious fears!** Even if there were any truth in witchcraft and omens, they could not affect the people of the Lord. Those whom God blesses devils cannot curse. Ungodly men, like Balaam, may

cunningly plot the overthrow of the Lord's Israel; but with all their secrecy and policy they are doomed to fail. Their powder is damp, the edge of their sword is blunted. They gather together; but as **the Lord is not with them**, they gather together in vain. We may sit still, and let them weave their nets, for we shall not be taken in them. **Though they call in the aid of Beelzebub, and employ all his serpentine craft, it will avail them nothing: the spells will not work, the divination will deceive them. What a blessing this is! How it quiets the heart!** God's Jacobs wrestle with God, but none shall wrestle with them and prevail. God's Israels have power with God and prevail, but none shall have power to prevail against them. We need not fear the fiend himself, nor any of those secret enemies whose words are full of deceit, and whose plans are deep and unfathomable. They cannot hurt those who trust in God. We defy the devil and all his legions.

---

**WHAT GOD HAS DONE - WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT!** - Samuel Morse, famous for his invention of the telegraph, gave God the glory for his inventions. It's fitting that the first message he ever sent over the wire was taken from Scripture: "What hath God wrought!" (Numbers 23:23). Morse, who graduated from Yale in 1810, wrote these words four years before he died: "The nearer I approach the end of my pilgrimage, the clearer is the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible. The grandeur and sublimity of God's remedy for fallen man are more appreciated and the future is illuminated with hope and joy."

---

[Thomas Constable](#) notes that "Several types of divination were common in the ancient Near East."

1. [Extispicy \(Haruspex\)](#) was the examination of the entrails of a sacrificed sheep by a trained specialist to determine messages from the gods. The intricate arrangements of the internal organs are what believers in this form of divination regarded as indicative of divine revelation.
2. [Astrology](#) studied the arrangements of the moon, sun, meteors, planets, and fixed stars to discover the future. Eclipses were particularly significant.
3. [Augury](#) was the study of the appearance, movements, and behavior of birds. The seers supposed the direction and manner of flight of birds was revelatory.
4. [Kleromancy \(Cleromancy\)](#) was divination by means of lots. The various configurations of symbolic objects, actors, and areas yielded a binary ("yes" or "no") answer to a given question.
5. [Oneiromancy](#) was revelation by dreams that sometimes contained verbal communication from a god or non-verbal communication. In the latter type certain colors, animals, or activities corresponded to types of misfortune, happiness, or success.

In all the types of divination, [fortunetellers](#) used tricks to deceive and impress their clients. They often clothed their predictions in mysterious ambiguous language to cover possible error. Devout Israelites were to reject divination as a way of discovering the likely outcome of events and to rely on God to make known what He wanted them to know.

---

**G Michael Hagan - DIVINATION** - Communication with a deity for the purpose of determining the deity's knowledge, resulting in clarification of a decision or discernment of the future. Two forms of divination developed in the ancient Near East, one using inductive manipulation of natural or human phenomena and the other taking intuitive forms of inner revelation.

**The History of Divination** . In Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, and Canaan, people communicated with their deities by means of divination, both on a personal and public level. From the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000 b.c.) on in Mesopotamia, the reading of livers helped determine the actions of commoners and kings. A sheep was slaughtered, its liver removed, and the markings of the organ "read" for an answer. Other inductive types of divination included the analysis of stars, moon, entrails, lungs, weather, birds, and fetuses. Human-produced phenomena studied included casting lots, shooting arrows, dropping oil in water, drinking wine, calling the dead, and sprinkling water on an ox. Intuitive types of divination in the ancient Near East involved oracles, prophecies, and dreams.

In Israel, an official position on divination limited its uses to forms that did not reflect the practices of surrounding cultures. Most inductive forms were forbidden (Leviticus 19:26 ; Deuteronomy 18:11 ), although the use of Urim and Thummim and lots supposes some inductive approaches. Most ancient practices, however, were used by both the populace and the officials. The Bible alludes to the use of omens (Isaiah 44:25 ), arrows (Hosea 4:12 ), animal actions (1 Samuel 6:7-12 ), the reading of livers (Ezekiel 21:21-22 ), budding plants (Numbers 17:1-11 ), [necromancy](#) (1 Samuel 28 ), and prophetic utterances, called false (Micah 3:7,11 ) or "lying divinations" (Isaiah 44:25 ; Jeremiah 14:14 ; 27:9-10 ; Ezekiel 12:24 ; Zechariah 10:2 ). References to the "soothsayers' tree" (Judges 9:37 ), the "sons of a sorcerer" (Isaiah 57:3 ), and the girl with a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-19 ) are evidence of widespread practice.

