

Numbers 22 - Balaam

II. Failure of the first generation (Num 11:1—25:18)

(5) Failure at Moab (Num 22:1—25:18)

(A) Balak and God summon Balaam (22:1-41)

(a) Balak seeks to hire Balaam (22:1-6)

(b) Balaam's refusal after receiving counsel from God (22:7-14)

(c) Balaam comes to Balak after being financially induced (22:15-34)

(d) God allowed Balaam to continue with his mission after telling him he would say what God told him to say (22:35-41)

The events that took place on the plains of Moab probably covered the last five months of the 40th year (mid-October to mid-March), and take in the rest of Numbers and the whole of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy hardly mentions the Balaam episode (Deut 4:3; 23:4-5).

Numbers 22

(5) Failure at Moab (Num 22:1—25:18)

(A) Balak and God summon Balaam (22:1-41)

(a) Balak seeks to hire Balaam (22:1-6)

1 Then the sons of Israel journeyed on, and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan *opposite* Jericho.

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1 The Israelis continued their travels, eventually encamping on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River opposite Jericho.

1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.

2 Now **Balak** the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

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2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

- "...Balak" - vain, empty. Not a hereditary king, but imposed on Moab by Sihon. Also apparently was allied with the Midianites in some way.

3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

3 As a result, Moab greatly feared the people, because they were so numerous. Because a sense of impending doom was afflicting the Moabites as they faced the Israelites,

3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

- He had seen the conquests of Israel (Num 20-21) and was afraid his people would be overcome too

- He realized that physical force would never defeat the Jews, so he resorted to spiritual deception by hiring Balaam to curse Israel

- He offered Balaam a good price for doing the job, but the prophet (having consulted the Lord) refused to agree

- Balak's messengers went home and reported failure

4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will eat up all that is around us, as the ox eats up the grass of the field!" And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.

4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.

4 the Moabites told the elders of Midian, "This horde of people is about to lick up everything around us, like an ox licks up the green ground."

At that time, Zippor's son Balak was the king of Moab.

4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

- The fears of Balak were actually in vain, for the Moabites, as kinsmen of Israel (Cf. Gen 19:26-37) like the Ammonites, were exempted from the attacks of Israel

- In fact the Lord had explicitly revealed through Moses that Israel must assiduously avoid any harmful contact with the Edomites (Deut 2:5-6), Moabites (Deut 2:9,19)

- Even the Midianites were distantly related to Israel (Gen 25:1-4), and so presumably they had nothing to fear

5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the *Euphrates* River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call for him, saying, "Behold, a people came

out of Egypt; behold, they have covered the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.

5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, *in* the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.

5 He sent messengers to Beor's son Balaam in Pethor, near the Euphrates River, the land where the descendants of his people originated, to summon his aid. He said, "Look! A group of people have escaped from Egypt. They cover the surface of the whole earth, and are sitting here right in front of me.

5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children 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 abide over against me:

- Balak's employment of Balaam, the seer in Mesopotamia, would imply a circulation of intelligence, great considering the times
- Moabites descended from Lot, originally of Mesopotamia
- The merchant caravans passing across the deserts, led to an advanced civilization of Moab, as evidenced by the Moabite stone some centuries later

Balaam the Prophet

Balaam, son of Beor, was from Pethor, a city on the Euphrates. Pethor was not far from the great city of Mari, discovered in 1933 in the Euphrates Valley. The discovery of a vast number of cuneiform tablets at Mari, beginning in 1933, revealed the existence of a complex cult of prophets and seers whose activities precisely resemble those of Balaam.

6 Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

6 Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

6 So come right now and curse this people for me, because there are too many of them for me to handle. Perhaps I'll be able to strike them down and drive them out of the land, since I know that whomever you bless is is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed."

6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

(b) Balaam's refusal after receiving counsel from God (22:7-14)

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian left with the *fees for* divination in their hands; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him.

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the *fees for* divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him.

7 So the elders of Moab and Midian left to visit Balaam, bringing an honorarium with them, and communicated Balak's concerns to him.

7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

8 And he said to them, "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you just as the LORD may speak to me." And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam.

8 He said to them, "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me." And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam.

8 In answer, Balaam told them, "Stay here for the night and I'll bring back a message to you, depending on what the LORD says to me." So the officers of Moab stayed with Balaam overnight.

