

PARASHAT BALAK

([KING] BALAK)

NUMBERS 22:2-25:9

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading

Micah 5:6-6:8

B'rit Chadashah

On false prophets in the last days: **Matthew 24:11, 24; 2 Peter 2:1-22**

On the error of Balaam: **Jude 11**

On the doctrine of Balaam: **Revelation 2:14-15**

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 22:2 Balaam, A Secular Prophet
- 22:20 YHVH Tests Balaam
- 22:22 The Messenger of YHVH Blocks Balaam's Path
- 22:28 Balaam's Donkey Speaks
- 23:6 Balaam's First Blessing Over Israel
- 23:11 Balak's Anger Over Balaam Blessing and Not Cursing Israel
- 22:18 Balaam's Second Blessing Over Israel
- 22:25 Balak's Anger and His Further Entreaty for Balaam to Curse Israel
- 24:1 Balaam's Third Blessing
- 24:15 Balaam's Last Prophecy Concerning Israel in the End Days
- 25:1 Balaam's Plot to Destroy Israel Through Sexual Immorality and Idolatry
- 25:7 Phinehas' Zealotry to Put an End to the Sexual Immorality in Israel

Study Questions for This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):

- 1 **22:5**, *Pethor ... by the river*. Balaam was from the land of Pethor, which is "by the River." This is a reference to the Euphrates River, the great river of Babylon (*ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 857). Thus Balaam was a Babylonian. One of the aspects of Babylon of the last days is her religious system (Rev 13:11ff) the head of which is her false prophet (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The Babylonish religious system of the end days is a blend of both good and evil (reminiscent of the tree by that name in Eden from which the serpent beguiled Adam and Eve away from YHVH's path of truth and righteousness into a false religious

system). In the last days, YHVH is calling his people out of that false religious system (Rev 18:4) with its false prophets who prophesy a mixture of good and evil. What religious system is Scripture referring to here that YHVH's people are caught up in? Reflect on the implications of this. To what degree have you heeded YHVH's call to "come out of her"? Scripture seems to indicate that Balaam had some knowledge of the truth of YHVH (2Pet 2:15). If this is the case, then is there anyone alive today who could fit this modern scenario? Let us not forget Yeshua's warning about false prophets arising in the last days who might deceive the very elect (Matt 24:24).

- 2 22:10ff**, Carnal men want to be like YHVH's saints, to be recipients of the blessings of Israel, and want to be numbered among YHVH's chosen, but few want to walk the walk required to receive these blessings and privileges. Many will "court YHVH" by getting as close to him as possible without actually crossing over (becoming an *Ivrit*/Hebrew) and surrendering their all to him. The sacrifice of doing so is too great for most. To do so, fame and fortune must be laid aside and one must become a servant-slave of YHVH. Balaam couldn't cross over. How serious are you about serving YHVH? It is said of the end-time saints that they loved not their lives unto death (Rev 12:11). Paul declares that followers of Yeshua must become "living sacrifices" in service of YHVH (Rom 12:1). Yeshua gave his very life for you. Are you holding back some of your life for him? Do the cares of this world, the desire for pleasures, material goods, entertainments or acclaim still have a grip on your heart? Are they preventing you from moving into your spiritual calling and destiny—to truly walk by faith?
- 3 22:11–12**, Make no mistake about it, false prophets are neither the friends of YHVH nor his people. They are grievous wolves who hate YHVH's people and want their total destruction. For example, in verse 11 Balak asks Balaam to pronounce a mild curse (*arah*) on Israel that would result simply in their being driven away, not on their being destroyed. But then notice in verse 17 how Balak employs a much stronger Hebrew expression (*kavah*) to curse Israel implying their total destruction, thus indicating Balaam's hatred for Israel (and his contempt for YHVH). In verse 12, YHVH uses the milder term to let Balaam know that even the mildest curse would not prevail against his people (*ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 858). Do you walk so closely to YHVH in relationship with Yeshua and in his righteousness that you are protected from even the mildest curse from the enemy? Do you stay under the blood of Yeshua so that no spiritual darts of Satan can pierce your spiritual armor (Eph 6:16; Rev 12:11)? Do you take refuge perpetually under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty (Ps 91:1, 4)? How does the child of YHVH do this every day? Proverbs 26:2 states, "As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come." Do you have any "spiritual doors" open so that the Evil One has "legal" entrance into your life to attack you? The solution to the problem is to repent, turn from sin and turn to Yeshua! Obey his Word so that you do not open yourself up to the curses for disobedience as mentioned in Deuteronomy 28.
- 4 22:21–22**, Balaam was willful, greedy, arrogant, rebellious and presumptuous in the face of YHVH's revealed will. Balaam was attempting to manipulate YHVH through soulish means for his personal gain. But the moral of the story is that YHVH is sovereign over the affairs of men regardless of men's machinations. The will of YHVH cannot be manipulated or bent to accommodate men's selfish ambitions. After all, how can man—a created being—hope to play mind games with the Sovereign Creator of the universe and win? In the end, man will be humbled and YHVH will be exalted as was the case with Balaam, the arrogant and esteemed international "prophet." He was made to look like a fool through a talking donkey and all this occurred in front of the accompanying delegation of Moabite leaders. It was evident to all that Balaam was but a pawn in the hands of YHVH, and that if YHVH could make a brute beast speak, then he was certainly capable of putting his words into the mouth of mortal man, albeit a sorcerer. What lessons can we learn here? Is it wise to toy with or tempt YHVH Elohim? How often do we attempt to bend his will to fit our own? How often do we have our own carnal and selfish agendas and then attempt to convince ourselves and others that it is the will of YHVH? What are the end results? How many people go through life on this basis and never grow in their walk since they have never learned to distinguish between their will and that of the Almighty? When we finally submit to YHVH and let go of our own agendas it is then that we start to have the breakthroughs in our lives and begin to experience his joy, shalom and victory not to mention an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

