



## Parasha Balak

July 20, 2024

*Torah:* Numbers 22:2-25:9

*Haftarah:* Micah 5:6-6:8

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* 1Corinthians 1:20-31

*Shabbat shalom!* Our *Torah* portion today is *Balak*, the name of the king of Moab. He and his people were the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. ADONAI gave the land of Moab to Lot's descendants and not to Israel, but *Balak* feared that Israel would make war against them if not actually possess the land. But Moses had no such intention and only wanted to peacefully camp there until ADONAI instructed Israel to enter Canaan. The *parasha* begins: *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.* (Numbers 22:2-3 TLV).

In last week's *parasha*, Israel arrived at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin, where Miriam died and was buried. Because of frustration with the unfaithfulness of the people, Moses produced the waters of Meribah by striking the rock rather than speaking to it as ADONAI had commanded. This one act of disobedience brought ADONAI's judgment on both him and Aaron, preventing them from entering the Promised Land. Moses requested passage through Edom from its king, but he refused and they had to take a long way around. Going straight through Edom would have been much easier, but they had to go around it on its west side. When they arrived at Mount Hor, ADONAI directed that Aaron be gathered to his people, and he died and was buried on the mountain. His garments were placed on his son *El'azar* and he became the High Priest. Shortly after that, Israel was attacked by the King of Arad, the Canaanite city, which is just north of Mount Hor, and ADONAI gave Israel the victory. On the way around Edom and Moab, the Israelites became impatient and spoke against ADONAI and Moses. ADONAI sent poisonous snakes to bite them, and many died. Rabbi Herb told us about the bronze serpent on a pole last *Shabbat*. After Israel completed their journey around Edom and traveled around Moab, we are told that Israel defeated and occupied the territories of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, the Amorite King of Bashan. This is confusing because the territories of Sihon and Og are north of the Plains of Moab, where our *parasha* takes place today. But by going around Moab on its western border, Israel had continued north until they arrived at the territories of the Amorite kings. The Amorites immediately attacked Israel, and ADONAI gave them victory. After they defeated the Amorites, they were north of their eventual entry point into Canaan, opposite Jericho. To get there, they had to turn around and travel south. This put them at the northern border of Moab on the Plains of Moab. The last verse of last week's *parasha*, *Chukkat*, reads: *1 Then Bnei-Yisrael set out and camped in the plains of Moab alongside the Jordan across from Jericho.* (Numbers 22:1 TLV). They set out from the territory of the Amorites and traveled south to get to the Plains of Moab.

As *Parasha Balak* begins, Israel was camped on the northwestern border of Moab opposite Jericho. The part of our *parasha* that we will discuss is the story of King Balak hiring Balaam to curse Israel. It contains significant prophecies of the future of Israel and of her Messiah. It is also about an ancient evil that has re-emerged numerous times through the ages and is present in our world today. King Balak had heard how Israel defeated the Amorites and was terrified. What was he to do? He very quickly allied himself with the Midianites, who lived in the territory to the south and east of Moab. And then he sent messengers, elders of Moab and Midian, with funds to summon Balaam to come and curse Israel.

Balaam, son of Beor, a prophet and soothsayer, a person who could tell the future, lived at Pethor near the Euphrates River, a very long distance away to the east of Moab. When the messengers arrived in Pethor with their funds, after a journey which might have taken weeks, they asked Balaam to come and curse Israel. He responded that he must ask G-d. While we wonder about his relationship with ADONAI, we do understand that ADONAI uses whomever He chooses in His dealings with men. ADONAI told him no, that Israel was a blessed people. The messengers returned to Balak and told him that Balaam refused to come.

Balak sent other dignitaries with promises of rich rewards if Balaam would come and curse Israel. *18 But Balaam answered Balak's servants, "Even if Balak gave me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot cross beyond the mouth of Adonai, my God, to do anything small or great!"* (Numbers 22:18 TLV). He told the messengers that he would again consult ADONAI, after which he was told that he could go with them, but only to do as he was directed. Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the messengers.

