

BALAK

NUMBERS (BE'MIDBAR 22:2 – 25:9)

INTRODUCTION:

1. This portion will focus on a heathen prophet's ability but futile attempts to curse the nation of Israel.
 - a. He was renowned in the ancient world, apparently.
2. Going against his nature and self-interests is forced to bless rather than curse.
 - a. Proclaims the futility in man's attempt to undermine God's purposes for Israel.
3. This story also hints at future personalities who, like Balaam, possess a genuine gift but lack the virtues to refrain from misappropriating those gifts for personal gain.
4. These chapters were known in ancient times as the Book of Balaam.
5. Balaam was possibly taught of the one true God, being from Mesopotamia.
 - a. There were scattered worshippers of God: Melchizedek, Job and Jethro.
 - b. Yet he is regarded as a heathen sorcerer.
 - c. Had a gift, had knowledge of the truth but perverted it all.
6. Though he ultimately blesses Israel, his intention was to curse, thus he is called Balaam the Wicked (Heb. בלעם הרשע).
 - a. His "disciples" are those with haughty mind, proud spirit and an evil eye.
 - b. Associated with Amalek and Haman as arch enemy to Israel.
7. New Testament writers address his infamy when warning of his "disciples."

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." – 2 Peter 2:15

"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah." – Jude 1:11

8. Even the Messiah mentions him:

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there, those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." – Revelation 2:14

9. Still, one eloquent thing he said is still recited in every Synagogue service:

"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!" – Numbers 24:5

CHAPTER 22: BALAK SENDS EMISSARIES TO BALAAM

1. Verse Verses 2 – 3: "Balak (king of Moab) saw what Israel had done to the Amorites...and Moab was overcome with dread."
 - a. Israel was settled on Moab's borders.

2. Overcome with dread is “loathed” because they hated Israel.
 - a. Interestingly, the Egyptians were in dread of Israel (Ex. 1:12).
 - b. It would seem those who dread Israel want Israel dead.
3. Verse 4: “And Moab said unto the elders of Midian.”
 - a. Moab is situated close to Midian.
 - b. Moab suggests Israel is there to overcome Moab and Midian.
4. Interesting Moab aligns with Midian considering Moses lived in Midian for forty years.
 - a. Their confederacy against Israel is based on causeless hatred.
5. Verse 5: Balak sends messengers to Balaam alerting him of Israel.
 - a. “A people come out of Egypt...they cover the face of the earth.”
6. Balaam (Heb. בלעם) is thought to be a shortened version of בעל העם - “lord of the people.”
 - a. He was from Pethor (known in ancient manuscripts as Pitru).
 - b. It was in Mesopotamia along the Euphrates – “the River.”
 - c. Jewish literature contends that Balaam was a descendant of Laban.
 - d. Supposedly Laban taught him black arts.
7. Verse 6: “Come now...and curse this people.”
 - a. Ancient nations had a firm belief in curses and blessings.
 - b. Babylonian region was rooted in demonology.
8. “They are too mighty for me” – again reminiscent of Pharaoh’s assessment of Israel.
 - a. “More and mightier than we” ... “will side with our enemies.”
 - b. In both cases, they oppose God’s purposes for Israel.
9. “For I know that he whom you bless is blessed and whom you curse is cursed.”
 - a. According to prior Torah portion, Balak was on receiving end of a curse.
 - a. As a result, Sihon overcame Moab and some of its territory.
 - b. Traditionally, Balaam was the one who had cursed Balak.
10. Verse 7: “The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with rewards of divination.”
 - a. Verses 8: Balaam receives them and invites them to stay the night.
 - b. He must first hear from God.
11. The text does not mention Israel by name and we might assume Balaam isn’t aware of exactly who this people coming out of Egypt are.
 - a. He seems surprised when he first sees them suggesting limited knowledge.
12. Verse 9: “And God said unto Balaam” – God speaks to non-Israelites.
 - a. Suggests that Balaam was accustomed to hearing from God.
 - b. Balaam is accustomed to speaking to God – relates Balak’s message.
13. Verse 12: “And God said, ‘You shall not go with them, you shall not curse the people.’ ”
 - a. “Because they are blessed.”
14. Verse 13: Informs his guests he has not been given “leave” to go with them.
 - a. He doesn’t say anything about God forbidding him to curse Israel.
 - b. They departed back to Moab.
 - c. Suggesting this is a process that may have taken months to unfold.
15. Verse 15: Balak sent more messengers than before and of greater reputation.
 - a. This time Balak promises “great honor” and anything you ask.
 - b. Balaam tells him, “regardless of how much I can’t go beyond what God says.”
16. Verse 19: “Stay here tonight...” – Though he has already heard from God.
 - a. Why didn’t he repeat his former answer if he was intent to do what is right?
 - b. He knew God had forbid him to fulfill Balak’s request – to curse what was blessed.

