

# Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

*A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary*  
By Glenn Mc Williams

---

Torah Portion: *Balak* בלק "Balak"

**When Balak son of Tzippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, the Moabites became deathly afraid because the [Israelite] people were so numerous.**

**Vayar Balak ben-Tsipor et kol-asher-asah Yisra'el la-Emori Vayagor Moav mipeney ha'am me'od ki rav-hu vayakots**

Scripture for study: *Bamidbar (Numbers) 22:2 - 25:9*  
Haftorah portion: *Micayahu (Michah) 5:6 - 6:8*

---

Our Torah Portion begins this week with a declaration of fear on the part of Balak, the pagan king of Moab.

*Numbers 22:2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. <sup>3</sup>And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.*

The reason for Balak's fear is clearly stated in the portion. Balak saw what Israel had done militarily to the Canaanites and the Amorites.

*Numbers 21:3 And YHWH hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and He called the name of the place Hormah.*

*Numbers 21:23 And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. <sup>24</sup>And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.*

*Numbers 21:33* And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. <sup>34</sup>And YHWH said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. <sup>35</sup>So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

A second reason for Balak's fear was the sheer size of the people of Israel. It is estimated that the children of Israel numbered around 2.5 million people, plus sheep, goats, and cattle. We have already marveled at the logistical miracles of YHWH providing food and drink for this wilderness-weary host. Unfamiliar with the Elohim of Israel, Balak could only imagine how many of their crops would be seized to feed such a marching multitude. As a king responsible for protecting and providing for his kingdom, Balak had every reason to be concerned.

*Numbers 22:3* And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. <sup>4</sup>And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

It is this fear on the part of the pagan king that is the impetus behind the infamous story of Balak and Balaam that makes up the heart of our Torah portion this week. Before we delve into this most enlightening story, however, I want to address another issue that is made evident by the fear of Balak.

Understanding the chronology of this story as it is set against the very promises of YHWH ELOHIM to the children of Israel brings to light another very important lesson that I feel we would do well to learn as we approach the last days and their ominous events.

In previous studies we have recounted the numerous times that YHWH promised and affirmed the promise that He would give the land of Israel to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have also discussed the fact that the patriarchs knew the Holy One as El Shaddai, the All Sufficient One and Maker of Promises. But the generation that came out of Egypt would be blessed to know the Holy One not only as El Shaddai, but also as YHWH, the merciful Keeper of Promises.

*Exodus 6:3* And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, but by My name YHWH was I not known to them. <sup>4</sup>And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

It was this particular generation that witnessed the power of the words that YHWH spoke to them through Moses at the Yam Suph:<sup>i</sup>

*Exodus 14:13* And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of YHWH, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. <sup>14</sup>YHWH shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

On the other side of the Yam Suph Moses prophetically sang:

*Exodus 15:2* YHWH is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my Elohim, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's Elohim, and I will exalt Him.

*Exodus 15:11* Who is like unto Thee, O YHWH, among the elohim? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? <sup>12</sup>Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. <sup>13</sup>Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. <sup>14</sup>The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. <sup>15</sup>Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. <sup>16</sup>Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O YHWH, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased. <sup>17</sup>Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O YHWH, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Adonai, which Thy hands have established.

YHWH had promised the children of Israel that He would clear the inhabitants of the land of Canaan out before them and put fear in the hearts of Israel's enemies.

*Exodus 23:20* Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. <sup>21</sup>Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in him. <sup>22</sup>But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. <sup>23</sup>For Mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. <sup>24</sup>Thou shalt not bow down to their elohim, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. <sup>25</sup>And ye shall serve YHWH your Elohim, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. <sup>26</sup>There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. <sup>27</sup>I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. <sup>28</sup>And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

Not only had Israel witnessed what YHWH had done to Pharaoh and his army at the Yam Suph, but word had spread throughout the region. As soon as the children of Israel were safely on the other side of the sea, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and a Midianite priest, was there to meet them.