- 5** **22:21ff**, *Angel of YHVH*. This term is used several times in these verses. The word *angel* here is a misnomer. It is the Hebrew word *malak*, which means “messenger.” It can refer to an earthly messenger or a heavenly messenger such as an angel sent from YHVH. But when the term *Angel/Messenger of YHVH/Elohim* is used Scripture in many cases shows this “Messenger” to be equivalent to YHVH himself. (See Gen 31:11,13; Exod 3:2,14; Judg 6:12–24.) Who was that “Angel”? Stephen makes reference to this “Angel” in Acts 6:35. Now compare this verse with who he says the “Angel” of YHVH is in verses 37 and 38.
- 6** Balaam claimed to hear the voice of YHVH, yet his claims and the reality of the facts were two different things. YHVH makes a mockery of Balaam’s claims in front of the Moabite delegation when the lowly she-donkey is able to discern the presence of the Messenger of YHVH and Balaam is not (at least until YHVH opens his eyes). How many times have you encountered people who claim that “the Lord told me this” and “the Lord told me that,” yet on closer examination they have not heard from YHVH, for the fruits of their lives and ministry do not verify their claims? Be wary of such people who announce to others their super-spirituality and make great claims about their supposed inside track with YHVH. Ask yourself: what do these people really want and what are their hidden agendas? What are they trying to gain for themselves or trying to cover up? Are they possibly, like Balaam, trying to control for their own selfish motives?
- 7** **22:38**, What does Balaam finally have to admit? Wouldn’t we all be better off to resolve to speak only what YHVH gives us to speak, nothing more or less? Wouldn’t our words be fewer and our sin be less? What did James say about bridling the tongue (Jas 3:2)? How did Yeshua characterize all the words that he spoke?

It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.** (John 6:63)

Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? **The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me,** he does the works. (John 14:10)

For I have given unto them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did send me. (John 17:8)

Resolve today to follow the example of Yeshua in this area. Hold yourself accountable for every word that proceeds from your mouth. If you speak from the flesh and not by the Spirit, repent on the spot and resolve to do better. Make it a day-to-day routine and a way of life. Resolve to use your words to impart only life to others, not death—to build up and not to tear down, to glorify YHVH, not the world, flesh or the devil. See the difference that will occur in your life, in your marriage, your family, and in your relationship with YHVH.

- 8** **23:4**, *Seven altars*. Rashi, the Jewish sage, says these seven altars refer to the altars built by Israel’s ancestors—four of which were built by Abraham (*ArtScroll Sapirstein Edition Rashi/Numbers*, p. 288). Whether this is true or not, this story can serve to teach us a lesson. Perhaps Balaam superstitiously thought that by returning to some place where humans in times’ past had encountered the Presence of YHVH he could actually find YHVH there. Matthew Henry in his commentary on this verse states, “Oh the sottishness of superstition, to imagine that God will be at man’s beck!” To resort to programs, rituals or methodologies to “conjure” up the Presence of YHVH can lead to idolatry and witchcraft. What “attracts” the Spirit of YHVH? Is it worship, praise, a repentant and humble heart, faith in him with obedience to his Word, and love for him or rituals, charms, incantations, etc.?
- 9** **23:21**, *Perverseness in Israel*. Balaam tried to find some iniquity, some perversion in Israel that would give him legal grounds to curse Israel, but could find none. Remember, a curse causeless shall not land (Prov 26:2). Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10) has no legal grounds with which to attack the righteous of Yeshua who are submitted to the authority, will, Word and Spirit of YHVH (Jas 4:7), and who are under the blood of Yeshua, the Lamb of Elohim (Rev 12:11). How do we stay in such a spiritual state so that the attacks of the enemy have no legal ground to stick in our lives, and so that the fiery darts of Satan are instantly quenched? (Read compare and discuss Eph 6:10–18; Col 2:15; Luke 9:1; 10:19.)