17. Would seem he is trying to find a way to receive reward and prestige.
 - a. At the same time, feigning not going beyond what God says.
18. He wants them to stay that “I might know” – he already knew.
 - a. He harbored evil thoughts in his heart.
19. Verse 20: “God came to him and said, ‘Go with them but speak only what I tell you speak.’ ”
 - a. Balaam was trying to justify the journey for personal gain.
 - b. God consents to the journey but warns him against cursing the people.
 - c. God knows what is in his heart.
20. It seems He agrees because Balaam is bound to go to destruction against the warning.
 - a. Many times God tries to protect us but we are bent to what is in our heart.
 - b. Unfortunately, like Balaam we pay the consequences of not obeying His voice.

CHAPTER 22: THE JOURNEY

1. Verse 21: Balaam leaves with the princes of Moab.
 - a. V. 22: God’s anger is kindled against him – why?
 - b. It would seem God is considering what Balaam is likely pondering in his heart.
 - c. “How can I obtain the riches and honor without disobeying God’s instruction?”
2. Verse 22: The angel of the LORD stands in the way of Balaam as a *satan* (Heb. שָׂטָן).
 - a. The donkey sees the angel and Balaam does not.
 - b. Nor, apparently, do the two servants who are with him.
 - c. The donkey turns away from the angel who has sword drawn.
 - d. “Balaam struck the donkey to turn her in the way” – intent on destruction.
3. Footnote: Moses got in trouble for striking rock when he was to speak as God had said.
 - a. Balaam is close to death by striking the donkey because he’s intent on doing his will.
4. Verse 24 – 25: Angel stands in the way forcing the donkey to run into the wall.
 - a. This crushes Balaam’s foot, prompting him to strike her again.
 - b. That he crushes his foot is interesting – it is intent on running to evil.

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down to the Pit; We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, we shall fill our houses with spoil; Cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse.’ My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path; For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.” – Proverbs 1:10-16

5. Verse 26 – 27: Angel positions himself so that the donkey (Balaam) can’t turn left or right.
 - a. The donkey sees her, lies down and will go no further.
 - b. Prompting, for the third time, Balaam to strike her with his staff.
6. Consider that the “seer” doesn’t see but the beast of burden does.
 - a. Seems to refute his claim to know God’s will and authority as spokesman.
 - b. In reality, Balaam was a sorcerer, not a prophet.
 - c. True, he did have a gift and heard from God.
 - d. Also consider to avoid destruction we are not to turn to the right or to the left.
7. Verse 28 – 30: “The LORD opened the mouth of the donkey and she spoke to Balaam”
 - a. What have I done to you that you have struck me three times?

- b. Balaam responds: “Because you mocked me...I would kill you if I had a sword.”
 - c. Going to “slay” a nation with spoken word but needs a sword to kill a donkey.
8. Many commentators take these verses as literal and some consider the episode to be a dream or vision.
9. Nothing is impossible with God – no more miraculous than a speaking serpent.
- a. Other strange and “miraculous” phenomena are noted in Scripture.
 - b. “Mouth of the earth” swallowed Korah.
 - c. The well that followed them in the wilderness had a “mouth.”
 - d. Miracles are not an interruption of Nature’s laws.
 - e. Interesting that he “opened” his mouth as if to say, it had been closed.
10. Maimonides and others feel this is a vision or dream noting Balaam doesn’t show any astonishment at the fact the donkey begins to speak.
11. The angel in the way is, in some sense, an angel of mercy.
- a. Attempts to restrain Balaam from committing a sin and perishing.
 - b. This “angel” who opposes our intent to do evil often appears in a familiar guise.
 - c. Sometimes it is your spouse or your children or another circumstance.
12. The angel was trying to save Balaam from going to destruction and, thus, caused the donkey to speak – perhaps that will cause him to come to his senses.
- a. The donkey asks, “In all these years have I ever done anything like this?”
 - b. God uses every instrument to alert us to destruction we seem intent on rushing to.
 - c. Ironically, God can cause a beast to say what He wants him to.
 - d. The challenge is to get those formed in His image to do so.
13. Verse 31–33: “The LORD opened the eyes of Balaam” – sees the angel with sword drawn.
- a. He bowed and fell on his face and received a strong rebuke.
 - b. V 32: I’m here as an adversary because “your way is contrary (headlong) unto me.”
 - c. V 33: “Had it not been for the donkey I would have slain you and let her live.”
14. Balaam acknowledges his sin and offers to return “if it displeases you.”
- a. What “sin” was he referring to?
 - b. In response to this the angel answers:

