

**Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us**  
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,  
and shew my people their transgression,  
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

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**Our Sabbath Lesson**  
**Adar 17th, 6006**  
**March 10th, 2012**

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## **Remain Blessed!**

**Reading:**  
Numbers Chapters 22 & 23

### **1. Introduction**

**Balaam** was a resident of the town of Pethor on the river Euphrates. He was a mercenary prophet who sold himself to the highest bidder. The *'love of money'* corrupted Balaam; though at times, when **Jehovah** controlled his tongue, he couldn't help but speak the Truth. **Balaam was hired by king Balak of Moab to come and curse Israel.** But for all his eagerness to do so, (for he desperately wanted Balak's gold) Balaam couldn't curse the chosen people of God. Balaam's love of money and the frustration he felt at being unable to curse Israel are graphically told in Numbers chapters 22 to 25. The world would do well to learn lessons from Balaam's greed and Balak's hatred of Israel; lessons which could well apply even to the **Christian church**, which in ages past has **sorely persecuted** the people of God, the apple of Jehovah's eye. (Deuteronomy 32: 10, Zechariah 2: 8) But first a few definitions.

### **2. Pagan Gods**

There are literally thousands of pagan gods. In the Bible two are mentioned over and over again. Their names are **Baal** and **Ashtoreth** (known variously as Ashtaroth/Astarte/Ishtar, etc.)

#### **BAAL**

Who is **Baal**? Why is he singled out for repeated mention? The name **Baal** means **'lord, possessor, husband'**

#### **"Baal**

worship apparently had its origin in the belief that every tract of ground owed its productivity to a **supernatural being**, or **baal**, that dwelt there. The farmers probably thought that from the **Baalim**, (plural for Baal) or fertility gods, of various regions came the increase of crops, fruit and cattle... **Baal** was adored in the high places of Moab as early as the days of **Balaam** and **Balak...** (Numbers 22: 41) In the time of the Judges he (**Baal**) had altars in Palestine) Judges 2: 13; 6: 28-32) and when **Ahab** married **Jezebel**, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, the worship of Baal almost supplanted that of **Jehovah**. The struggle between the two religions culminated on Mt Carmel when the prophet **Elijah** met the priests of Baal (1 Kings 16: 31, 32; 18: 17-40) Though it ended in the slaughter of the priests of Baal, yet

the cult soon recuperated until crushed by Jehu... (1 Kings 10: 18-28) **The worship of Baal was accompanied with lascivious rites**, (1 Kings 14: 24) the sacrifice of children in the fire by parents, (Jeremiah 9: 5) and **kissing the image**. (1 Kings 19: 18; Hosea 13: 2) Baal was often associated with the goddess **Ashtoreth** (Judges 2: 13) and in the vicinity of his altar there was often an Asherah.” (Judges 6: 30) (**Westminster Dictionary of The Bible, Article Baal**)

### **ASHTAROTH / ASTORETH / ASTARTE / ISHTAR**

“**Astarte**, a goddess of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. The name occurs in South Arabic as **Athtar**, a god identified with the planet **Venus**. In the Ras Shamra tablets are found the masculine ‘**Athtar and the feminine**’ Athtar. In the Amarna letters this goddess is known as **Ashtartu**. In Babylonia **Ishtar** whose name is cognate with **Ashtarte**, (Ashtar) was identified with Venus. **She was the goddess of sexual love, maternity, and fertility. Prostitution as a religious rite in the service of this goddess under various names is widely attested.** The identification of ‘**Ashtar with Aphrodite**’ is evidence of her sexual character.” (**Westminster Dictionary of The Bible, Article Ashtoreth**)

Because the worship of these two fertility gods, **Baal** and **Astoreth**, was accompanied by sexual rites, their festivals became popular throughout the ancient world. There is nothing like ‘**sexual freedom**’ when it comes to attracting devotees to a festival. We should also bear in mind that **Easter** is a fertility festival which derived its name from this goddess **Ashtaroth**. That is why we see **bunny rabbits** and **painted eggs** in the shops at Easter time. The **egg** is a symbol of fertility and the **rabbit** is one of the most prolific of animals. Thus was born the idea that the husband **Baal** with his wife **Astoreth** would produce bountiful harvests in the vineyard, the field and the womb.

The Moabites worshipped these two gods; so Israel's God and His commandments concerning sexual conduct would certainly not be welcome in the land of Canaan. That is why king Balak invited Balaam the prophet to curse Israel. **Balaam agreed.**

- He **recognized** Yahweh's presence with Israel
- He **knew** that he was unable to go against the Almighty's will; however much he wanted to.
- He **knew** the spiritual significance of the number seven.
- He also **knew** about clean and unclean sacrifices.
- He **specialized** in blessing and cursing.
- Yet **compelled by the Holy Spirit** Balaam predicted:
  - Israel's assured victory in the **latter days**, just prior to the Messiah's arrival.
  - The coming of **Yeshua The Messiah**, (Jesus Christ) and his **millennial reign**.

## **3. The Almighty's Blessing**

To be **blessed of Jehovah** means to be highly favoured, made happy, protected, gifted and cared-for by the Creator of heaven and earth. It is a most gracious position to be in. In the past the Almighty has blessed many people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, king David and His people Israel. But divine blessing was - and still is - conditional; and the condition is **faith** and **obedience**. This fact is detailed in the following verses:

Ecclesiastes 12: 13: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.**”*

Deuteronomy 28: 1: *“And it shall come to pass, **IF thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:***  
2: *And all these **blessings** shall come on thee, and overtake thee, **IF thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.***  
3: ***Blessed** shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.*  
4: ***Blessed** shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.*  
5: ***Blessed** shall be thy basket and thy store.*  
6: ***Blessed** shalt thou be when thou comest in, and **blessed** shalt thou be when thou goest*

out.