*Exodus 18:1* When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that Elohim had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that YHWH had brought Israel out of Egypt; <sup>2</sup>then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, <sup>3</sup>and her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I

*have been an alien in a strange land:<sup>4</sup>and the name of the other was Eliezer; for the Elohim of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:<sup>5</sup>and Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of Elohim:<sup>6</sup>and he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. <sup>7</sup>And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.*

From the language and formalities of this text one may postulate that Jethro was sent to Moses along with Moses' Midianite wife and children as an ambassador to test the waters of intention and as a good-will gesture. Clearly the Midianites had already heard what the Elohim of Israel had done to Pharaoh and his army. The promised fear was already at work in the nations between the Yam Suph and the land of Israel.

We should take note, however, that the enemies' fear of Elohim and the children of Israel was conditioned upon Israel's exclusive faithfulness to YHWH. We should also note that as long as Israel walked in accordance with the revelation of Elohim, they had nothing to fear. While the children of Israel walked with YHWH, the nations around them were filled with awe and trembled at their approach. However, when the children of Israel provoked YHWH to anger, the nations saw the plagues that befell Israel and were emboldened, losing their fear of Israel and of Israel's Elohim.

We may remember that when YHWH brought the children of Israel out of Egypt He did not take them the quickest way, lest they see the Philistines ready for war and retreat to Egypt.

*Exodus 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that Elohim led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for Elohim said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.*

From the very beginning, Israel's lack of faith was an issue that hindered their walk with YHWH. The first time that Israel was attacked was shortly after they came out of Egypt. While somewhat justified in their concern for food and water, Israel's lack of faith in YHWH'S ability to provide for them and protect them emboldened the Amalekites to attack.

*Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*

*Exodus 17:8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*

The pattern was repeated a few years later when the spies returned from scouting out the land and gave an evil report about the land and about their Elohim.

*Numbers 13:27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. <sup>28</sup>Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and*

moreover we saw the children of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. <sup>30</sup>And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. <sup>31</sup>But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than (HE)<sup>ii</sup> we. <sup>32</sup>And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. <sup>33</sup>And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

This rebellious report and the blatant display of faithlessness on the part of the ten spies and the children of Israel who received the report again provoked the wrath of the Almighty. In His anger YHWH ELOHIM swore that this faithless generation would not go up and enter the land, but would indeed die in the wilderness as they had declared over themselves.<sup>iii</sup> After hearing the displeasure and judgment of Elohim the children of Israel changed their minds, and again, in defiance of and contrary to the will of Elohim, they attempted to go up to the land. Again it was the Amalekites who met them.

**Numbers 14:41** *And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of YHWH? but it shall not prosper. <sup>42</sup>Go not up, for YHWH is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. <sup>43</sup>For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from YHWH, therefore YHWH will not be with you. <sup>44</sup>But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of YHWH, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. <sup>45</sup>Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.*

Later in the story we witness the rebellion of Korah, Abiram, Dathan, On, and two hundred and fifty princes of Israel being dealt with via a miraculous chastisement.<sup>iv</sup> Even Moses and Aaron eventually stumbled and fell along the way.<sup>v</sup> Again and again the children of Israel provoked YHWH ELOHIM to anger. We should here take note of the juxtaposition of the death of Aaron, the *Cohen Gadol*<sup>vi</sup> of Israel, and the attack by the Canaanite king Arad.

**Numbers 20:29** *And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel. 21:1* *And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.*

After the attack by Arad the children of Israel again rebelled, provoking the discipline of the Holy One. Once again the nations were emboldened to attack Israel.

**Numbers 21:4** *And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. <sup>5</sup>And the people spake against Elohim, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water;*



*and our soul loatheth this light bread. <sup>6</sup>And YHWH sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.*

***Numbers 21:21** And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, <sup>22</sup>Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders. <sup>23</sup>And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.*

Just as the nations had heard what had happened to Pharaoh and his army at the Yam Suph, so too did they hear what happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness. Therefore when the nations witnessed Israel's rebellion, faithlessness, and consequential chastisements, they realized that Israel was vulnerable. When the nations saw a generation of Israelites dying in the wilderness at the hand of their Elohim, they assumed that the Elohim of Israel was incapable of delivering the people of Israel to the promised land, or as the children of Israel had themselves proclaimed, that He had brought them out into the wilderness to destroy them. Moses was quite aware of this reality, and raised this concern when interceding for the children of Israel.