“Then the Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.’ So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”

– Numbers 22:35

15. For the second time, he is reminded to speak only what is spoken to him to speak.
- a. Warned to guard against this evil intention in your heart.
 - b. It came close to costing you your life.
16. Perhaps Balaam is convinced it is hopeless to attain his goal and obey God at the same time and suggests returning home but, now, he is bound to be God’s messenger and bless Israel.
- a. Also possible that Balaam ignores why the angel was in his path – i.e. true motive.
17. When Balaam finally arrives in Moab, Balak greets him with “What took so long?”
- a. Balaam’s response is, “I’m here aren’t I? I will only speak what God tells me.”
 - b. After sacrificing sheep and oxen, takes Balaam to *Bamot Ba’al* – high places of Ba’al.
 - c. This is where Balaam first sees the people of Israel.

CHAPTER 23: BALAAM'S BLESSINGS & PROPHECIES

1. Verse 1 – 3: Balaam instructs Balak to build 7 altars and prepared 7 bulls and 7 rams.
2. As Balak waits by the burnt offerings, Balaam goes to see “if the LORD will meet with me.”
 - a. “Whatever He shows me I will tell you.”
3. God placed a word in Balaam’s mouth who returns to Balak.
 - a. He is forced to bless Israel.
 - b. He pronounced the parable to Balak and the princes of Moab.
4. Verse 8: In the parable, Balaam asks, “How can I curse whom God has not cursed?”
5. Verse 9: Observing them from the mountain peak he says:
 - a. “It is a people who will dwell alone (Heb. **בָּדָד** *badad*), “separate” from all others.
6. “Shall not be reckoned among the nations” – literally, “does not reckon itself among the nations.”
 - a. Israel is to be a “set apart” (holy) nation (Ex. 19:6).
 - b. Since it is separate it doesn’t conspire against others, then why curse it?
7. Even when Israel was deserving of a curse, he didn’t allow others to do it.
 - a. Jacob gained blessing through deception but Isaac said, “He is blessed.”
 - b. Jacob rebuked Levi and Simeon and cursed their anger but not them (Gen. 49:7).
 - c. Noah did not curse Ham (but Canaan) because Ham was blessed (Gen. 9:1).
 - d. You can’t curse what God has blessed.
8. Another translation of verse 9 suggests that Israel is, “from its origin, like a rock.”
 - a. Balaam is saying they are established just as surely as rocks and hills are established.

“Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.” – Isaiah 51:1

9. Verse 11: Balak’s responds angrily, “What have you done to me?”
 - a. I asked you to curse but you have blessed.
 - b. Balaam insists he must speak only what God tells him to say.
10. Balak takes him to another mountain – to the top of Pisgah.
 - a. This is where Moses will eventually die and be buried – but not yet.
 - b. This place “field of Zophim” is “field of the lookouts.”
 - c. From here, Moses would see the land and be gathered to his fathers.
 - d. Ironic that he is buried where Balak and Balaam sought to “bury” all Israel.
11. Even though Balaam will be looking at same thing from different perspective, it won’t change the outcome.
12. Verse 19-20: Balaam says:

“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? Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.” – Numbers 23:19-20

13. He or anyone else can overturn what the Creator has ordained.
 - a. He can’t curse what God has blessed because he doesn’t have the authority.