7: The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

8: The LORD shall command the **blessing** upon thee in thy storehouses, **and in all that thou settest thine hand unto;** and he shall **bless** thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

9: The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, **IF thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.**

10: And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.

11: And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

12: The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to **bless all the work of thine hand:** and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

13: And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; **IF that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:”**

## 4. The Almighty's Cursing

Alas the opposite is also true. Blatant disobedience results in **divine cursing** and the reverse of all the beautiful things mentioned above are sure to come in the wake of wilful disobedience. But I'll not dwell on those things; though you should - for your own good - take time to study them.

## 5. Balaam's Advice

Balaam understood these facts about **divine blessing** and **cursing**. Yet he needed to be taught a lesson as to how futile it is to try to reverse Yahweh's will. When Balaam discovered that he was unable to curse Israel, he revealed a secret to king **Balak** which **every soul on earth should pay special attention to**. It is this: **that when a nation, community or person forsakes the law of Almighty God and turns to sin - particularly to sins of a sexual nature - then the curses of God will automatically fall upon the guilty**. It matters little if that community or person had previously served God. Once people take to sin and turn their backs on Yahweh's commandments, all the curses recorded in the book of Deuteronomy begin to descend upon their heads.

With that fact in mind, Balaam advised Balak to invite the men of Israel to the Moabite festivals where **idolatry, drunkenness, the eating of forbidden food** and **Fornication** were encouraged. The results were catastrophic. Israel sinned grievously and the Almighty's curses poured down on His chosen people. **Twenty four thousand Israelites** died in a plague sent by God; all because they committed **fornication** with the women of Moab.

Numbers 25:

1: **“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.**

2: *And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

3: *And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel*

4: *And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.*

5: *And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.*

6: *And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

7: *And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from*

*among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;  
8: And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.  
9: **And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.**”*

The Saviour gave a special warning to His church concerning the sin of Balaam. Here it is:

Revelation 2: 14: *“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold **the doctrine of Balaam**, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to **eat things sacrificed unto idols**, and to **commit fornication.**”*

## 6. The Holy War

The Almighty never forgot or forgave Balaam's sin and the deadly advice he had given the people of Moab. Had it not resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites? (Numbers 25:9). And so, just before Israel entered the Promised land the LORD commanded Moses to enlist an army of 12,000 Israelite soldiers, 1000 from each tribe, to go and slaughter the Midianites and Moabites. In the holy war which followed, Israel:

- Slew all the males of Midian and their five kings.
- Took all the virgins of Midian captive.
- **Slew with the sword the false prophet Balaam**, who had opted not to return to Mesopotamia but to stay with the Midianites and Moabites.
- Captured 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, 32,000 persons.
- All without the loss of a single Israelite soldier!

You may read the amazing story, which has **prophetic implications** for this generation, in **Numbers chapter 31**. This time the victorious army will number **144,000**; that is 12,000 from each tribe. But the objective will be the same; to root out the **sins of idolatry, heathenism and illicit sexual intercourse**. This they will accomplish, not with bullets or bombs, **but by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Real Word of God**.

## 7. The Coming False Prophet

False prophets are known for their **love of money**, their **heathen teachings** and their unwillingness to speak out against **illicit sex**. Many of them also have **miraculous powers**. The world is awash with false prophets. But soon there is coming a **False Prophet** in the Balaam mould; but with infinitely more power than had Balaam. We read about this character in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 16: 13: *“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the **false prophet**.  
14: For they are the spirits of devils, **working miracles**, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

When he arrives on the world scene, this **False Prophet** will do stunning miracles and will cause billions of earth's inhabitants to reject the commandments of God. No doubt his stand against God's law concerning sexual conduct will be welcomed by our sex-crazed society. But his end will be far worse than that of Balaam.

Revelation 19: 20: *“And the beast was taken, and with him the **false prophet** that **wrought miracles** before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. **These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.**”*

## 8. Remain Blessed

**Balaam's prophetic words concerning Israel in the last days are significant.** They tell us that Israel, though surrounded by enemies intent on her destruction, will **in the end be victorious.** Balaam predicted the coming kingdom of **Jesus Christ, the Star of Israel, the One who will hold the Sceptre!**

Numbers 24: 12: *“And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,*  
13: *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, **I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?***  
14: *And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people **IN THE LATTER DAYS.***  
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:*  
16: *He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:*  
17: ***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.***  
18: *And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; **and Israel shall do valiantly.**”*

Are you an Israelite? Do you believe in Israel's God and His Son **Yeshua the Messiah?** the Bible says that if you do then you are already blessed. See **Israel, The Chosen of God.** Moreover, no one can reverse that blessing except you; and then only if you blatantly sin. As Balaam so correctly

Numbers 23: 19: *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”*  
20: ***Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.**”*

The same principle applies today. If you trust and obey **Yahweh,** the Almighty God of Israel, you are already blessed and no power in the heavens above or the earth below can reverse that blessing. Remember that fact.

Revelation 22: 14: *“**Blessed are they that do his commandments,** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”*

**Remain blessed!**

**AMEN!**

**In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.**  
Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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