- 10** 23:15–25, Balaam calls YHVH “Most High” and “the Almighty.” He had great respect for YHVH (as does Satan as we learn from James 2:19, “You believe that there is one Elohim, you do well: the devils also believe and tremble.”), but he did not have enough fear of, faith in and love for YHVH to obey him. Does this describe you? How much do you hold back loving YHVH with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?
- 11** 23:36, Balaam is desirous of pleasing Balak, even though he pretends to please YHVH. At heart Balaam is a man-pleaser, not a YHVH-pleaser. Yeshua castigated the religious hypocrites of his day for the same thing (John 12:43). What truly motivates you? Do you care more what men think when it comes to obeying the truth of YHVH? Do you often take the easy way out and the path of least resistance, which pleases the flesh and those around you rather than YHVH?
- 12** 25:1, *Commit whoredoms.* Sexual immorality is the downfall of many who consider themselves to be strong and righteous. The enemy knows the weaknesses of the flesh and will do what he can to capitalize on them for our destruction. Romans 13:14 says, “But put on the Master Yeshua Messiah, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” *What* doors of immorality have you kept open in your life to gratify the immoral cravings of the flesh? What spiritual stronghold exists in your life that the enemy can use to keep you under his thumb and from walking in the joy and freedom of the will of YHVH? It is time to cry out to YHVH for help and deliverance and to repent.
- 13** 25:7, *Took a javelin.* Phineas, the priest, took a stand for righteousness and was commended for it. When was the last time you put your life and reputation on the line standing for righteousness against the forces of evil?

BALAM: A SUBVERTER OF DIVINE GIFTS AND A PROPHET OF BABYLON

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THE NAME *Balaam* (TWOT 251B) MEANS “DESTRUCTION OF PEOPLE.” The Hebrew word *bela* means “destruction, confuse, confound.” The Hebrew word *am* means “people, tribe, nation.” The name *Balak* means “waster, to annihilate.” He was the king of Moab, a country named after the man who was a distant cousin to Israel through Lot, Abraham’s nephew.

Balaam was from Pethor, a city located on the Northern Euphrates/Tigris Rivers area called Mesopotamia in modern Syria and including modern Iraq to the south.

Balaam was a soothsayer or diviner (one who foretells or predicts events, Josh 13:22). *The ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash* says that Balaam was a sorcerer, necromancer or wizard (one who consults evil spirits) and that the sublime prophecies he uttered over Israel were but temporary aberrations that YHVH granted him for the honor of Israel (Ibid., p. 863). These prophecies also served to glorify YHVH in the eyes of the nations. Other commentators consider Balaam to have been a true prophet of YHVH gone bad. Some consider him to have been a bad prophet going good (i.e. learning obedience to YHVH). Some consider him to have been a false prophet seeking personal fame and fortune who had prophetic abilities that he misused by mixing paganism and the truth of YHVH. This seems to be Scripture’s view of Balaam, for 2 Peter 2:15 indicates that Balaam had some knowledge of the truth, but turned away from it loving instead the “wages of unrighteousness.”

YHVH commands false prophets to be put to death (Deut 13:5), and indeed, we read of Balaam’s death at the hands of the Israelites in Numbers 31:8.

YHVH used Balaam to instruct Israel in the righteousness of YHVH (Mic 6:5). YHVH can use anyone, even a secular “prophet” or one’s enemy, to speak his words. YHVH is sovereign, all-powerful and always in control of everything.

The rabbis teach that the blessings from Balaam weren’t his, but were rather what YHVH put into his mouth

and then drew out with a hook (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 1056). Jeremiah the prophet says that YHVH's Word is like fire shut up in one's bones and that one isn't released or unburdened from it until it is given.

Scripture never paints Balaam in a positive light, but rather as a deceptive, greedy schemer and a very dangerous man (*A Torah Commentary For Our Times* [אֲתִּפּוֹת], vol 3, p. 70b, Feldman Library, UAH Press).

The Jewish Torah Commentator Ramban writes that it was YHVH's intention to use Balaam, a "prophet" of the nations, to bless Israel all along.