- b. Neither can the Adversary curse what God has blessed.
14. Verse 21: Balaam says:

“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.” – Numbers 23:21

15. This verse – “has not observed iniquity” - has interesting implications:
- a. Speaking for himself, Balaam – who has looked for a reason to curse – can’t find one.
 - b. Speaking for God, Israel is a nation without spot or stain.
 - c. They have committed no sin that would warrant the removal of God’s blessing.
 - d. Interesting considering they had, in the past, sinned mightily against God.
16. Must conclude that, even though they had sinned and angered God, He still would allow no one to curse them nor permit those who would destroy them to observe their faults.
- a. Does this not speak to us as well where our Adversary is concerned?
 - b. Don’t believe that, if we are blessed, the Adversary has ability to curse.
17. Another possible interpretation is given by Ibn Ezra, who concluded:
- a. If there is no iniquity, God maintains His kindness to Israel.
18. “The LORD his God is with him” – therefore, no weapon formed against him shall prosper.
- a. If Israel sins, God withdraws His kindness and allows punishment.
 - b. Thus Balaam learned the best way to harm Israel is, not to curse, but entice them to sin.
19. If the Adversary can’t curse what God has blessed, then seduce them to sin and they will do to themselves what their enemies have not the power to do.
- a. Serpent in the **midst** of garden seduced them to sin.
 - b. Sanballat wanted to get into the **midst** of them to kill them.
20. Verse 23: Mentions that, unlike Moab and Balak, there is no need for divination in Israel.
- a. God Almighty is with them.
21. Another possible interpretation – “no enchantment prevails against Israel.”
- a. The black arts have no power over God’s people.
 - b. Believers should not fear a “witch’s” curse as some do.
22. God delivered Israel from Egypt by His might not by magicians’ tricks.
- a. The rod of Aaron devoured the rod of the Egyptian magicians.
 - b. Balak trying to curse with magic a nation blessed because it has repudiated magic.
23. Verse 23: “Now it is said of Jacob and Israel: ‘What has God wrought?’”
- a. One interpretation is: “In due time it is told to Jacob and Israel what God does.”
 - b. i.e. He lets His people know what is about to happen when it is time.
 - c. There is no need for divination or enchantments.
 - d. Even then they had the breastplate (*Urim v’ tummim*) to hear from God.

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” – Amos 3:7

24. Verse 25: Frustrated, Balak says: “Don’t curse or bless, just keep quiet.”
- a. Still, takes them to another point – Peor – to look at them one more time.
 - b. Still holding out that something Balaam sees will change God’s mind.
 - c. Balak, a sorcerer himself, takes Balaam to a place that will be a detriment to Israel.
 - d. Peor is a place where an idol was worshiped – Balaam again has altars built.

CHAPTER 24: BALAAM'S FINAL PROPHECY

1. Verse 1: "It pleased the LORD to bless Israel so he went not as at the other times."
 - a. Did not meet with enchantments.
 - b. Set his face toward the wilderness.
2. He apparently realized that his enchantments in order to curse were of no use.
 - a. So he resolves to say whatever God will give him to say.
3. Verse 2. He saw Israel dwelling tribe by tribe and Spirit of God came upon him.
 - a. He does not address Balak now, but speaks to the future; prophetic.
4. Verse 3: His prophecy begins with "Balaam ... the man whose eye is opened."
 - a. He "hears the words of God."
 - b. He sees "the vision of the Almighty."
 - c. Even heathens are ultimately destined to confess God's truth.
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar (head of gold) proclaims Him the "Most High God" (Dan. 3).
 - e. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.
5. Verse 5: "How goodly are your tents O Jacob; your dwelling places O Israel."
 - a. In Hebrew "*mah tovu ohalekha Ya 'akov – mishkenotekha Yisrael.*"
 - b. Rabbis liken the tents to Torah and tabernacles to synagogues
 - c. Yet, he saw them dwelling "tribe by tribe."
 - d. This speaks to me of a united Israel – tribe by tribe – under Kingship of Messiah.
 - e. Subsequent verses seem to support this.
6. Verse 7: "His seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag; his kingdom shall be exalted"
 - a. "Many waters" speaks of nations and multitudes.
 - b. "His seed" alludes to His Word, His Messiah and Israel as well.
 - c. The seed is the Word (Mk. 4), the Messiah (Gal. 3) and "sons of kingdom" (Mt. 13).
 - d. "his kingdom exalted" speaks of the Kingdom of Israel under Messiah."