***Exodus 32:11** And Moses besought YHWH his Elohim, and said, YHWH, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup>Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. <sup>13</sup>Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. <sup>14</sup>And YHWH repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.*

***Numbers 14:13** And Moses said unto YHWH, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for Thou broughtest up this people in Thy might from among them;) <sup>14</sup>and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that Thou YHWH art among this people, that Thou YHWH art seen face to face, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup>Now if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, <sup>16</sup>Because YHWH was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness.*

There are numerous lessons we need to learn from this clear pattern. The first lesson that we should come to understand is that we have been called to be the embodiment of YHWH ELOHIM to the nations. The nations form their understanding of YHWH ELOHIM based upon our actions. Since the children of Israel displayed no fear of YHWH in their numerous rebellions, the nations had no fear of YHWH. It was this lack of fear of YHWH ELOHIM that allowed the nations surrounding Israel to attack Israel. If we as the children of Israel do not demonstrate the love and fear of YHWH as well as faith in Him to protect us, defend us, provide for us, and deliver us, then the nations of the world will never feel a need to put their

faith in YHWH. As the chosen people, a royal priesthood, we are the revelation of YHWH to the world.

I am reminded of a story of a congregation that had been praying that Elohim would close down the local Adult Bookstore and Strip Club. For months the congregation had been publicly protesting and praying that this plague in their community would be removed. One night during a severe thunderstorm, lightning hit the building and burned it to the ground. The owner of the Adult Bookstore promptly filed charges against the church, claiming that their prayers were to blame. The case went to court, with the bookstore's attorney claiming that the church was responsible for the destruction of the Club. The church's attorney claimed that lightning destroyed the building, and that the church members and their prayers had nothing to do with it; they could not possibly be held accountable. After each side made their argument, the judge ruled in favor of the congregation. But before he closed the case the judge declared that he had seen something during this case that he had never thought he would ever see - an Adult Bookstore owner arguing in favor of faith in the power of prayer, and the church arguing successfully against faith in the power of prayer!

This little story should remind us that the world is watching us. It should also remind us that we have been the ones chosen to be watched. If we show no fear of YHWH, then the world will not fear YHWH. This is extremely important when we remember that it is YHWH who defends and protects us.

There are many stories and testimonies from Israel's enemies during the Six Day War of how they saw angels protecting Israel. Repeatedly we have seen YHWH intercede for the children of Israel, protecting them against numerous and mighty enemies as Israel continued to conquer the land. The enemies also saw these miracles and learned to fear Israel and the Elohim of Israel. But now Israel seeks to give away the land, and her enemies have been emboldened by Israel's lack of faith and obedience. In many ways Israel has forsaken her Elohim and has turned instead to Egypt (the United States) and the IDF (the Israeli Defense Forces) to protect her. Now Israel cowers in fear of Allah instead of fear of YHWH. Again the Amalekites raise their heads to chastise Israel's faithlessness. How important it is for us to learn the FEAR OF YHWH!

From the pattern above we should learn that in many ways **we** determine how the nations will treat us. It is **we** who must teach the nations to tremble in the presence of YHWH and the mention of His Holy Name. As it is at present, even many of the children of Israel are sadly ignorant of His Name. The world clearly is shaking at the name of Allah. But YHWH is hardly a familiar name, let alone a revered one. Do not get me wrong. I believe we should be extremely careful not to desecrate His name through misuse. But this does not mean we should hide or neglect His name either. Our lives should be lived boldly in His name. Our lives should teach the nations the meaning of His name. Our lives should teach love and fear of His name. But we can only accomplish this calling when we ourselves so love and fear YHWH ELOHIM that we keep the Torah as He has graciously and mercifully bestowed it upon us.

We should note in our portion that as the faithless generation died off and the second generation rose up to walk faithfully with YHWH, there were a number of important victories

which again instilled fear and awe in the enemies of Israel. First was the defeat of Arad of the land of Canaan; then Sihon, king of the Amorites; and finally Og, king of Bashan. It was the defeat of these three kingdoms that caused Balak, king of Moab, to tremble at the presence of Israel.