There are many comic aspects to the story of Balaam (*Ibid.*, p. 68). YHVH actually mocks this famous, renowned "prophet" of the nations and "prophet" to kings by speaking to him through his ass. This "prophet/seer" could not even *see* the angel until YHVH opened his eyes. YHVH is always in control and he let Balaam know it in a most curious, humbling and demonstrative way.

Balaam was a perverter of divine gifts (*Ibid.*, p. 68).

The story of Balaam shows the sovereignty of YHVH. He will even use lying spirits to do his bidding (2 Chr 18:19–21) or Satan to test and refine the character of a Saint (as in the case of Job). Furthermore, he confounds the wise and turns their wisdom into foolishness and lifts up the simple and unlearned (Mic 6:5; 5:7–6:8 for context).

Men in the world want to be like YHVH's saints and be recipients of the blessings of Israel and some even want to be numbered among YHVH's chosen, but few want to walk the walk of righteousness required to receive these blessings and privileges. Many will "court YHVH" by getting as close to him as possible without actually crossing over (becoming an *Ivrit*/Hebrew) and surrendering their all to him. This seems to have been Balaam's demeanor. However, the sacrifice of laying aside fame and fortune was too great for Balaam to totally commit to obeying YHVH. Balaam could not leave the world and cross over from "Babylon" to Israel.

As YHVH, in love, sometimes denies the prayers of his people, so likewise he sometimes grants the desires of the wicked in wrath (to accomplish an agenda of his that is bigger than them and which they know nothing about, Num 22:15–21).

Imagine the wickedness and foolishness (or arrogance!) of Balaam to think YHVH would give him a curse against Israel, YHVH's own people! YHVH, who made the ass to speak, pried out of a stubborn ass of a man words contrary to the man's heart's desires, making him to speak a prophetic word in accordance with divine will (Num 23:5,9–10).

Balaam offered seven sacrifices on seven altars on a mountain high place used for Baal worship. Here we see a blend of Yahwehism (offering sacrifices to YHVH on rock altars) and paganism (seven altars instead of one) (Num 23:4).

Balaam called YHVH "Most High" and "the Almighty." He had great respect for YHVH (as does Satan), but he had no faith, fear or love of him to obey him (Num 23:15–25).

Balaam was desirous of pleasing Balak, even though he pretended to please YHVH. At heart he was a man-pleaser, not a YHVH-pleaser.

The story of Balaam is that of a man who had divine prophetic giftings, but who used these giftings for unrighteous, selfish and materialistic purposes. Though Scripture reveals that he heard the voice of YHVH, he was willful and disobedient, and did not fear YHVH enough to walk fully in obedience. False prophets repeatedly plagued ancient Israel, and Yeshua stated that they would be active among his people in the last days (Matt 7:15; 24:11,24; see also 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1).

Many people today, like Balaam, have prophetic giftings that they are misusing for personal, unrighteous or misguided purposes. Many such individuals ply their trade within or on the fringes of the spiritual body of redeemed believers in these end times. Beware!

HAFTORAH READING—MICAH 5:6-6:8

What Does YHVH Require of Us?

MICAH, A CONTEMPORARY OF ISAIAH, lived in the eighth century before Yeshua, and, like Isaiah, prophesied in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, yet he directed some of his prophecies toward Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) as well as to some of the surrounding nations. Samaria fell to Assyria during Micah's ministry, and Judah would fall to Babylon after Micah had passed from the scene.

During this time, Judah was in a state of spiritual declension due to pagan Canaanite influences infiltrating into the Southern Kingdom from Samaria. Micah prophesied judgment upon Judah unless that nation would wholeheartedly repent and turn to YHVH. Although Micah censured Israel and its leadership and pronounced doom upon YHVH's people, at the same time he offered a message of hope. Out of judgment would come deliverance. Out of the nations into which Israel would be scattered, a faithful Torah-obedient remnant would be redeemed and return to the land of Israel.

Micah portrays YHVH as a very personal, condescending and compassionate Being who longs for his people to worship him with right heart motives, not out of mechanical religious ritualism.