"And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." – Daniel 7:14

7. Verse 9: Balaam says, "Blessed be everyone that blesses you and cursed be every one that curses you."
 - a. Instead of being cursed from without, Israel would source of blessing for others.
 - b. Reiterates what God told Abraham in Gen. 12:3.
 - c. Spoken by the one intending to curse them in front one intending to curse them.
8. Verse 10: Balak was enraged, "Instead of cursing, you have blessed them three times."
 - a. Interesting that Balaam struck his donkey three times on the journey.
9. Verse 11: Balak intended to promote Balaam to honor but "the LORD has kept you from receiving that honor."
 - a. Balak intends to shame him as a failure.
 - b. Balaam reminds him he said he would speak only what God gave him to speak.
10. God has kept you from receiving honor – that is the honor of wicked men.
 - a. God gave Balaam opportunity to say yes or no to man's honor code.
 - b. Likewise, we are given same opportunity – shouldn't seek the honor of men.

11. Y'shua addressed this issue:

“I do not receive honor from men....How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only?” – John 5:41, 44

12. Verse 14: Balaam will, before going home, “announce to you” – advise what will happen.

a. Balak learns what Israel will do to his people – Moab.

b. In “advising”, a hint that he told Balak the only way he could hope to overcome Israel.

13. Balaam set out a snare that would get God to do to them what Balak could not.

a. Can't curse them but you can seduce them into sin.

b. That plan comes to fruition in next chapter.

c. Moses makes it clear that it was Balaam's plan (Numbers 31:16).

14. Yet he still lays out what will become of Israel in the future – ultimately messianic era.

a. Also what becomes of Moab and Israel's enemies.

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel and shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Seth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remains of the city.” – Numbers 24:17-19

15. Rabbinical writings suggest the “star” is David who is the first to bring Moab into subjection.

a. The scepter refers to the kingdom.

16. “Star” is understood, ultimately to refer to Messiah, the son of David.

a. Commentaries suggest a “meteor” or “shooting star” because:

“He will have to flash across heaven, visible to the whole world, to gather in (Israel) from their dispersion.”

17. A fascinating comment considering these passages:

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shines unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” – Matthew 24:27. 30-31

“Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of him.” - Revelation 1:7

18. Concerning Israel's enemies; multiple prophecies discussing the fate of Moab and Edom.

a. Obadiah in its entirety describes Edom's destruction.

b. Describing the redemption because Judaism refers to current exile as Edomite exile.

c. Suggesting Israel is under oppression of Edom.

d. Prophecy in Gen. 25 suggests one will ascend while the other is descending.

19. At the end of days, the Messiah will vanquish Edom (Seir) and Israel will rule over Esau.
 a. Older shall (ultimately) serve the younger (Gen. 25).
20. “Break down all the sons of Seth” – Seth was ancestor of all people who existed after the flood – i.e. Noah was descendant of Seth.
 a. Thus speaking of the “star” will rule over all the nations of the earth.

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Messiah; and He shall reign forever and ever.” – Revelation 11:15

21. “Destroy him who remains in the city.”
 a. Interesting statement considering the first city builders; i.e. Nimrod, Cain.
 b. Judas Iscariot is Y’hudah Ish K’riot – “man of (the) cities.”
 c. Feigning support of poor wanted to line his own pockets.
 d. Greek for city is polis from which is derived police, politic.
 e. Those who establish laws in defiance of Creator’s law.
22. Verse 20: “Amalek is first among the nations but its end will be eternal destruction.”
 a. Amalek is “first” in that he is primary among Esau’s descendants.
 b. First to attack Israel as they exited Egypt.
 c. They are embodiment of intense hatred for Israel – Messiah will destroy them.
23. Verse 21-22: “He looked upon the Kenite... Kain shall be wasted.”
 a. “The Kenite” (Heb. אֲדָמִי); “Kain” is קַיִן; identical in spelling to Cain of Genesis 4.
 b. Not descendants of Cain of Gen. 4 but related in nature by their name?
 c. According to Judges 1:16 Jethro belonged to this family, part of the Midianites.
24. Verse 23: “Who will survive when He imposes these.” – Syria given temporary dominion.
 a. That is travail that ushers in the Messianic age.
 b. It will be difficult for people to survive “the Syrian” though Israel will prevail.

