



Parasha Balak

July 20, 2019

Torah: Numbers 22:2-25:9
Haftarah: Micah 5:6-6:8
Shlichim: 1Corinthians 1:20-31

Shabbat shalom! Our *torah* portion today is entitled *Balak*. In this *parasha*, Israel has been travelling for about 38 years. It has been that long since the twelve spies were sent out survey the Land of Canaan. Because of the people's disobedience then, ADONAI sentenced the current generation to death in the wilderness, deaths which would occur gradually during the 40 more years which they had to wander, one year for each of the 40 days that the spies were in Canaan.

At the time of this *parasha*, Israel was traveling north to eventually enter into Israel. Now, Israel is camped across from the Land of Moab, the nation where Balak was king. *2 When Balak son of Zippor, realized all that Bnei-Yisrael had done to the Amorites, 3 Moab became terrified because there were so many people. Moab was filled with dread because of Bnei-Yisrael* (Numbers 22:2-3 TLV). Balak had become very concerned because Israel had defeated the Amorites and the people in the territory of Bashan. Because of his fear, he consulted with the leaders of the nation of Midian and joined forces with them. But, because he was too weak, rather than confront Israel militarily, he chose another method. He decided to send for a prophet named *Bi'lam*, Balaam, and hired him to come and curse Israel. Balaam was a Gentile and a pagan. He was not faithful to the G-d of Israel, ADONAI. But, he feared Him and would obey His direct commands. After Balaam arrived in Moab and began trying to curse Israel, Balak became greatly distressed. Every time he set out to curse Israel, it became a blessing. But, He could only speak the words which were given to him by ADONAI. Although Balaam blessed Israel, his heart was not right and not too much later it was revealed.

One of the blessings he pronounced is very familiar: *5 "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwellings, O Israel!"* (Numbers 24:5 TLV)! You prayed that this morning. We begin each *Shabbat* service with its Hebrew: *Mah tovu, ohalecha Ya'akov mish'k'notecha Yis'raeil!* Another of the blessings he pronounced which is important to followers of Yeshua is this one: *17 "I see him, yet not at this moment. I behold him, yet not in this location. For a star will come from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel"* (Numbers 24:17a TLV). To us, as followers of Yeshua, this is a prophecy about Him as the King of Israel, an event which we see on the horizon and something to which we are looking forward. Yeshua as King is one part of our message focus today. The other is about Balaam, but not about what he did in this *parasha*. Today, we are examining the "sin of Balaam."

Balaam was a bad man. There is nothing positive which we can say about him. He only prophesied the good things about Israel because he feared ADONAI. He was also an idol worshipper who sold his services and was a teacher of evil, an evil which was present in the world then and still is today. Yeshua's disciple John was in the Spirit on the Island of Patmos when he had a vision of Yeshua in His very majestic and kingly form. The time in the vision was the "Day of the Lord," the future day on which Yeshua will return to earth as King Messiah. Yeshua told John to write what he heard and send it to the seven messianic congregations. Yeshua spoke directly to each of the seven congregations about what he saw as either good or bad with them. To the congregation at Pergamum, He said: *14 "But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who was teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before Bnei-Yisrael, to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality"* (Revelation 2:14 TLV). As we read everything else which Yeshua said to this congregation, we notice that they hadn't done everything wrong and were not being completely condemned. But, one of their problems was that they held to false teaching. We can see

in this verse that they followed the teaching of Balaam. In the verse, Yeshua identified this sin as what took place after Balaam's cursing of Israel failed. He taught Balak what to do in order to entice the Israelites *to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality*. He taught Balak to be devious, to be sly, and not to confront Israel directly. Maybe he earned his money after all. After ADONAI would not allow him to curse Israel, Balaam showed the Moabites how through the attractive young women of Moab they could get to the young men of Israel. The women enticed the men sexually and through that relationship they encouraged them to take part in idolatrous festivals and to eat meat which had been sacrificed to false gods, to idols. We also see in the next verse in Revelation 2 that Pergamum also followed the false teaching of the Nicolaitans, a group whom we mentioned a few weeks ago. The Nicolaitans were gnostics, people who believed that the material world was not real and that "what you believed" was the most important thing, and not faithfulness in action.