At one point in the journey, ADONAI became angry with Balaam. He knew Balaam's greedy heart and in His anger against it, ADONAI placed His angel in the road in front of him. The donkey saw the angel and turned off the road into the field. And Balaam beat the donkey. Back on the road, the angel stood in a narrow path between two walls. Seeing the angel and not able to go around, the donkey pressed against the wall, crushing Balaam's foot, and he beat her again. Then, in a narrow place, the angel blocked their way, which caused the donkey to lie down, and Balaam beat her once more. At that point, ADONAI opened the donkey's mouth, and she asked Balaam why he had beaten her three times. ADONAI then opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel with his sword. ADONAI told Balaam to go with the men but to only speak the word that he was told.

Arriving in Moab, Balaam was greeted by Balak and he immediately told him that he could only speak what G-d put in his mouth. Balak took him to the mountain peak Bamoth-baal where he looked out and saw some of the people of Israel and offered sacrifices. Going to a separate peak, ADONAI gave him the words to speak. Balaam said: *7 ... "From Aram, Balak brought me, Moab's king from the mountains of the east: 'Come! Curse Jacob for me! 'Come! Denounce Israel!'" 8 How can I curse one whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce one whom Adonai has not denounced? 9 From the rocky peaks I see him. From the heights I behold him. Look, he lives as a nation apart, and does not consider himself as being like the other nations. 10 Who can count Jacob's dust? Who can number a fourth of Israel? Let my soul die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!"* (Numbers 23:7b-10 TLV). Balak replied that rather than cursing Israel, Balaam had blessed them.

Balak then took him to Lookout Field on top of Mount Pisgah where he again made sacrifices. ADONAI met Balaam and put His message into his mouth. Balaam prophesied: 18 ... *“Rise, Balak! Hear me, son of Zippor! 19 God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind! Does He speak and then not do it, or promise and not fulfill it? 20 Look, I received a command to bless. He has blessed—I cannot change it! 21 No misfortune is to be seen in Jacob, and no misery in Israel! Adonai their God is with them—the King’s shout is among them! 22 God is bringing them from Egypt with the strong horns of the wild ox! 23 There is no sorcery effective against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel! Now it will be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘See what God has done!’ 24 The people rise like a lioness, like a lion who does not rest until he eats his prey and drinks his victim’s blood!”* (Numbers 23:18a-24 TLV). Balak protested again and Balaam again said that he could only say what ADONAI told him.

Balak took him to another place, the top of Peor, where he again offered sacrifices. When Balaam looked out and saw Israel, the *Ruach Elohim* came over him and he said: 3 ... *“This is the oracle of Balaam son of Beor, and the oracle of a strong man whose eye has been opened, 4 the oracle of one hearing God’s speech, one seeing Shaddai’s vision, one fallen down, yet with open eyes: 5 How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwellings, O Israel!* Verse 5 is very familiar to you as the opening line of *Mah Tov*, our *Shabbat* morning opening prayer. *Mah Tov*, meaning “how lovely,” is the only line in Israel’s liturgy written by a non-Jew. 6 *Like valleys they are spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by Adonai, like cedars beside the waters. 7 Water will flow from his buckets, his seed by abundant water. His king will be greater than Agag, his kingdom will be exalted. 8 God is bringing him out of Egypt. like the strong horns of a wild ox. He devours nations hostile to him. He will crush their bones. His arrows will pierce them. 9 He crouches like a lion or a lioness—who would rouse him? He who blesses you will be blessed, and he who curses you will be cursed.*” (Numbers 24:3b-9 TLV). In this last verse, Balaam was inspired to quote ADONAI’s words to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. After he said this, Balak became furious, saying that rather than cursing them, he blessed them three times and he sent Balaam away.

Before leaving, Balaam uttered a final oracle: 15 ... *The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the strong man whose eye is opened, 16 the oracle of one hearing God’s speech, one experiencing Elyon’s knowledge, one seeing Shaddai’s vision, one fallen down, yet with open eyes: 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 24:15b-17 TLV). This last verse is a prophecy by a pagan prophet correctly foretelling the coming of King David and also King Messiah Yeshua. Balaam then left Moab. In reality, Balaam was a wicked and greedy man. What was Balaam’s occupation? He was “a prophet for profit.”