8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

- In gracious condescension and in anticipation of His blessing on His own people, the Lord appeared to the diviner and warned him not to heed Balak's instructions to curse God's blessed people

Gentile Appearances

The appearance of the God of Israel to unbelieving prophets and kings was not unique to Balaam:

- To Abimelech king of Gerar in Abraham's time (Gen 20:6-7)
- To Pharaoh in dreams (Gen 41:25)
- To Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and visions (Dan 2; 4:1-18)
- To the Witch at Endor (1 Sam 28:7-20)
- To the Magi and others (Matt 2:15)

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

9 God visited Balaam and asked him, "Who are these men with you?"

9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?

10 Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent *word* to me:

10 Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent *word* to me,

10 Then Balaam told God, "Zippor's son Balak, king of Moab, sent them to me and said,
10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying,

11 'Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt, and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I will be able to fight against them and drive them out.'

11 'Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them out.'

11 'Look! A group of people have escaped from Egypt. They cover the surface of the whole earth! So come right now and curse them for me. Perhaps I'll be able to fight against them and drive them out.'

11 Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

12 God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

12 But God told Balaam, "Don't go with them. Don't curse the people, because they're blessed."

12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.

13 So Balaam got up in the morning and said to Balak's representatives, "Go *back* to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

13 So Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak's leaders, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

13 So Balaam got up the next morning and told Balak's officials, "Go back to your homeland, because the LORD has refused me permission to go with you."

13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

14 And the representatives from Moab got up and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

14 The leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

14 So Balak's officials got up, returned to Balak and reported, "Balaam refused to come with us."

14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

(c) Balaam comes to Balak after being financially induced (22:15-34)

15 Then Balak sent representatives once again, more numerous and more distinguished than the previous.

15 Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and more distinguished than the former.

15 In response, Balak sent more officers—higher ranking ones, at that!—

15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

16 They came to Balaam and said to him, "This is what Balak the son of Zippor says: 'I beg you, let nothing keep you from coming to me;

16 They came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, 'Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me;

16 who approached Balaam with this message: "This is what Zippor's son Balak says: 'Don't let anything get in the way of your coming to me.

16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

17 for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you tell me. Please come then, curse this people for me."

17 for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse this people for me!"

17 I'm determined to reward you generously, and I'll do everything you tell me to do. So come right away and curse this people for me!"

17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

18 But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, "Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do *anything*, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.

18 Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.

18 Balaam responded to Balak's entourage by saying, "Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I won't double-cross the command of the LORD my God in even the slightest way.

18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

19 Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will say to me."

19 Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will speak to me."

19 Meanwhile, stay here overnight so I may learn what the LORD might say to me."

19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise *and* go with them; but you shall do only the thing that I tell you."

20 God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise up *and* go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do."

20 God came to visit Balaam that same night and told him, "If the men come to call on you, get up and go with them, but be sure to do only what I tell you to do."

20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

21 So Balaam arose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the leaders of Moab.

21 So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab.

21 The next morning, Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and started to leave, accompanied by the Moabite officials.

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

22 But God was angry that he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the road as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

22 But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him.

22 At this, the anger of the LORD flared up against Balaam, because he was leaving. So the angel of the LORD stood in the way to oppose him. As Balaam was riding his donkey, accompanied by two of his servants,

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

23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand, the donkey turned off from the road and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey to guide her back onto the road.

23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way.

23 all of a sudden the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with an unsheathed sword in his hand! The donkey turned off the road and went into an open field. Balaam started beating the donkey in order to turn her back to the road,

23 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 smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

- God's resistance was not against his going but against his unspoken motive or intention (he "loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Peter 2:15) which was obviously contrary to God's will (Cf. Num 22:32b,34-35)

24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, *with* a stone wall on this side and on that side.

24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, *with* a wall on this side and a wall on that side.

24 but the angel of the LORD stood on a narrow path that crossed the vineyards. It had walls on both sides of the path.

24 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.

25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again.

25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again.

25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she squeezed herself so close to the wall that Balaam's foot was pressed to the wall. So he beat her again!

25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

26 Then the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right or to the left.

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

26 Then the angel of the LORD went along a little further and stood in a much narrower space, where it was impossible to turn either right or left.

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

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his staff.

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick.

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she crouched down under Balaam. As a result, Balaam got so angry that he started to whip the donkey with his staff.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

28 That's when the LORD enabled the donkey to speak. She asked Balaam, "What did I do to you that you would beat me in the space of only three footsteps?"

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said to the donkey, "*It is* because you have made a mockery of me! If only there had been a sword in my hand! For I would have killed you by now!"

29 Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now."

29 "Because you're playing a dirty trick on me," Balaam answered the donkey. "If only I had a sword in my hand! I'd kill you right now!"