As we have already stated above, Balak clearly understood the threat that was approaching. We should understand that the defeat of Arad, Sihon, and Og and the fear of Balak were signs of YHWH'S mercy toward Israel. These victories and the recognition of the fear of the people of Israel and their Elohim were signs that the time of chastisement was ending. YHWH had neither rejected nor forsaken His chosen people. It was this fear that drove Balak, king of Moab, to pursue every means imaginable to stop the children of Israel from entering his kingdom, including military treaties and sorcery.

*Numbers 22:2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. <sup>3</sup>And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. <sup>4</sup>And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. <sup>5</sup>He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: <sup>6</sup>come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. <sup>7</sup>And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.*

Within Balak's opening strategy, the foundation is laid for the lesson that is to be learned by both Israel and the nations who would dare to thwart the will of the Holy One of Israel. It is understandable that the unbelieving nations would rely upon politics, armies, human strength, and ingenuity to solve their problems, since they had nothing else to depend on. But the people of Moab and Midian were not merely unbelievers; they were pagan idolaters who believed in other elohim, magic, and the occult. So it is that Balak and the elders of Moab and Midian did not simply summon an army, but a sorcerer named Balaam the son of Beor.

The very name of this scoundrel speaks volumes. Understanding that Hebrew names have meaning is particularly enlightening in this case. Balaam (Bet, Lamed, Ayin, Mem) literally means "not from my people." Balaam is the son of Beor (Bet, Ayin, Vav, Resh) which means "burning." Balak's name (Bet, Lamed, Kof) literally means "devastator." So we have the "Devastator" sending for "Not of My People," the son of "Burning." Surely nothing good could come from this! While Balaam was selling himself as a prophet of YHWH, he was, like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, merely a prop in the Creator's hand. It is interesting to note Balaam's arrogance in the presence of the esteemed elders of Moab and Midian. Note how rudely and inhospitably Balaam treated these men.



*Numbers 22:7* And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. <sup>8</sup>And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as YHWH shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

*Numbers 22:13* And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for YHWH refuseth to give me leave to go with you. <sup>14</sup>And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

Unhappy with this result, Balak sent representatives of even higher estate with even greater promises of wealth and honor to persuade Balaam to cooperate with the will of the king.

*Numbers 22:15* And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. <sup>16</sup>And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: <sup>17</sup>for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

We should note Balaam's response to these men was not so much a refusal as it was a bartering over the price of his services.

*Numbers 22:18* And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of YHWH my Elohim, to do less or more.

We may compare this to the bargaining between Abraham and Ephron the Hittite over the cave at Machpelah. Note how Ephron first "gives" the cave to Abraham, and then later names the price in such a way as to make it sound like he was only asking for a pittance for it.

*Genesis 23:11* Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. <sup>12</sup>And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land. <sup>13</sup>And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. <sup>14</sup>And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, <sup>15</sup>My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

So it is that Balaam made the price of his integrity known unto Balak: a house full of silver and gold.

While Balaam sold himself as being a prophet of YHWH, we should take careful note of the use of the names YHWH and Elohim in this story. Notice that twice when Balaam invited the princes to stay the night, he declared to them that he would consult with "YHWH."<sup>vii</sup> Let us remember that YHWH describes the attribute of mercy. YHWH is the revealed name of the Elohim of Israel; thus by using the name YHWH, Balaam was implying that he had some sort of

personal relationship with the Elohim of Israel. However, when the answer came to Balaam it was from Elohim, the attribute of stern justice.<sup>viii</sup> In other words, it was the Holy One's way of telling Balaam "you are no friend of Mine!"

We should also note that the princes came with the "rewards of divination." When Balaam finally conceded to the king's request, we witness his witchcraft at work through his building seven altars and making sacrifices of seven oxen and seven rams.<sup>ix</sup> Here let us remember that the altar of Israel and the altars of the pagans served two completely different functions. The altar of Israel was part of the proclamation of YHWH to Israel that He had made provision for their restoration after unintentional sin. The altar of Israel was part of the proclamation of Messiah. The altar of Israel was also the place where the children of Israel drew near to YHWH ELOHIM, declaring their willingness to put to death their *yetzer hara*<sup>x</sup> that drew them down to the level of living like animals in their animal nature. It was also part of Israel's proclamation that they were willing to fulfill their calling to have dominion over the animals instead of worshipping them.