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger! And the staff in their hand is My fury. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath. I will command him to take the plunder, and to strip off the spoil, and to trample them like the mud of the streets.... Therefore so says the Lord GOD of Hosts, O my people who dwell in Zion, do not fear Assyria. He shall strike you with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against you, in the way of Egypt. But yet a little while, and the fury shall cease, and My anger shall be in their ruin. And the LORD of Hosts shall stir up a whip on him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and as His rod was on the sea, so shall He lift it up in the way of Egypt. And it shall be, in that day his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.” – Isaiah 10:5-6, 24-27

25. Verse 24: “Big ships from Kittim will afflict Syria ... but it too will be destroyed.”
 a. Rabbinical sources make this to be the Roman Empire who succeeded the Grecians.
 b. Conquered the lands of Assyria (including Israel) and those across the Euphrates.
26. Daniel 7:7 speaks of a fourth beast who surpasses the previous three in strength.
27. Kittim is descended from Yavan (Greece) who is the third beast in Daniel 7.
 a. They developed into a powerful nation who became Roman empire.
 b. In addition to conquest of Assyria, this verse alludes to the “other bank.”

- c. This word is עֵבֶר *ever* (or Eber) which might allude to *Ivri* or “Hebrew.”
- 28. The current exile (Edomite) is also Roman Exile since they destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews.
 - a. This will be ended by the Messiah.
 - b. Yet before, other empires (e.g. Islam) have also afflicted Israel.
- 29. Amazing to consider the prophecies through vision or dreams given to pagans.
 - a. Balaam, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh.
 - b. Can’t make a determination about someone based on ability to prophesy.
 - c. Saul prophesied after an evil spirit came upon him.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as he did day by day. And Saul had his spear in his hand.” – 1 Samuel 18:10

- 30. You shall know them by their fruits.
- 31. Verse 25: Balak and Balaam parted ways but not before Balaam laid out a plan for Balak.
 - a. Balaam was killed among the Midianites shortly after (31:8) so must have lingered.

CHAPTER 25: THE SIN OF BA’AL PEOR

“And Israel abode in Shittim; and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab: for they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.” – Numbers 25:1-3

- 1. This was the plan developed by Balaam given to Balak; it is in concert with methods of Satan.
 - a. Adversary can’t curse Israel but has ability to seduce Israel into cursing themselves.
 - b. His methods always include something appealing to the eye.
 - c. Tree of “good” and evil; sons of God and “beautiful” daughters of men.
- 2. Many Israelites accepted invitation of beautiful women of Moab and Midian.
 - a. Leaders of Moab and Midian so intent to destroy Israel they sent their own daughters.
 - b. Israel joined them in a sacrificial rite at Ba’al Peor – lured them with food.
 - c. Said to have included licentious behavior which followed the food.
 - d. They joined themselves (literally “yoked”) to this idol as a woman to a husband.
 - e. *Ba’al* is “husband” – Peor is the mountain.
- 3. It would seem that the women of Midian were more persuasive than the Moabite women.
 - a. Tradition says Midianites tried to seduce the leaders.
 - b. When that failed they turned to notables of lesser rank like Zimri.
 - c. Later God commands Israel to exact vengeance upon Midian (Numbers 31).
- 4. Seeing that this is the final place Balaam had stood looking upon Israel, perhaps this place gave him inspiration for his diabolical plan.
- 5. The anger of the LORD kindled against them resulted in a plague that killed many.
 - a. When Torah refers to God’s anger as “wrath” it is always provoked by immorality.
 - b. Accentuated by the fact that He is among them.
 - c. Consider also that He had prevented Balaam from cursing them.
- 6. Verse 4: Moses was to enlist the aid of the chief men (“judges”) to slay those guilty of the sin.

- a. These are men who were selected to settle disputes (Ex. 28:21-26).
- 7. Verse 5: “slay everyone who joined themselves to the Ba’al Peor.”
 - a. So that the LORD’s anger might be turned away.

“And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting.”

– Numbers 25:6

- 8. We are told in Pinchas that this man is Zimri, a prince of Simeon.
 - a. Beyond having relations with the woman, taunts Moses and Israel in sight of *mishkan*.
 - b. Moreover, while they are weeping over the grievousness of the people’s actions.
 - c. Does fact Moses was married to a Midianite have anything to do with the brazenness?
- 9. Verse 7-8: Aaron’s son, Pinchas, took a spear and killed both of them apparently in the act.
 - a. This quick action is what stopped the plague.
- 10. Verse 9: A total of 24,000 people were killed by plague.
 - a. In census that comes after the plague, Simeon has the greatest decrease in population.
 - b. Simeon’s tribe camped to the south and would have been closer to Moabites.
 - c. Footnote: It was Dathan and Abiram (Reuben) and Korah (Kohath) that rebelled.