We might think that as followers of Yeshua, we are morally strong and able to resist temptation. But, it is very dangerous to live in or be in a community that has values so much in opposition to ADONAI’s values. The reality is that we all live in such communities because sinfulness has become the norm and is everywhere. Sin against ADONAI happens over and over in our society, just as it did with Israel while they were camped at Shittim. 1 *While Israel was staying in Shittim, the people began to have immoral sexual relations with women from Moab. 2 Then they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, so the people were eating, and bowing down before their gods. 3 When Israel became bound to Baal of Peor, the anger of Adonai grew hot against Israel* (Numbers 25:1-3 TLV). Even Israel, which had the presence of ADONAI in their midst, allowed their natural desires to

overrule their personal relationship with Him. Scripture says that Israel was bound to *Ba'al Peor*, which seems to indicate that both men and women were involved in worshipping this false god. As Yeshua's followers today, we don't understand how a group of people who had seen so many miracles done on their behalf could turn away so quickly.

*Shimon Kefa* condemned false prophets and people who followed their ways. He wrote: *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.* (2 Peter 2:15 TLV). The wages of wickedness are payment for doing evil. Balaam didn't leave well enough alone but returned and gave advice to the Moabites. For that, he was paid his wages of wickedness. Yeshua spoke about Balaam's sin in His message to the congregation at Pergamum: *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). Some in the congregation at Pergamum followed the teaching of Balaam, teachings which included tempting Israel to worship idols and commit sexual sins. Not only did the men of Israel sin sexually, but they also bound themselves, that is, made a covenant with the false god, Baal of Peor. Those who entered into these relationships knew that what they were doing was wrong. It seems that the second-generation Israelites sinned just as much or more than first-generation Israel. We read later that this sin came about because of Balaam's advice to Moab, what *Shimon Kefa* called "the wages of wickedness." Balaam came back and advised Moab to have their women tempt the Israeli men. (Numbers 31:16). In the end, Balaam was judged for his wicked actions: *7 They fought Midian just as Adonai had commanded Moses, and killed every male. 8 Among the slain they also killed the Midianite kings: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam, son of Beor, with the sword.* (Numbers 31:7-8 TLV).

These sexual sins are in Yeshua's body of followers today. *HaSatan* is always lurking near us to tempt us to turn away from ADONAI. Many who claim to follow Yeshua have knowingly or unknowingly bound themselves to *HaSatan* and his demons through unrepented and/or continuing sin. It may be sexual sins, it may be a lack of forgiveness in hearts or it may even be a complete turning away from Yeshua. Unrepented sin is prevalent in the body of Yeshua today. Here in our own midst we have had souls to reject Yeshua. Even those who at one time seemed so strong in their faith, when tempted and encouraged by others, turned away from Yeshua, some to traditional Judaism and some to what they called Abrahamic faith, faith in the G-d of Israel without Yeshua. They are always in our prayers that they will return to Yeshua.

Among Yeshua's followers, sexual sin is a major sin that causes His followers to fall. Many pastors have fallen and continue to fall today because of sexual sin. Sexual sin was the enticement of the Moabite women to get the Israelite men to worship their god, *Ba'al Peor*, and that same spirit exists and inhabits men and women today. Saying that Israel became bound to *Ba'al Peor* implicated the whole nation in the worship of an idol, a false god. But then, something even more blatant happened. *6 Then behold, a man from Bnei-Yisrael came and brought a Midianite woman to his brothers before the eyes of Moses and of the whole assembly of Bnei-Yisrael, while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting* (Numbers 25:6 TLV). ADONAI had just sentenced the ringleaders of this rebellion to be hanged when this thing happened. Even while ADONAI's justice was being carried out, without fear, a man from the Tribe of Simeon named Zimri began to have sexual relations with a Midianite woman. It was done right before the eyes of Moses and

the other people who were weeping at the entrance of the Tabernacle. There is a rabbinic tradition that says that the tent in which this happened was actually the Tabernacle, and the whole congregation could see them. Whether that was true or not, the High Priest *El'azar's* son *Pinchas* (Phinehas) was so outraged about this violation against ADONAI that he took a spear and plunged it through both of them. His action stopped the plague that had broken out among the people because of ADONAI's anger.