It seems that just as Solomon said, "there is nothing new under the sun." there is nothing new today. Many of our congregations today have a mixture of truth and falsehood. Within Yeshua's larger body, there are all kinds of teachings, many of which are blatantly in opposition to the truth of Scripture. What we seem to be seeing today is a measurable falling away of millions of people who formerly confessed Jesus. We could list the changes among Yeshua's followers: increase in divorce rates, decrease in church attendance, increase in the acceptance of fornication among believers, having children without marriage, etc. It goes on and on, not the least of which are some of the sexual sins taught by Balaam. And, some of the things going on today among some of those who claim to be Yeshua's followers is almost indistinguishable from the way of those in "the world," the unbelievers. And, without being a conductor of surveys, we can see with our own eyes that sin is abounding today among those who claim to follow Yeshua.

Today, as followers of Yeshua, our concern is to speak the truth in love, even as we expose unrighteousness, not only in the world, but also in Yeshua's Body of Believers. Evil is ancient. It was introduced by the Adversary in the Garden and he has promoted it in every succeeding generation. And, it was present when Israel was encamped across from Moab as several forms of it were expressed in the sin of Balaam. In the 1st century, this sin was recognized by *Shimon Kefa* when he said: *1 "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies. They will even deny the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their immoral ways, and as a result the way of the truth will be maligned"* (2Peter 2:1-2 TLV). He went on from there to list a number of ways that people sinned and ended with those who followed the way of Balaam: *14 "They have eyes full of adultery that never stop sinning, enticing unstable souls. They have hearts trained in greed—a cursed brood! 15 They have abandoned the straight way. They have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness"* (2Peter 2:14-15 TLV). In saying this, Peter was talking about the Body of Messiah. He spoke about those who have abandoned the straight way and indulged in adultery and greed, about false teachers who would come with destructive heresies and about some who even denied the Messiah himself. We are seeing these things multiplied today. *Yehudah*, Yeshua's brother (Judah, Jude), also spoke about Balaam's error as being consumed for pay (Jude 1:11). But, justice was eventually done and Balaam got his reward for his sins when he was killed by Israel. A little later, he was among the Amorites when they were defeated by Moses: *22 .. "and Balaam son of Beor the diviner, whom Bnei-Yisrael killed with the sword among the rest of their slain"* (Joshua 13:22 TLV).

We are increasingly seeing these sins in the Body of Messiah today, a time which we understand to be the last days. There is no doubt that we are living in this period of time because of the fulfillment of prophecies regarding Israel. It has again become a nation as prophesied by Isaiah in 66:7-8, Jerusalem as a city under Jewish control as prophesied by Yeshua in Luke 21:24 and the regathering of Jews to Israel by Ezekiel in 37:21. But, we don't understand everything. There are still mysteries facing us. In 2Thessalonians, *Sha'ul* spoke to them about a message, a teaching, which was going around at that time. Some had said, and the rumor was spreading, that the Day of the Lord, the day which we mentioned from Revelation 1, the day on which Yeshua will return as King,

had already happened. *Sha'ul* assured them that it had not. And, then he said: 3 *“Let no one deceive you in any way, for the Day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the one destined to be destroyed”* (2Thessalonians 2:3 TLV). He said, not only has it not come, but it can't come until two things happen. First, the rebellion, the falling away, must come. Second, the “man of lawlessness” must be revealed. That's the \$64 question; who is the man of lawlessness. But, the \$32 question is when is the “falling away?” Has it already happened or is it yet to come? The KJV doesn't say “man of lawlessness,” but “the man of sin.” But, it is in the minority as most Bibles translate the Greek word *anomia* as it should be, “lawlessness” and not sin. But, unfortunately, it is the title “man of sin” which most people remember. “Man of sin” seems to fit that which they believe, that is, that this person is the “Antichrist,” a name which brings shivers to some.