On the other hand, the pagan altar was an attempt to manipulate their elohim by satisfying their lusts, desires, and appetites in the hope of winning their favor or blessings. Clearly Balaam's intention was to manipulate YHWH ELOHIM into blessing Balak by cursing Israel. Everything in this portion demonstrates that Balaam was not a prophet, but an idolatrous sorcerer selling his magic and deception for silver and gold. But YHWH exposed not only Balaam, but his whole idolatrous, occult system as impotent. In many ways, this is the very heart and point of this Torah portion. There is no Elohim like YHWH. We are to FEAR YHWH ELOHIM ALONE!

After several attempts to persuade YHWH into letting him accept the king's generous offer, YHWH finally allowed Balaam to go with the princes of Moab and Midian.<sup>xi</sup> But on the way an angel of YHWH blocked the path.<sup>xii</sup> Three times the donkey veered away from the fearful messenger of YHWH. Three times the mighty sorcerer's anger was kindled against his donkey, until he finally resorted to beating the poor beast with his staff.<sup>xiii</sup> How ironically humorous it is that the great seer could not see what his humble ass could see. How ridiculous Balaam appeared carrying on a conversation with his ass!<sup>xiv</sup> To think that the one who was hired to curse a nation with his lips was now reduced to beating a donkey with his staff! Here YHWH mocks both idols and idolaters, revealing how ridiculous they both are. We may remember the words of the psalmist:

*Psalm 115:3 But our Elohim is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. <sup>4</sup>Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. <sup>5</sup>They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: <sup>6</sup>they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: <sup>7</sup>they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. <sup>8</sup>They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. <sup>9</sup>O Israel, trust thou in YHWH: He is their help and their shield.*

Twice Balak set up his altars of divination and enchantment<sup>xv</sup> to manipulate the Elohim of Balaam to rain down a curse upon the children of Israel, but both times it was met with a blessing instead of a curse. Finally a third attempt was made,<sup>xvi</sup> but when Balaam realized that

there was no manipulating the Elohim of Israel; that divination, witchcraft, enchantments, and sorcery were of no avail with the Elohim of Israel; Balaam submitted to the will of YHWH.

*Numbers 24:1* And when Balaam saw that it pleased YHWH to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. <sup>2</sup>And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of Elohim came upon him.

Here we witness a radical difference in the relationship between Balaam and YHWH ELOHIM. I am not suggesting that Balaam repented or yielded; simply that he momentarily awakened to the reality that YHWH is the ruler of the universe and that His will is the only will that matters.

Notice that it says that Balaam did not seek after enchantments, but instead set his face toward the wilderness. We are also told here for the first time that the Spirit of Elohim came upon him. Thus, when even this idolatrous sorcerer submitted to the will of the Creator, YHWH was able to use him for His holy purposes. And so it was that Balaam became the vessel by which YHWH blessed Israel. I want to be clear on this point that it was not Balaam that blessed Israel, but YHWH. YHWH also used Balaam to prophesy the destruction of the enemies of Israel.

*Numbers 24:15* And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: <sup>16</sup>he hath said, which heard the words of Elohim, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: <sup>17</sup>I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. <sup>18</sup>And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. <sup>19</sup>Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. <sup>20</sup>And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. <sup>21</sup>And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. <sup>22</sup>Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. <sup>23</sup>And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when Elohim doeth this! <sup>24</sup>And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

Here we receive powerful Messianic prophecy concerning the end of days. Note again that it will be Elohim who does this. It will once again be YHWH ELOHIM fighting the battle, delivering His people, and fulfilling His promises. This brings us back to the beginning of this study. Once again we must realize that YHWH is indeed a fulfiller of His promises. We have no reason to doubt His word. We should also note in this portion that several times Balaam revealed the source of Israel's power and protection. From his first vantage point on the high places, Balaam declared:

*Numbers 23:8* How shall I curse, whom Elohim hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom YHWH hath not defied? <sup>9</sup>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.