Sexual sins among the people of Canaan were just one of the reasons that ADONAI commanded Joshua to destroy all of them. (Deuteronomy 20:16-18). Sex and pagan religion continued to be an enticement of the Israelites throughout the ages and was something that Yeshua's early followers also had to confront. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Gentiles who worshipped Greek and Roman gods often participated in temple prostitution, both heterosexual and homosexual. It was this very thing that *Sha'ul* and the other followers of Yeshua had to deal with in Antioch where Yeshua's new followers had been involved in pagan ritual. After they brought this problem to the leaders in Jerusalem, the group discussed what to do with the new Gentile followers of Yeshua. The decision was rendered by Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* (Jacob; James), the *nasi* (leader) of the Jerusalem Congregation, who said: 19 *"Therefore, I judge not to trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God— 20 but to write to them to abstain from the contamination of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what is strangled, and from blood."* (Acts 15:19-21 TLV). This was not a list of commandments for the Gentile followers of Yeshua but prohibitions that would provide an entry point into the synagogue. If they did not do these things, they would be welcome in the synagogues and could hear and learn the *Torah*. *Ya'acov's* concluding words were: 21 *"For Moses from ancient generations has had in every city those who proclaim him since he is read in all the synagogues every Shabbat."* (Acts 15:21 TLV). The word "Moses" is a metaphor, a figurative way of saying "the *Torah*." That was *Ya'acov's* suggestion for those new Gentile followers of Yeshua. Go to synagogue on *Shabbat*. By forsaking those four pagan practices, they would be able to attend synagogue on *Shabbat* and begin to learn the *Torah*.

These kinds of things are present in our society today and even in our churches and congregations. There is nothing new under the sun. 9 *"What has been is what will be, and what has been done will be done again. There is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there anything about which is said, "Look! This is new!"? It was already here long ago, in the ages long before us"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 TLV). *Shlomo* (Solomon), in his G-d-given wisdom, recognized this long ago. But, even he was not immune to sexual sin. Later in his life, Solomon took many foreign women as wives or concubines: 1 *Now King Solomon loved so many foreign women, besides the daughter of Pharaoh—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom Adonai had said to the children of Israel: "You shall not associate with them nor they associate with you, for surely they would turn your heart away after their gods."* Solomon clung to them for love. 3 *So he had 700 wives as princesses and 300 concubines—and his women led his heart astray.* (1 Kings 11:1-3 TLV). Sex led his heart away from G-d. What Solomon did after so faithfully serving ADONAI is almost unthinkable: 7 *At that time Solomon also built a high place for Chemosh, the detested thing of Moab, on the mountain near Jerusalem, as well as for Molech the detested thing of the children of Ammon.* (1 Kings 11:7 TLV). Thousands of children were sacrificed to both of these demonic entities in Jerusalem at those high places, and they remained active for a very long time, actually existing for more than three hundred years. They were destroyed by King Josiah, who led a revival after finding the Book of the *Torah*: 13 *The king also desecrated the shrines facing Jerusalem—to the south of the Mount of*

*Destruction—which King Solomon of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 14 He smashed the pillars and cut down the Asherah poles, and filled their places with human bones. (2 Kings 23:13-14 TLV).* Solomon had also built a high place for Ashtoreth, the so-called “queen of heaven. Some scholars believe that *Molech* and *Milcom* are the same Ammonite god. How many of Israel’s children were murdered during those three hundred-plus years because of this man who had served ADONAI so faithfully early in his life? Rabbi Jonathan Cahn has shown in his book (*Return Of The Gods*), that these same spirits are alive and well here today. Today, there are many temptations that can cause even the very committed to slip and fall. *Sha’ul* said: 1 “*But understand this, that in the last days hard times will come— 2 for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 hardhearted, unforgiving, backbiting, without self-control, brutal, hating what is good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to an outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 TLV)! Do not associate with those doing evil.