But, as most of you know, that doctrine is not taught at *Beit Shalom*. The teaching of Dispensationalism, a system which includes the pre-tribulation rapture and the Antichrist, in the opinion of this teacher, is not true. The modern teaching about the Antichrist is based upon earlier false teachings, books from the 16th and 18th centuries which were then embellished upon in the 19th and early 20th centuries. And, this theology has been actively promoted in Christian circles since the 1909 publishing of the Scofield Reference Bible which included it. This teaching also relies upon an incorrect understanding of Daniel's message about the 70 weeks in chapter 9. Dispensationalism teaches that there is a 2000 year gap between two verses in Daniel 9, verse 26 and verse 27. According to this theology, verse 26 occurred in the 1st century and verse 27 will likely occur sometime in the 21st century. I don't doubt the sincerity or devotion to Yeshua of those who believe this and this is not a judgment of them. Nevertheless, I don't believe it is true and it leads many astray. I suggest that you go to <http://www.prophecysociety.org/> and download the free e-book, *Daniel Unsealed* by Dan Bruce. There you will discover the real truth of Daniel 9. If you've heard me say this before and been procrastinating about it, please do it now.

Regarding the term “anti-messiah,” which most Bible versions translate as “Antichrist,” this word is only found four times in all of Scripture, three times in 1John and one time in 2John. The meaning of the word is: “one who opposes Messiah” or “one who opposes Christ.” Here they are. 18 *“Children, it is the last hour. Just as you heard that the anti-messiah is coming, even now many anti-messiahs have come—by this we know that it is the last hour”* (1John 2:18 TLV). 22 *“Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This one is the anti-messiah—the one who denies the Father and the Son”* (1John 2:22 TLV). 2 *“You know the Ruach Elohim by this—every spirit that acknowledges that Messiah Yeshua has come in human flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-messiah, which you have heard is coming and now is already in the world”* (1John 4:2-3 TLV). 7 *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world—those who do not acknowledge Yeshua as Messiah coming in human flesh. This one is a deceiver and the anti-messiah”* (2John 1:7 TLV). As John said, this is a spirit which was already in the world in his time, the 1st century. It's very definitely present in our time. Here, verse by verse, is a condensation of the main points in these verses. 1John 2:18: many anti-messiahs have already come. 1John 2:22: the anti-messiah is one who denies the Father and the Son. 1John 4:2-3: Every spirit that does not acknowledge that Yeshua has come in human flesh is the anti-messiah. 2John 1:7: Those who do not acknowledge that Yeshua is Messiah who came in human flesh is the anti-messiah. In John's day, those who denied both the Father and the Son were more than likely, the pagans, most of whom worshipped Roman and Greek gods. Today, we have pagans of all sorts and also atheists who deny both the Father and the Son. A group seen in the last two of these verses is likely the Gnostics, a group which was already present at that time. One group of gnostics was the Nicolaitans. They didn't believe in the reality of the flesh, and therefore would not confess that Yeshua came in the flesh. We've seen what John spoke about today, even in our small community, we've seen those who once professed Yeshua deny Him and turn to traditional Judaism. As *Yochanan*, John, said, this is a demonic spirit, and I will add, is a spirit which can inhabit even those who have once confessed Yeshua as Savior as well as pagans and atheists.

Although it's on the minds of many people today, the lawlessness which leads to the "man of lawlessness" didn't begin in our time. *Sha'ul* said: 3 *"Let no one deceive you in any way, for the Day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the one destined to be destroyed"* (2Thessalonians 2:3 TLV). *Sha'ul* said that it was already there when he wrote this letter: 7 *"For the mystery of lawlessness is already operating;".* (2Thessalonians 2:7 TLV). This rebellion was already going on in the 1st century. Regarding the person, if it is a person, is he a government figure like the proposed Antichrist taught in Dispensationalism? It doesn't have to be. It could also be a religious figure, it could be a governmental system, or it could even be a worldwide move of unrighteousness. Our question remains: who is "the man of lawlessness" in 2Thessalonians 2? The reality is that we have many more questions about this man or this "it" than we have answers. *Sha'ul* said: 4 *"He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in the Temple of God, proclaiming himself that he is God"* (2Thessalonians 2:4 TLV). How does he do that? We don't know, but it doesn't necessarily mean that he will physically sit in the Temple, a building which we don't presently have. It could also be a symbolic "sitting in the Temple" by proclaiming that he is god. Whatever it is, it can be traced to *HaSatan*: 9 *"The coming of the lawless one is connected to the activity of satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with every kind of wicked deception toward those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved"* (2Thessalonians 2:9-10 TLV). The spirit of anti-messiah is already in the world inhabiting many people. But, the event which *Sha'ul* spoke to the Thessalonians about may not be ahead of us, it could have already happened. So many questions!