**Theology of Divination** . Divination presupposes that the divine communicates with the human. This communication takes both human and divine initiative. Inductive techniques depend on human initiation. The Bible supposes that a priority rests on revelatory

forms (dream, vision, oracle) rather than on inductive ones (Urim/ Thummim, ephod). Although natural phenomena may communicate God's will, their interpretation must be scrutinized and may be helped by the verbal. It seems clear that God is not limited to the use of any one means of revelation.

Why would the Bible record such strong negative injunctions against inductive divination? Deuteronomic law especially attacks everything connected with pagan religions. Foreign deities may have attached themselves to these methods. Even then, most of Israel's approved methods display parallels with the surrounding cultures. The question of veracity may be involved because they prove difficult to interpret. For this reason, verbal forms take precedence over inductive methods. Yet even prophecies need to stand the test of whether they come true (Deuteronomy 18:21-22 ).

Human need requires discernment of divine desires. God chooses to communicate in a variety of ways, including divination techniques, but always in the clearest, most unambiguous way possible. (Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Divination](#))

---

**Question:** [Can a Christian be cursed? Will God allow a curse on a believer?](#)

**Answer:** The Bible tells us that "like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest" (Proverbs 26:2b). This means that foolish curses have no effect. **God does not allow His children to be cursed.** God is sovereign. **No one has the power to curse one whom God has decided to bless. God is the only One able to pronounce judgment.**

"**Spells**" in the Bible are always described negatively. Deuteronomy 18:10-11 numbers those who cast spells with those who commit other acts "detestable to the LORD" such as child sacrifice, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, or necromancy (consulting with the dead). Micah 5:12 says that God will destroy witchcraft and those who cast spells. Revelation 18 describes spells as part of the deception that will be used by the antichrist and his "great city of Babylon" (Rev 18:21-24+). Though the end-times deception will be so great that even the elect would be deceived if God did not protect us (Matthew 24:24), God will utterly destroy Satan, the antichrist, and all who follow them (Revelation chapters 19-20).

The Christian has been born again as a new person in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17+), and we are in the constant presence of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and under whose protection we exist (Romans 8:11). We do not need to worry about anyone casting any sort of pagan spell on us. Voodoo, witchcraft, hexes, and curses have no power over us because they come from Satan, and we know that "the one who is in you [Christ] is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world" (1 John 4:4+). God has overcome him, and we have been freed to worship God without fear (John 8:36). "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? " (Psalm 27:1). [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about divination? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Divination](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Divination](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Divination](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Divination](#) [Magic](#), [Divination](#), and [Sorcery](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Divination and Magic](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Divine; Diviner](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Divination](#).
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Divination](#) [Arrows divination by](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Divination](#)
- [What does it mean to be bewitched?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about superstitions?](#)
- [What is a jinx? What does it mean to be jinxed?](#)

**Numbers 23:24 "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."**

BGT Numbers 23:24 δο λα ς ς ακ μνος ναστ σεσαι κα ς λ ων γαυριωθ σεσαι ο κοιμηθ σεσαι ως φ γ θ ραν κα α μα τραυματι ν π εται

NET Numbers 23:24 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."

NLT Numbers 23:24 These people rise up like a lioness, like a majestic lion rousing itself. They refuse to rest until they have feasted on prey, drinking the blood of the slaughtered!"

ESV Numbers 23:24 Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself; it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey and drunk the blood of the slain."

NIV Numbers 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."

KJV Numbers 23:24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

YLT Numbers 23:24 Lo, the people as a lioness riseth, And as a lion he lifteth himself up, He lieth not down till he eateth prey, And blood of pierced ones doth drink.'

LXE Numbers 23:24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a lion's whelp, and shall exalt himself as a lion; he shall not lie down till he have eaten the prey, and he shall drink the blood of the slain.