Today, we are seeing the real nature of the people of our nation and the world. The things taking place today show beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are living in the last days. We must hold firm to our Scriptural beliefs and our commitment to Yeshua and ADONAI. But the reality is that many of Yeshua’s followers today are lukewarm. His words to the Congregation at Laodicea are very much for His body today: 15 “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. Oh, that you were either cold or hot! 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew you out of My mouth*” (Revelation 3:15-16 TLV). Pray for those who are lukewarm, that they would repent and become hot again, and live in a fully committed relationship with Yeshua. We ourselves must guard against being lukewarm. We must be doers of the Word, walking in our convictions: 22 “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror— 24 for once he looks at himself and goes away, he immediately forgets what sort of person he was*” (James 1:22-24 TLV). In *Parasha Balak*, there was a form of godliness in the prophet Balaam and a form of godliness in some of the people of Israel at Shittim. But it was not enough godliness to overcome the inclinations of their evil hearts. As *Sha’ul* prophesied, there is an outward form of godliness today and we see it among many of the professed followers of Yeshua today. Pray for the whole body of Messiah that “luke-warmness” would disappear and that we would all be “hot” for Yeshua and that we would not succumb to the enemy’s temptation.

As followers of Yeshua in Messianic Judaism, we are here to proclaim that ADONAI does not change. (Malachi 3:6). His Word has not changed. Our presence as a called-out group is a proclamation to the world that the Jews are still ADONAI’s people and that He is using them in these last days. Pray for each other that our own individual visions would be secure. If ADONAI’s Spirit has called you into Messianic Judaism, it is to be a part of what He is doing today through those whom He chose to be priests to the nations. He is doing this through both Jews and Gentiles. Those of us in Messianic Judaism are not any more special than Yeshua’s followers in the Church. They have their calling, and we have our calling, and we need to support each other and pray for each other. We also must pray for those in our society who are far away from G-d. We pray that they will come to know Yeshua as their Messiah. We, who have committed our lives to Yeshua, must move forward in faith, believing not only that all Israel shall be saved but also that there is revival

coming before the Day of ADONAI. We pray for it. Don't fear what you see around you today, but be strong in ADONAI. Let your life be a proclamation of faith in Yeshua to everyone around you.

Yeshua's greater body needs a wake-up call. It is much later in ADONAI's prophetic timetable than most believe. Many in the worldwide Ecclesia of Yeshua have been lulled to sleep by false doctrines. We say to Yeshua's body: "Wake up!" They are like the proverbial ostrich with his head in the sand. *Sha'ul* wrote: *1 Now concerning the times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. 3 When they are saying, "Shalom and safety," sudden destruction comes upon them like a woman having birth pains in the womb—there is no way they will escape.* (1 Thessalonian 5:1-3 TLV). We are in the last of the last days. Those who are saying "peace and safety" are deceived. Yes, we must have faith. Yes, we must be strong. And yes, we must vote our conscience with the hope that our nation will be restored. But even if it is, it is temporary. The Day of ADONAI is near. There is no human anti-Christ coming to rule the world. There is no Great Tribulation coming. It happened in Jerusalem in 70 CE. And it is much later than most believe. *HaSatan* has already been bound in the Abyss and released to trouble the nations. These things are not one thousand years in the future. They are here now.

Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* wrote: *7 So be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it until it receives the early and late rain. 8 You also be patient. Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord is near.* (James 5:7-8 TLV). Until that day comes, as it says in our Mourner's *Kaddish*: "May there be great peace from heaven and life for us and for all Israel. Now respond: AMEN." *Shabbat shalom!*

***Revival Begins With Me!***

***Return to Yeshua!  
Return to Authority!  
Return to Attendance!***

***Pass it on!***