The truth is that no one knows what *Sha'ul* was writing to the Thessalonians about. The congregation to which he wrote the letter seemed to know more about it, but in our day and age, we don't have a clue. There are many speculations among followers of Yeshua about this "one" little mention about "the man of lawlessness" in all of Scripture, and still we don't know. But, we are not to have a spirit of fear. ADONAI is still in control and whoever or whatever this is will be taken care of by Yeshua when the time comes. We are to have *shalom*. Yeshua's *shalom* is with us, a word which according to the Complete Jewish Bible means: peace, tranquility, safety, well-being, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity. Speaking to His disciples before He went to the stake, Yeshua said: 27 *"Shalom I leave you, My shalom I give to you; but not as the world gives! Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid"* (John 14:27 TLV). He encourages us throughout the Gospels and the other writings of His disciples. But, it's more than that. We are in Him, connected to Him and His *shalom* is more than just words. He is with us in all that we do. So, don't fear the Antichrist. Trust in Yeshua and receive His *shalom*!

But, the mystery of the "man of lawlessness" is not our only mystery. We have many other questions. When will Jerusalem and Israel mourn for Yeshua, the One whom they pierced, as prophesied by the Prophet Zechariah in 12:10? When will all Israel be saved as prophesied by *Sha'ul* in Romans 11:26? And, when in relation to these events will Yeshua return as King? We have some ideas, but we don't know.

But, we do know that Yeshua, who first came as the "suffering servant" Messiah 2000 years ago, will soon return as "Son of David," the glorious King and conquering Messiah. As Balaam correctly prophesied so many thousands of years ago: 17 *"I see him, yet not at this moment. I behold him, yet not in this location. For a star will come from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel"* (Numbers 24:17a TLV). We see Yeshua in these words as King, but, there are a number of things which must happen first and before He returns to defeat His enemies. Here's something that we do know. When that time comes, we will already be with Him. We, who have trusted in Him, will have already risen to meet Him in the air, both the resurrected dead and those living at that time, just as *Sha'ul* prophesied in 1Thessalonians 4: 16 *"For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God's shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord"* (1Thessalonians 4:16-17 TLV). This is not the "Rapture" which is taught in Dispensationalism, because it does not

occur in connection with a tribulation period of seven years divided into two three and one-half year periods, a supposed opportunity to escape “the great tribulation.” That teaching about the tribulation is an incorrect understanding of Daniel 9:27, which we said earlier, was an event which occurred in the 1st century during the time of Yeshua. This doesn’t mean that we don’t have tribulation today; we most certainly do. But, it is not the “great tribulation” which Yeshua spoke of and which occurred in 70 CE when the Temple was destroyed. He said: 21 “*For then (speaking of 40 years in the future; 70 CE) there will be great trouble, such as has not happened since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will*” (Matthew 24:21 TLV). He said, “it will be so terrible then that it will never happen again.” And, it was terrible in Jerusalem, more than one million killed and taken into slavery. That was the “great tribulation,” the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 CE. We don’t fear the tribulation, not because we are going to be taken out before it, but because we have Yeshua’s assurance that it has already happened. And, we have His *shalom*.

I urge you again to read *Daniel Unsealed* and to be Berean about what you hear. Don’t just take my word for any of this. We are all Yeshua’s *talmidim*, His disciples, and He expects all of us to know about these things. We all must be students of His Word. As students who have rightly divided the Word, we are also to be prepared to take up *Sha’ul*’s charge to Timothy as Yeshua’s modern day followers: 1 “*I solemnly charge you—in the presence of God and Messiah Yeshua, who is about to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom— 2 proclaim the Word! Be ready when it is convenient or inconvenient. Confront, rebuke, encourage—with complete patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not put up with sound instruction, but they will pile up for themselves teachers in keeping with their own desires, to have their ears tickled. 4 And they will turn away from hearing the truth and wander off to myths*” (2Timothy 4:1-4 TLV). That time is today.

The evil provoked by *HaSatan*, the evil one, the Adversary, led Balaam astray and is still leading many astray today. But, we don’t fear him. He is a defeated foe and he has no power over us. At the name of Yeshua he must flee. So, don’t fear what is happening in the world today. Perfect love casts out all fear. Serve Yeshua! He has overcome the world. Our King is coming! *Marana’ta!* Our L-rd, come! *Shabbat shalom!*