- 1 **5:6[7]**, *The remnant of Jacob*. This is referring to a faithful remnant of Israel who would be scattered among the nations. The phrase, *as dew from YHVH*, is a reference to this remnant's faithfulness to the Torah since dew is a poetic metaphor for YHVH's instructions in righteousness (Deut 32:2). Like the dew, the Torah is a gift from heaven and waters the ground of men's hearts to help bring forth a bountiful harvest of righteousness. Is this prophecy being fulfilled in our day? If so, who is that faithful remnant that YHVH is calling out?
- 2 **5:7[8]**, *As a lion among the beasts of the forest*. The scattered remnant of Israel who are Torah-obedient are like lions among the beasts of the field or forest—a metaphor for the heathen nations. (In Deuteronomy 7:22, we also see that the term *beasts of the field* represents the nations of the earth from which Israel was to stay separate [See also Jer 12:9; 27:6.] The Word of YHVH is like a powerful and sharp two-edged sword to those who resist the Word (Heb 4:12). It is a weapon in the hands of the righteous to advance YHVH's kingdom when used wisely (Eph 6:17).
- 3 **5:10-13 [11-14]**, *I will cut off*. Speaking of the greater nation of Israel (as opposed to the faithful remnant to be found within her), YHVH says he will cut off paganism within Israel, and he will judge heathenism. Is there yet a future (end-time) prophetic fulfillment to this prophecy? Who is end-time Israel? Paul clearly states that those who are believers in Yeshua are part of Israel, the seed of Abraham (Eph 2:11-19; Gal 3:7,9,14,28-29). Are there pagan influences to be found in Christianity? With regard to the worldwide Babylonian or harlot religious system, what is YHVH pleading for his people to do? (Rev 18:4)
- 4 **6:2-5**, *He will plead with Israel . . . My people*. Here YHVH is pleading with his backslid people using terms of endearment in a tone not of rebuke, but of affectionate appeal. He asks, "Wherein have I wearied you?" or "What have I done unto you" to cause you to turn from me, for Israel to neglect him for pagan deities? As proof of his love, he reminds Israel how he not only delivered Israel from her captors, but turned her enemy's cursing into a blessing. If this was the heart of the Father 2700 years ago, how much more is it his heart for the lost spiritual sheep of the House of Israel today? Was this not Yeshua's heart (Matt 15:24; Luke 13:34) and Paul's (Rom 10:1ff), as well, for YHVH's lost and scattered people? Read Yeshua's parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. Gathering the lost sheep of Israel was on the apostles' minds at the ascension of Yeshua just prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:6-10). What are you doing to help fulfill the desires of your Father's heart toward the prodigals of Israel?
- 5 **6:6-7**, *With what can I come before YHVH to bow down?* (CJB) Israel's response was a good one. In light of YHVH's merciful acts toward us, what can we do to please him? Is this the response we would expect to see in our day in our nation in light of the multitude of blessings and mercies YHVH has granted us? For those who do sense that their unrighteousness is about to yield the calamitous results of divine judgment, what is often one's response? It is religious activity—the sacrificing of thousands of rams and the giving of

rivers of oil. In our day, people are often prompted to attend more religious meetings, to give more charitably, to pray the rosary every day and light more candles, so to speak. Is this what YHVH is really seeking from his people?

6 **6:8**, *What does YHVH require of you ... ?* According to *The Soncino Pentateuch*, this verse gives the world the noblest definition of true religion (p. 682).

- *To act justly* involves *executing justice* toward one's fellow man in a just, righteous, and respectful way realizing that all humans were made in YHVH's image and that all are equal before him possessing the same inalienable rights. Yeshua repeats this idea of loving one's neighbor as the fulfilling of the Torah in Mark 12:31 (a repetition of Lev 19:18), as well as in the famous "Golden Rule" passage of Matthew 7:12. (See also Rom 13:10; 1 John 3:11-18.)
- *To love mercy*. The Hebrew word for *mercy* is *chesed* meaning "kindness." Rabbinically, this refers to "the bestowal of acts of lovingkindness" such as clothing the naked, nursing the sick, comforting those who mourn, and burying the dead (Ibid., p. 685). Remember what the apostle stated in James 1:27?
- *To walk humbly with your Elohim*. This is referring to fellowship and communion with your Heavenly Father. Rabbi Phinehas ben Yair said: "Holiness leads to humility; humility leads to the fear of sin; fear of sin leads to saintliness; saintliness leads to the Holy Spirit." (Ibid.) In YHVH's Word, what code of conduct defines holiness? The Apostle Paul—the one who many claim taught against YHVH's Torah-law—answers this question in Romans 7:12! What did Yeshua say was the reward of those who are "poor in spirit" or contrite? (Matt 5:3; cp. with Isa 66:2)

"Micah's ideal is not a minimum of religion, it is a maximum. He provides the great standards by which we may test our acting, our thinking, our religious practice. And this is why Micah's pronouncement has about it an air of finality. The Prophet seems to feel that what he is saying is an eternal truth Men may come and go, but Micah's ideal must live for ever." (Ibid.) As a final thought, read Romans 12:1-5.