ASV Numbers 23:24 Behold, the people riseth up as a lioness, And as a lion doth he lift himself up: He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, And drink the blood of the slain.

CSB Numbers 23:24 A people rise up like a lioness; They rouse themselves like a lion. They will not lie down until they devour the prey and drink the blood of the slain.

NKJ Numbers 23:24 Look, a people rises like a lioness, And lifts itself up like a lion; It shall not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."

NRS Numbers 23:24 Look, a people rising up like a lioness, and rousing itself like a lion! It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey and drunk the blood of the slain."

NAB Numbers 23:24 Here is a people that springs up like a lioness, and stalks forth like a lion; It rests not till it has devoured its prey and has drunk the blood of the slain.

NJB Numbers 23:24 for here is a people like a lioness rising, poised like a lion to spring; nor will he lie down till he has devoured his prey and drunk the blood of his slain.

- as a great: Nu 24:8,9 Ge 49:9 De 33:20 Ps 17:12 Pr 30:30 Isa 31:4 Am 3:8 Rev 5:5
- he shall: Nu 24:17 Ge 49:27 Da 2:44 Mic 5:8,9 Zec 10:4,5 12:6 Rev 19:11-21
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## STRENGTH AND POWER OVER ALL ENEMIES

**Behold** (02009) (**hinneh**) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinneh** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! **Hinneh** is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows (Isa 65:17, Ge 17:20, 41:17). The first use of **hinneh** in Ge 1:29 and second in Ge 1:31 - "And God saw all that He had made, and **behold**, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." **Hinneh** is often used in the idiom "**Here I am**" in Ge 22:1, 7,11 Ge 27:1,18, Ge 31:11, Ge 46:2 Ex 3:4 1Sa 3:4, 3:16, 12:3, 2Sa 1:7, Isa 52:6, Isa 58:9. **Hinneh** is used most often to point out people but also to point out things (Ge 31:41, 17:4). God uses **hinneh** to grab man's attention before He brings destruction (Ge 6:13, 17). God uses **hinneh** when He establishes covenants (Ge 9:9, 15:12, 17 [when Jehovah cut the Abrahamic covenant], Ge 17:4, cp Ge 28:13, 15), when He provided a sacrificial substitute for Isaac (foreshadowing His giving us His only Son!) (Ge 22:13). **Hinneh** marks the "chance ([The Providence of God](#))" arrival of Boaz at the field where Ruth was gleaning (Ru 2:4 [read about this "chance romance" - Indeed, "Behold!"](#)). **Hinneh** is used to announce the Lord's sending of a child as a sign and a prophecy of [Immanuel-Emmanuel](#), the Messiah (Isa. 7:14 [note](#)). In fact **W E Vine** says that it is notable that when **behold** (**hinneh**) is used in Isaiah, it always introduces something relating to future circumstances. **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**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** - Balak must have been shaking by now. This description conveys the truth that Israel is powerful and will be victorious.

**Allen** - At this point the would-be victim of the curse of Balaam and Balak becomes the instrument of the destruction of its own enemies. As a lioness (the huntress), Israel is about to rouse herself and bring her foes down to destruction. She will not rest until the enemy is devoured, its blood lapped clean at the end of the chase. (EBC)

**Spurgeon** - He foresaw the military prowess of the nation, and foretold the destruction of the Canaanites by Israel, thus in reality blessing the people whom he was invited to curse

**Bush - Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion.** Heb. "As a courageous lion." Here the blessing which was bestowed specifically upon the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:9, is applied to the whole nation of Israel collectively: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" But this blessing reaches on and expends itself on the Christian church, with whom is the victorious presence of Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." **And lift himself up as a young lion.** Emblematic of strength, courage, and majesty. In the primary sense this phrase and the "rising up" in the former clause, may be conceived as pointing to the bold and valorous onset which Israel should make upon their enemies the Canaanites, the record of which is contained in the book of Joshua.

**FSB** - The lion metaphor is used elsewhere of Israel (see Gen 49:9; Deut 33:20; Mic 5:8), including in Balaam's third oracle (Num 24:9).

