
Pearl Seeking

TREASURING HIS WORD

Let's do a quick overview of the entire Torah portion:

Monday:	Num. 22:2-20	King Balak sends emissaries to Bil'am
Tuesday:	Num. 22:21-41	Bil'am's donkey and the Messenger of Yahweh speak
Wednesday:	Num. 23	Bil'am pronounces Yahweh's blessings
Thursday:	Num. 24	Bil'am continues to pronounce Yahweh's blessings
Friday:	Num. 25:1-9	Yisra'el falls into immorality and idolatry

In this week's Parsha Pearls lesson, we see the victorious Yisra'elites encamped in the desert plains of Mo'ab, beyond the Yarden of Yeriho. Here is where the famous story of Bil'am and his talking donkey takes place. Now, let's read Num. 22-24.

PARSHA POINTS

Chapter 22

- King Balak (means devastator), the sovereign of the Mo'abites, sends messengers to Bil'am asking him to curse the children of Yisra'el, for he is exceedingly afraid of them - 22:2-6
- Balak states that whomever Bil'am blesses (**barak**) is blessed, and whomever he curses (**arar**) is cursed - 22:6
- The elders bring payment to Bil'am for his services - 22:7
- Bil'am tells the men to spend the night and wait for Yahweh's Word to him - 22:8
- Elohim appears to Bil'am and asks the seer (someone who sees the future or something specific) to explain the identity of these men - 22:9
- Bil'am replies to Elohim that they are messengers of King Balak who wishes to hire him to curse the Yisra'elites so that the king may drive them out - 22:10-11
- Elohim directs Bil'am to refrain from cursing the people, for they are blessed - 22:12
- Bil'am tells the leaders to go back without him, for Yahweh has refused to allow him to go with them - 22:13
- The heads of Mo'ab report back to Balak regarding the negative response of Bil'am - 22:14
- Balak tries to persuade Bil'am by sending to him men even more prestigious than the first group, and in greater number - 22:15
- These men flatter Bil'am and promise him anything he wants - 22:16-17



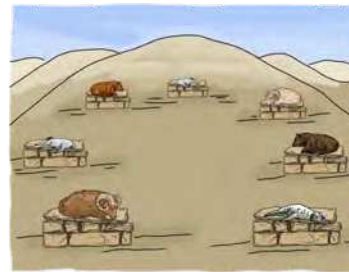
- Bil'am appears to refuse their bribery, but asks the men to spend the night so that he might inquire of Yahweh again - 22:18-19
- Elohim allows Bil'am to go with the men, but cautions him to only speak the words that Elohim gives him to speak - 22:20
- Bil'am rises early in the morning and saddles his donkey to go with the heads of Mo'ab - 22:21
- Yahweh is very displeased with Bil'am's actions. He sends His Messenger to stand in the way of Bil'am as an adversary against him - 22:22
- Bil'am can't see the Messenger of Yahweh standing with a sword in his hand, but Bil'am's donkey does! She tries to protect Bil'am by (22:23-27):
 - turning aside into a field
 - pushing herself against a wall, crushing Bil'am's foot
 - laying down and refusing to move
- Bil'am beats his donkey each time with his staff - 22:23, 25,27
- Yahweh opens the donkey's mouth to ask why Bil'am has beaten her 3 (**shalosh**) times - 22:28
- Bil'am believes the donkey was 'mocking' him by her actions. He wishes that he had a sword with him, so he could have killed her - 22:29
- The donkey asks Bil'am to consider whether she has ever acted in this way before. Bil'am answers that she has not - 22:30
- After this, Yahweh opens up Bil'am's eyes to see the Messenger of Yahweh with a sword in his hand. Bil'am falls on his face - 22:31
- The Messenger of Yahweh reproves Bil'am for beating his donkey, revealing that He would have killed Bil'am by now if his donkey had not seen and avoided Him; for Bil'am's actions have been reckless in the eyes of Yahweh - 22:32-33
- Bil'am acknowledges that he has sinned; if the Messenger intends to punish him, he will indeed turn back - 22:34
- The Messenger tells Bil'am to continue going with the men to Balak, but to only speak the words that He gives him to speak - 22:35
- When Bil'am arrives with the heads of Balak, the sovereign questions Bil'am's delay, reminding him that he intends to honor him (make him rich) - 22:37
- Bil'am assures King Balak that he is here now, but cannot pronounce whatever words may come from a human source; rather all his words will come from Elohim - 22:38
- As a foretaste of the honoring, Balak has cattle and sheep slaughtered and sent to Bil'am and the heads who were with him - 22:40
- The next day Balak brings Bil'am to the high places of Ba'al, from where they can see the extremity (furthest point) of the camp of Yi'sra'el - 22:41