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

- Balaam seems little surprised at this turn of events. Undoubtedly as a pagan diviner he may have heard such things before.
- Much of the success of such practitioners of the occult lay in the demonic inspiration of the prophets themselves or of the victims with whom they dealt
- The serpent, for example, could speak because it was the incarnation of Satan (Gen 3:1)
- Jesus cast demons out of a human being and allowed them to inhabit a herd of swine (Luke 8:26-39)

30 But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing such a thing to you?" And he said, "No."

30 The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

30 But in response, the donkey asked Balaam, "I'm your donkey that you've ridden on in the past without incident, am I not, and I'm the same donkey you're riding on right now, am I not? Am I in the habit of treating you like this?"

"No," he admitted.

30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

31 Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

31 Then the LORD enabled Balaam to see, so he observed the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with an unsheathed sword in his hand. So he bowed down and prostrated himself on his face.

31 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 flat on his face.

32 Then the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was reckless *and* contrary to me.

32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me.

32 Then the angel of the LORD asked him, "Why did you beat your donkey in the space of only three footsteps? I've come to oppose you, because I say that what you're doing is

perverted.

32 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me:

33 But the donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I certainly would have killed you just now, and let her live."

33 But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live."

33 The donkey saw me and turned in front of me in the space of those three footsteps.

33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

34 So Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back."

34 Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back."

34 If she hadn't turned away from me, I would have killed you by now and left her alive!"

At this, Balaam replied to the angel of the LORD, "I've sinned! I didn't know that you were standing to meet me on the road. So now, since it displeases you, let me go back."

34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

(d) God allowed Balaam to continue with his mission after telling him he would say what God told him to say (22:35-41)

35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went along with the representatives of Balak.

35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you." So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

35 But the angel of the LORD told Balaam, "Go with the men, but deliver only the message that I'm going to give you." So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam had arrived, he went out to meet him in the city of Moab on the border of Arnon at the extreme end of his territory.

36 And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast.

37 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not urgently send *word* to you to call for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?"

37 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not urgently send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?"

37 Balak asked Balaam, "Didn't I repeatedly send for you to summon you? Why didn't you come to me? I can pay you well, can't I?"

37 And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

38 So Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you now! Am I really able to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that *only* shall I speak."

38 So Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak."

38 Balaam answered Balak, "Well, I'm here now. I've come to you, but I can't just say anything, can I? I'll speak only what God puts in my mouth to say."

38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth.

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth.

39 So accompanied by Balaam and Balak's officials, Balak traveled to Kiriath-huzoth,

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath Huzoth.

40 Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and the leaders who were with him.

40 Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and the leaders who were with him.

40 where he sacrificed oxen and sheep.

40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him.

- The two then went to Kiriath Huzoth (location unknown) where the divination rituals commenced

- These frequently involved sacrifices as well as examining the animals' internal organs, a practice known as hepatoscopy or augury

Balaam's Prophecies

(1) First Oracle (Num 23:1-12) - Balaam explained that God's blessings upon Israel were irrevocable.

(2) Second Oracle (Num 23:13-26) - Balaam explained that the source of Israel's blessings was her unique relationship to Yahweh.

(3) Third Oracle (Num 23:27--24:14) - Balaam extolled Israel's beauty

(4) Fourth Oracle (Num 24:15-19) - Balaam explained that a future messianic deliverer (Gen 49:10) would spring forth and exercise dominion from Israel.

(5) Fifth Oracle (Num 24:20) - Balaam predicts Amalek's destruction. Amalek was the first enemy that Israel had to fight against after leaving Egypt (Cf. Ex 17).

(6) Sixth Oracle (Num 24:21-22) - Balaam predicts the destruction of the Midianite group known as the Klenites, as well as Assyria.

(7) Seventh Oracle (Num 24:23-24) - the nations of the 7th oracle are difficult to identify.

41 Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, and he saw from there a portion of the people.

41 Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, and he saw from there a portion of the people.

41 The next day, Balak brought Balaam up to Bamoth-baal, where he could see part of the community of Israel.

41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

- The following morning they ascended Bamoth Baal ("the heights of Baal") probably a mountaintop overlooking the plains of Moab

- Its association with Baal suggests that it was a high place where Canaanite cultic functions were carried out

- Balaam asked Balak to build seven altars there where seven bulls and seven rams could be sacrificed, a bull and a ram for each altar (Cf. 23:14,29-30)

— There is no biblical instruction or precedent for what Balaam did, so presumably the sacrifices were part of a pagan ritual