**NN on lioness** - The oracle compares Israel first to a lion, or better, lioness, because she does the tracking and hunting of food while the lion moves up and down roaring and distracting the prey. But the lion is also the traditional emblem of Judah, Dan and Gad, as well as the symbol of royalty. So this also supports the motif of royalty as well as power for Israel.

#### Numbers 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!"

BGT Numbers 23:25 κα ε πεν Βαλακ πρ ς Βαλααμ ο τε κατ ραις καταρ σ μοι α τ ν ο τε ε λο γ ν μ ε λο γ σ ς α τ ν

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

NLT Numbers 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Fine, but if you won't curse them, at least don't bless them!"

ESV Numbers 23:25 And Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all."

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

KJV Numbers 23:25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

YLT Numbers 23:25 And Balak saith unto Balaam, 'Neither pierce it at all, nor bless it at all;'

LXE Numbers 23:25 And Balac said to Balaam, Neither curse the people at all for me, nor bless them at all.

ASV Numbers 23:25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

CSB Numbers 23:25 Then Balak told Balaam, "Don't curse them and don't bless them!"

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

NRS Numbers 23:25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all."

NAB Numbers 23:25 "Even though you cannot curse them," said Balak to Balaam, "at least do not bless them."

NJB Numbers 23:25 Balak said to Balaam, 'Very well! Do not curse them. But at least do not bless them!'

GWN Numbers 23:25 Balak said to Balaam, "If you won't curse them, then at least don't bless them!"

- Ps 2:1-3
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**BALAK HAS  
HEARD ENOUGH**

**Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!"**- Hebrew = "Neither cursing curse him, nor blessing bless him." Now Balak even says don't curse because everytime he asks for a curse he only hears more blessings!

**Jensen** - On hearing this second word from God, Balak wished he had not solicited Balaam's help at all. But this momentary exasperation gave way to a third and final try to secure the desperately desired curse on Israel. (EvBC-Nu)

**Bush** - The impatience and vexation of Balak breaks out uncontrollably in these words. Since Balaam will not say what he would have him, he wishes him to say nothing. If he could procure no evil to be done to Israel, he would at least debar them from the reception of any good.

**NN on Do not curse them at all** - The verb is preceded by the infinitive absolute: "you shall by no means curse" or "do not curse them at all." He brought him to curse, and when he tried to curse there was a blessing. Balak can only say it would be better not to bother. The same construction now works with "nor bless them at all." The two together form a merism—"don't say anything." He does not want them blessed, so Balaam is not to do that, but the curse isn't working either.

**Numbers 23:26 But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"**

BGT Numbers 23:26 καὶ ἀποκρίθη ὁ Βαλαάμ ἐπὶ τὸν Βαλάκ ὁ κλησθεὶς λαλῶν τὸ μὴ ἰνα λαλῇ θεὸς τοιοῦτον

NET Numbers 23:26 But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the LORD speaks, I must do'?"

NLT Numbers 23:26 But Balaam replied to Balak, "Didn't I tell you that I can do only what the LORD tells me?"

ESV Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the LORD says, that I must do'?"

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

KJV Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?

YLT Numbers 23:26 and Balaam answereth and saith unto Balak, 'Have I not spoken unto thee, saying, All that Jehovah speaketh -- it I do?'

LXE Numbers 23:26 And Balaam answered and said to Balac, Spoke I not to thee, saying, Whatsoever thing God shall speak to me, that will I do?

ASV Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that Jehovah speaketh, that I must do?

CSB Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered him, "Didn't I tell you: Whatever the LORD says, I must do?"

NKJ Numbers 23:26 So Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'All that the LORD speaks, that I must do'?"

NRS Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD says, that is what I must do'?"

NAB Numbers 23:26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not warn you that I must do all that the LORD tells me?"

NJB Numbers 23:26 Balaam retorted to Balak, 'Did I not tell you? Whatever Yahweh says, I must do.'

GWN Numbers 23:26 Balaam answered, "Didn't I tell you that I must do whatever the LORD says?"