Chapter 23

Try #1 - Let's Give it a Try

- Bil'am instructs Balak to build 7 (**sheva**) altars, and prepare 7 bulls and 7 rams for him - 23:1
- A ram and a bull are offered on each altar - 23:2
- Bil'am tells the sovereign Balak to stand by his offering while he goes to inquire of Elohim what he should say - 23:3
- Yahweh tells Bil'am to return to Balak and say that although he thinks he has hired Bil'am to curse Ya'aqob and rage at Yisra'el, he must instead say this (23:5-10):
 - How do I curse whom El has not cursed?
 - How do I rage at whom Yahweh has not raged?
 - These people are living alone (not bothering anyone).
 - They do not reckon themselves among the nations (not significant in comparison to other nations).
 - Who shall count the dust of Ya'aqob?
 - Who shall count the number of one-fourth of Yisra'el?
 - Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!
- Balak is upset that Bil'am has blessed Yisra'el instead of cursing them - 23:11
- Bil'am reminds Balak that he speaks only what Elohim gives him to say - 23:12
- Balak believes that if he only takes Bil'am to another location where he can see more of the camp that he will be able to curse it - 23:13



Try #2 - Try and Try Again

- Balak takes Bil'am to the field of Tsophim, to the top of Pisgah, and again builds 7 altars and prepares 7 bulls and 7 rams - 23:14
- A ram and a bull are again offered on each altar - 23:14
- Bil'am again tells the sovereign Balak to stand by his offering while he goes to inquire of Elohim what he should say - 23:15
- Yahweh again tells Bil'am to return to Balak and say (23:16-24):
 - Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Tsippor!
 - El is not a man, that He should lie.
 - El is not a man, that He should repent.
 - What He says, He will do.
 - He speaks and He will confirm.
 - He has chosen to bless Yisra'el and will not reverse it.
 - He has not seen wickedness in Ya'aqob.
 - He has not seen trouble in Yisra'el.
 - Yahweh His Elohim is with him.
 - The shout of a Sovereign is in him.

- El, who brought them out of Mitsrayim, is for them like horns of a wild ox.
 - There is no sorcery that can be used against them.
 - Yisra'el rises like a lioness, and lifts itself up like a lion.
 - Yisra'el does not lie down until it devours its prey.
 - Yisra'el 'drinks' the blood of the slain.
- Balak tells Bil'am that if he won't curse them, to at least keep himself from blessing them - 23:25
 - Bil'am reminds Balak that he came on the condition that he must only speak what Yahweh gives him - 23:26

Try #3 - 3rd Time is NOT a Charm

- Balak tries *yet again* thinking that if only they go to another location, that Elohim will allow Bil'am to curse them from there - 23:27
- Balak then takes Bil'am to the top of Pe'or, which overlooks the wasteland. For the third time, he builds 7 altars and prepares 7 bulls and 7 rams - 23:28-30
- For the third time, a ram and a bull are offered on each altar - 23:30

Chapter 24

- As Bil'am faces the wilderness, he finally accepts that Yahweh is determined only to bless Yisra'el, and quits seeking to use sorcery - 24:1
- As he lifts his eyes, Bil'am sees Yisra'el encamped according to their tribes - 24:2
- Bil'am's eyes are then opened. He says this proverb (mashal), confessing that he hears the words of El and sees the vision of the Almighty (24:3-9):
 - *"How goodly are your tents, O Ya'aqob, your dwellings, O Yisra'el!" Like wadis that stretch out, like gardens by a river, like aloes planted by Yahweh, like cedars beside waters. He makes water flow from his buckets, and his seed is in many waters. His sovereign is higher than Agag, and his reign is exalted. El who brought him out of Mitsrayim is for them like the horns of a wild ox; he devours nations, his enemies; and he breaks their bones, and with his arrows he smites. He bowed down, he lay down like a lion. And, like a lion, who would rouse him? Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you."*
- Upon hearing this, Balak is extremely angry. He rebukes Bil'am, saying that he was summoned to curse the king's enemies, but instead Bil'am has now blessed them 3 times - 24:10
- Balak tells Bil'am to go back home empty-handed, as Yahweh has prevented him from getting esteem from Balak - 24:11
- Bil'am reminds Balak that he had cautioned the king's messengers that not even a houseful of silver and gold could enable him to go beyond the word of Yahweh, to pronounce either good or evil out of his own heart - 24:13
- Bil'am declares that what Yahweh speaks, he must speak the same - 24:13
- Bil'am then delivers his final proverbs to Balak - 24:14-24
- After this, both Bil'am and Balak return to their places - 24:25