*<sup>10</sup>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!*

Note that first Balaam discerned the disposition of YHWH toward the people of Israel; that clearly it was not the will of YHWH to curse Israel. It is in his last statement that Balaam revealed why YHWH was so inclined toward Israel. In the final phase of this declaration Balaam actually prayed that he might be righteous as Israel was. Let us clearly note the connection that Balaam revealed between the righteousness of Israel (keeping the Torah) and YHWH'S inclination to bless and not curse Israel. From the second vantage point Balaam confirmed this revelation.

***Numbers 23:20** Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. <sup>21</sup>He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: YHWH his Elohim is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.*

Here again we witness the fact that YHWH had beheld neither iniquity nor perverseness among the children of Israel. Let us see clearly the connection between YHWH'S inclination to bless Israel and the absence of rebellion, murmuring, and iniquity among the children of Israel. As long as they gave Elohim no reason to curse or chastise them, it was YHWH'S natural disposition to bless them. This is a critical revelation for us to grasp. By walking in the Torah we not only determine how the nations will respond to us, but we also determine our relationship with YHWH. It is YHWH'S heart to bless us, protect us, nurture us, sustain us, deliver us, and abide with us. It is only our rebellion, faithlessness, and iniquity that cause the refiner to toss us back into the fire in order that any remaining dross might be removed. We should know, however, that it is never YHWH'S heart to utterly destroy us or forsake us. It truly is as YHWH has declared:

***Deuteronomy 11:26** Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; <sup>27</sup>a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of YHWH your Elohim, which I command you this day: <sup>28</sup>and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of YHWH your Elohim, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.*

***Deuteronomy 30:15** See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; <sup>16</sup>in that I command thee this day to love YHWH thy Elohim, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and YHWH thy Elohim shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.*

***Deuteronomy 30:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

***Jeremiah 21:8** And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith YHWH; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.*

From his third vantage point Balaam again confirmed that the strength of Israel is found in the unimpaired relationship of this chosen people with their Elohim.

*Numbers 24:5* How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! <sup>6</sup>As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which YHWH hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. <sup>7</sup>He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

Here we must make the connection with the symbolic reference to the righteous as being like trees.<sup>xvii</sup>

*Psalms 1:1* Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. <sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of YHWH; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. <sup>3</sup>And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Here we see Balaam describing Israel as a righteous tree planted and fed by the water of the Word.<sup>xviii</sup> Again we need to see the connection between keeping the Torah and the unhindered relationship between YHWH and the children of Israel. It is YHWH who is the source of our life, our strength, and our salvation. By walking in His Torah our relationship with Him remains strong and our testimony to the nations remains true. It is in the revelation of this relationship that Balaam discovered both Israel's strength and her weakness.

If Israel chooses to fear and love YHWH and walk in His Torah, then no weapon formed against her will prosper. But if one can tempt Israel to walk away from the Torah and break this relationship, then there is nothing in the power of man that can save her. When we realize this reality we will do everything in our power to protect this most unique relationship that was restored to us through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Messiah.

SHAVUA TOV!

---

<sup>i</sup> The Red Sea

<sup>ii</sup> The Hebrew word *mimenu* (Mem, Mem, Nun, Vav) can be translated as "we" or "he." If in fact the spies said "He," it would be saying that YHWH ELOHIM was not capable of defeating the inhabitants of the land.

<sup>iii</sup> Numbers 14:2

<sup>iv</sup> Numbers 16:1-50

<sup>v</sup> Numbers 20:1-13

<sup>vi</sup> High Priest

<sup>vii</sup> Numbers 22:8, 19

<sup>viii</sup> Numbers 22:9, 20

<sup>ix</sup> Numbers 23:1-6

<sup>x</sup> Inclination to do evil

<sup>xi</sup> Numbers 22:20-21

<sup>xii</sup> Numbers 22:22

<sup>xiii</sup> Numbers 22:23-27

<sup>xiv</sup> Numbers 22:28-30

<sup>xv</sup> Numbers 22:41-23:6; 23:13-17

<sup>xvi</sup> Numbers 23:27-30



---

<sup>xvii</sup> See my commentary on Shelach; Numbers 13:1-15:41

<sup>xviii</sup> Ephesians 5:26