- Nu 23:12,13 Nu 22:18,38 Nu 24:12,13 1Ki 22:14 2Ch 18:13 Ac 4:19,20 5:29
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **BALAAM SPEAKS YAHWEH'S WORDS**

**But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do-** Rhetorical - I warned you Balak! - So the answer to this question is "yes" - As if Balak had not heard this before in Nu 23:12 **"Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"** Earlier Balaam had been very clear replying "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.**" And again in Nu 22:38 "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.**"

**Bush - Told I not thee, saying, etc.** The groundwork of Balak's reproach was the consideration, that Balaam, by his very coming, had laid himself under an obligation, at least, to do nothing against the interest of the king. To this Balaam replies by appealing to the declaration made on his first arrival, that he could only utter what was put into his lips. He is willing to own himself overruled, although he does not confess that he would have been very willing to comply with Balak's order if he had been able.

**Numbers 23:27 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."**

BGT Numbers 23:27 κα ε πεν Βαλακ πρ ς Βαλααμ δε ρο παραλ βω σε ε ς τ πον λλον ε ρ σει τ θε κα καταρ σα μοι α τ ν κεθεν

NET Numbers 23:27 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."

NLT Numbers 23:27 Then King Balak said to Balaam, "Come, I will take you to one more place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them from there."

ESV Numbers 23:27 And Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there."

NIV Numbers 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."

KJV Numbers 23:27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

YLT Numbers 23:27 And Balak saith unto Balaam, 'Come, I pray thee, I take thee unto another place; it may be it is right in the eyes of God -- to pierce it for me from thence.'

LXE Numbers 23:27 And Balac said to Balaam, Come and I will remove thee to another place, if it shall please God, and curse me them from thence.

ASV Numbers 23:27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come now, I will take thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

CSB Numbers 23:27 Again Balak said to Balaam, "Please come. I will take you to another place. Maybe it will be agreeable to God that you can put a curse on them for me there."

NKJ Numbers 23:27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there."

NRS Numbers 23:27 So Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there."

NAB Numbers 23:27 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come, let me bring you to another place; perhaps God will approve of your cursing them for me from there."

NJB Numbers 23:27 Balak then said to Balaam, 'Come with me now and I shall take you somewhere else. From there perhaps it will please God to curse them for me.'

- Come: Nu 23:13
- peradventure: Nu 23:19,20 Job 23:13 Pr 19:21 21:30 Isa 14:27 46:10,11 Mal 3:6 Ro 11:29
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **STUBBORN, FOOLISH BALAK MAKES A THIRD ATTEMPT TO CURSE**

**Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God(Lit - "be pleasing in the eyes of God") that you curse them for me from there** - Balak still did not fully believe Balaam's repeated

declaration that Yahweh would not let him curse Israel. "Balak is stubborn, as indeed Balaam is persistent. But Balak still thinks that if another location were used it just might work. Balaam had actually told Balak in the prophecy that other attempts would fail. But Balak refuses to give up so easily. So he insists they perform the ritual and try again. This time, however, Balaam will change his approach, and this will result in a dramatic outpouring of power on him." (NN)

**Bush** - If Balak, in uttering these words, had any thought of the true God in his mind, the absurdity as well as the impiety of the suggestion is astounding. To think that the Most High could be prevailed upon to turn from his purpose of blessing, and be pleased to curse his people, was the height of delusion, and making the Lord to be "a God who hath pleasure in wickedness." But it is possible that Balak, by the term "God," had mental reference to some other deity, in which case we cannot so much wonder at the crudeness of his apprehensions.

#### Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the wasteland.

BGT Numbers 23:28 καὶ παρέλαβεν Βαλακ τὴν Βαλαάμ πρὸς κορυφὴν τοῦ Φογὼρ τὴν παρατείνονσαν εἰς τὴν ἠῆραν

NET Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that looks toward the wilderness.

NLT Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

ESV Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the desert.

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

KJV Numbers 23:28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon.

YLT Numbers 23:28 And Balak taketh Balaam to the top of Peor, which is looking on the front of the wilderness,

LXE Numbers 23:28 And Balac took Balaam to the top of Phogor, which extends to the wilderness.

ASV Numbers 23:28 And Balak took Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh down upon the desert.

CSB Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.

NKJ Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland.

NRS Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.

NAB Numbers 23:28 So he took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks Jeshimon.

NJB Numbers 23:28 So Balak led Balaam to the summit of Peor, overlooking the wastelands.

GWN Numbers 23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor, which overlooks Jeshimon.

- Jeshimon: Nu 21:20
- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 25:3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel. (25:5) So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor."

Deuteronomy 4:3 "Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

Psalms 106:28-29 They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead. 29 Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them.

