

**Heroes, Villains, Saints and Fools:
The People in the Book.**

**The Entrapments of Balaam,
Balak and the Ass**

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PaRDeS

Peshat (literal or plain meaning, lit. "plain" or "simple")

Remez (deep meaning, "hints")

Derash (comparative meaning, from Hebrew *darash*—"to inquire" or "to seek")

Sod (hidden)



פַּרְדֵּס Pardes - Orchard, Garden

Hebrew	Letter	Meaning
פְּשָׁט	פ (p)	<i>P'shat</i> - Simple, literal
רֵמָז	ר (r)	<i>Remez</i> - Hint, Suggestion
דְּרָשׁ	ר (d)	<i>D'rash</i> - Insight
סוּד	ס (s)	<i>Sod</i> - Mystery

Chapter 22

Balak is Trapped

And the people of Israel set forward, and camped in the plains of Moab on this side of the Jordan by Jericho. **And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was very afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because of the people of Israel.**

And Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all who are around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

He sent messengers therefore to Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the sons 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 are dwelling opposite me; Come now therefore, I pray you, curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, that we may defeat them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.

And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and spoke to him the words of Balak. And he said to them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord shall speak to me; and the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. And God came to Balaam, and said, What men are these with you?

And Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent for me, saying, There is a people come out of Egypt, which covers the face of

the earth; come now, curse them for me; perhaps I will be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

Adonai said to Balaam, You will not go with them; you will not curse the people; they are blessed.

Balaam rose up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, “Go to your land; Adonai refuses to give me leave to go with you. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us.

Balak sent again princes, more, and more honorable than they. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus said Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me; For I will promote you to very great honor, and I will do whatever you say to me; come therefore, I beg you, curse this people for me.

Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now, I beg you, remain you also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say further to me.

Baalam is trapped!

Adonai came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men come to call you, rise up, and go with them; but only that word which I shall say to you, that shall you do.

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

The Ass is Trapped

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the

field; and Balaam struck the ass, to turn it to the way.

But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, it pushed itself to the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he struck her again.

And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, it fell down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the ass with a staff.

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and it said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?

Balaam said to the ass, Because you have mocked me; I wished there was a sword in my hand, for now would I kill you.

The ass said to Balaam, “Am not I your ass, upon which you have ridden ever since I was yours to this day? Was I ever wont to do so to you?”

And he said, “No.”

Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and

his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell on his face.

And the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why did you strike your ass these three times?”

Chapter 24

And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

And he took up his discourse, and said, The speech of Balaam, the son of Beor; the speech of a man whose eyes are open; The speech of him who heard the words of God, who saw the vision of the

Almighty, falling down, but having his eyes open;

How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, and your tabernacles, O Israel! Like winding brooks, like gardens by the river's side, as aloes which the Lord has planted, and like cedar trees beside the waters.

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.

God brought him out of Egypt; he has as it were the strength of a wild ox; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion. Who shall stir him up? Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you.

And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, **I called you to curse my enemies, and, behold, you have blessed them these three times.** Therefore now flee to your place; I thought

to promote you to great honor; but the Lord has kept you back from honor.

And Balaam said to Balak, Did I not speak also to your messengers which you sent me, saying,

If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not go beyond the command of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind; but what the Lord said, that will I speak?

And now, behold, I go to my people; come therefore,

and I will advise you what this people shall do to
your people in the latter days.

And he took up his discourse, and said, The speech of Balaam, the son Beor, and the speech of a man whose eyes are open;

The speech of one who heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling down, but having his eyes open;

I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not near; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall strike the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of Seth.

And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession; and Israel shall do bravely. Out of Jacob shall come a ruler, and shall destroy he who remains of the city. And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his discourse, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that of everlasting perdition. And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his discourse, and said, Strong is your dwelling place, and you put your nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be destroyed. Where shall Assyria carry you away captive? And he took up his discourse, and said, Alas, who shall live when God does this!

And ships shall come from the border of Kittim, and shall afflict Assyria, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish forever.

And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way.

Chapter 31

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Avenge the people of Israel of the Midianites; afterwards shall you be gathered to your people.” And Moses spoke to the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves for the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and do the Lord’s vengeance in Midian. From every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall you send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

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

And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them who were slain; that is, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian;
Balaam, the son of Beor, they also slew with the sword.

And the people of Israel took captive all the women of Midian, and their little ones, and took the booty of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burned all their cities where they lived, and all their encampments, with fire. And they took all the booty, and all the plunder, both of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives, and the booty, and the plunder, to Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan near Jericho.

And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the

princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them outside the camp. And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, who came from the battle.

And Moses said to them, Have you kept all the women alive? Behold, these caused the people of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

Peretz: Micah 6:5 pictures a God-fearing Balaam responding in the negative to Balak's request to curse Israel.

Chapter 6

Hear now what the Lord said; Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

“O my people, what have I done to you? And in what have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab planned, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal; that you may know the righteousness of the Lord.”

Asher: Joshua “Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.

Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. **But I was not willing to listen to Balaam.** So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand....

Peretz: (Sifrei Deut. 357) was in some ways greater than Moses, had been interpreted as righteous person?

Sifre Piska 357

And there has not risen a prophet since in Israel like Moses (34:10): None has arisen in Israel, but one has arisen among the nations. **And who was he? Balaam son of Beor.**

The difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of Balaam: Moses did not know who was speaking to him (out of the burning bush), whereas Balaam did know who was speaking to him, as it is said, “The saying of him who hears the words of God.” (Num. 24:16).

Moses did not know when God would speak to him, whereas Balaam did know, as it is said, “And knows the knowledge of the Most High (Num. 24:16).”

Asher: Rashi on Numbers 22: 11

And God came to Balaam, and said, “What men are these with you?”

And Balaam said to God, “Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent for me, saying,

‘Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covers the face of the earth; come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overcome them, and **drive them out.**’”

Rashi

and **drive them out** *from the world*.

But Balak only said, "that I may drive *them out of the land*" (v.6) *I only want to make them go away from me.*

And Baalam hated them more than Balak (Midrash Raba)