Hosea 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season. But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame, And they became as detestable as that which they loved.



## OF PEOR

**So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the wasteland-** Peor was identified with Baal (Nu 25:3, 5; Dt. 4:3; Ps. 106:28–29; Hosea 9:10).

**Wenham** - Third time lucky is Balak's motto. Unpersuaded by Balaam's last message that the LORD would not change his mind, he takes Balaam to another place. (TOTC-Nu)

**KJV for which overlooks the wasteland** has "that looketh toward Jeshimon." Bush says "That is, towards the desert so named."

**Mattoon** - Balak still believes that changing the location will correct the problem. He is determined to have his own will and way done. He takes Balaam to Peor which is identified with Baal worship. This is near the place of Moses' grave (see Dt 34:6). This place will also be the place of the defeat of God's people who will be lured by the sexual seduction of beautiful Moabite women into the worship of Baal. (Nu 25:3)

**Bush on Peor** - It was the name of a mountain in Moab where the people of that country used to sacrifice to their idol Baal. It was hence called Baal-Peor, ch. 25:2, 3, 18, and they seem there to have had a temple called Beth-peor, or the house of Peor, near which was a city of the same name, that the Israelites took from king Sihon, and afterwards gave for a possession to the tribe of Reuben, Deut. 3:29, Josh. 13:15, 20.

### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Peor](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Peor](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Peor](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Peor](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Baal-Peor](#) [Peor](#)

---

### Question: [What was Baal Peor in the Bible?](#)

**Answer:** Baal Peor, or the Baal of Peor, was a local deity worshiped by the Moabites. When the Israelites, following Moses to the Promised Land, were in the vicinity of Peor, some of them fell into idolatry and worshiped Baal Peor. As a result of their sin, the men of Israel were judged by God.

The story of Baal Peor starts when [Balaak](#), the king of the Moabites, hired [Balaam](#), a prophet-for-hire, to curse Israel. Balaak had seen the progress and might of Israel and was trying to do something that would stop them. Balaam took the money but was unable to curse Israel because the Lord would not allow him to do so. Balaam then met with the king of Moab and went through the motions of receiving a word from God; each time (seven times total) he ended up blessing Israel instead of cursing them (Numbers 23–24). At the time of the third oracle, Balaam and Balak were observing the Israelite camp from a place called Peor (Numbers 23:28). By the end of the seventh try, Balaak finally got the message that Balaam would not curse Israel for him.

In Numbers 25, we find that the women of Midian began to seduce the men of Israel to [sexual sin](#) and to sacrifice to their gods. Since the gods of the pagans were often fertility gods, the "worship" often involved sexual acts. The incident is recorded in Numbers 25:1–3: "While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Midianite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them." As a judgment against the Israelites' sin, God sent a plague among the people (verse 9).

According to Numbers 31:16, the women did this on the advice of Balaam. It appears that, since he could not curse Israel, he found another way to fulfill the wishes of Balaak, who was paying him. Balaam knew that, if the Israelite men could be seduced into idol worship, that God Himself would curse them.

The word *peor* simply means "opening" and is the name of the place (a mountain or a spot on a mountain) from which Balak and Balaam observed the camp of Israel. The meaning of the word may or may not be significant to the naming of the place. (Perhaps there was a cave opening there or some kind of mountain pass, or perhaps the place was called Peor for some other reason.)

The word *baal* is simply the word for "lord," "master," or "ruler." [Baal](#) became a technical or semi-technical name for the gods of the Canaanites. There was not just one god named Baal, but there were many Baals (many Canaanite "lords"). That is why Numbers 25:3 in the NIV does not use "Baal Peor" as if it were a proper name for a god but uses the term more as a description: "the Baal of Peor," which could also be translated "the Lord of Peor" or "Lord of the Opening." *Peor* might refer to the mountain top from which Balaam and Balak observed Israel, or it could have something to do with the literal meaning of the word *peor* (opening), which, in

the context of Canaanite worship (and the context of Numbers 25), could have a sexual or scatological connotation. Perhaps the top of the mountain was called Peor because that is where the sexual rites took place.

In any case, Baal Peor is really *the* Baal of Peor or simply the Lord of Peor, which distinguishes this Baal from all the others. This particular god is referred to again in Numbers 25:5. Then Numbers 25:18 speaks of “the Peor incident,” which sounds like Peor is being used as a place name rather than something based on the meaning of the word.

Deuteronomy 4:3 uses Baal Peor as a place name to refer to the incident recorded in Numbers 25 and in the same verse as a designation for the pagan god. “You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor.” Joshua 22:17 speaks of the “sin of Peor,” and Hosea 9:10 uses Baal Peor to refer to the place where this incident happened: “When they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved.” Psalm 106:28 also refers to the Baal of Peor: “They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods.”

So it seems that Peor and Baal Peor are both used as place names to refer to the place where Israel sinned in sexual immorality and in worship of a particular Baal. The Baal in question is referred to as Baal Peor. Perhaps he was already referred to by this name, as he was seen to be in charge of this particular location, or perhaps this is the name that the Israelites gave him after the fact.

In any case, this incident at Baal Peor stands out as the first of many times that Israel fell into immorality and idolatry, and it also serves as a warning to Christians. The Corinthians would have been particularly susceptible to this kind of temptation, as the [city of Corinth](#) was filled with idolatry and sexual immorality. The question of eating at idol temples was debated within the congregation. Although he does not mention Baal Peor by name, Paul refers to that incident in 1 Corinthians 10:8: “We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.” In verses 11–14, Paul goes on to say, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.”

Many things have changed since Israel’s sin at Baal Peor, but the basic temptations have not. Sexual temptation is ever present in modern societies, and the idols of money, pleasure, fame, and “the good life” also vie to take the place of the One True God in the hearts of many people. Even today, Christians must guard against the sin of Baal Peor. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 23:29 Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here."**

BGT Numbers 23:29 κα ε πεν Βαλααμ πρ ς Βαλακ ο κοδ μησ ν μοι δε πτ βωμο ς κα το μασ ν μοι δε πτ μ σχους κα πτ κριο ς

NET Numbers 23:29 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars here for me, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams."

NLT Numbers 23:29 Balaam again told Balak, "Build me seven altars, and prepare seven young bulls and seven rams for me to sacrifice."

ESV Numbers 23:29 And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

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

KJV Numbers 23:29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

YLT Numbers 23:29 and Balaam saith unto Balak, 'Build for me in this place seven altars, and make ready for me in this place seven bullocks and seven rams;'

LXE Numbers 23:29 And Balaam said to Balac, build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven calves, and seven rams.

ASV Numbers 23:29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven

bullocks and seven rams.

CSB Numbers 23:29 Balaam told Balak, "Build me seven altars here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

NKJ Numbers 23:29 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

NRS Numbers 23:29 Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

NAB Numbers 23:29 Balaam then said to him, "Here build me seven altars; and here prepare for me seven bullocks and seven rams."

NJB Numbers 23:29 Balaam then said to Balak, 'Build me seven altars here and prepare me seven bulls and seven rams.'

GWN Numbers 23:29 Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me."

- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ANOTHER ROUND OF THREE SEVENS

**Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here -** See [notes](#) on Nu 23:1

**Numbers 23:30 Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.**

BGT Numbers 23:30 καὶ ποῆσεν Βαλακ καθὼς ἐπεὶ αὐτὸς Βαλααμ καὶ νεγέννη μὴ σκῶν καὶ κρίν πέντε βωμῶν

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

NLT Numbers 23:30 So Balak did as Balaam ordered and offered a young bull and a ram on each altar.

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

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

KJV Numbers 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

YLT Numbers 23:30 and Balak doth as Balaam said, and he offereth a bullock and a ram on an altar.

LXE Numbers 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam told him, and offered a calf and a ram on every altar.

ASV Numbers 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar.

CSB Numbers 23:30 So Balak did as Balaam said and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

NKJ Numbers 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on every altar.

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

NAB Numbers 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam had ordered, offering a bullock and a ram on each altar.

NJB Numbers 23:30 Balak did as Balaam said and offered a burnt offering of one bull and one ram on each altar.

GWN Numbers 23:30 Balak did what Balaam told him, and he offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

- [Numbers 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### BALAK COMPLIES WITH BALAAM'S REQUEST

Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar -See [notes](#) on Nu 23:2