

- 2 Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
- 3 Moab was alarmed because that people was so numerous. Moab dreaded the Israelites,
- 4 and Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick clean all that is about us as an ox licks up the grass of the field." Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,
- 5 sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor in Pethor, which is by the Euphrates,*Euphrates Lit. "the River." in the land of his kinsfolk, to invite him, saying, "There is a people that came out of Egypt; it hides the earth from view, and it is settled next to me.
- 6 Come then, put a curse upon this people for me, since they are too numerous for me; perhaps I can thus defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed indeed, and whomever you curse is cursed."
- 7 The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, versed in divination,*versed in divination Lit. "with divination in their power (hand)." set out. They came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message.
- 8 He said to them, "Spend the night here, and I shall reply to you as יהוה may instruct me." So the Moabite dignitaries stayed with Balaam.
- 9 God came to Balaam and said, "What do these men*men Lit. "participants whose involvement defines the depicted situation." NJPS "people." See the Dictionary under 'ish. want of you?"
- 10 Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message:
- 11 Here is a people that came out from Egypt and hides the earth from view. Come now and curse them for me; perhaps I can engage them in battle and drive them off."
- 12 But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not curse that people, for they are blessed."
- וַיֵּרָא בַלַּק בֶּן־זִפּוֹר אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לָאֱמֹרִי:
מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מְאֹד כִּי רַב־הָיוּ וַיִּקֶּץ מוֹאֵב מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאֵב לְזִקְנָיו מִדְיָן עַתָּה יִלְחָקוּ הַקְּהֵל אֶת־כָּל־סָבִיבֵינוּ כְּלַחֵךְ וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאֵב
עָם יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם הִנֵּה כִסָּה אֶת־עֵינֵי הָאָרֶץ וְהוּא יִשֹּׁב מִמֶּלִּי:
פְּתוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַנָּהָר אֲרָץ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹ לְקִרְאֵלָיו לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה מְלָאכִים אֵל־בִּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעֹר*בְּסַפְרֵי סִפְרוֹ וַאֲשַׁכְנוּ בְּעוֹר וַיִּשְׁלַח
מִן־הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִלְעֹתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־תִּבְרָךְ מִבְּרָךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תָּאָר יִוָּאָר:
אֶת־יְהִיעֶשׁ הַזֶּה כִּי־עֲצוּם הוּא מִמֶּנִּי אוֹלִי אוֹכֵל נִכְהִיבוּ וְאֶגְרֹשְׁנוּ וְעַתָּה לִכְהֹנָא אֶרְהִי־לִי
מִדְּלִין וַיִּקְסְמוּם בִּיָּדָם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו דְּבָרֵי בַלַּק:
וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּקֶץ מוֹאֵב וַיִּקְרָא
דָּבָר כְּאֲשֶׁר יְדָבָר יְהוָה אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ שְׁרֵי־מוֹאֵב עִם־בִּלְעָם:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם לֵינוּ כֹּה הִלְלִיהָ וְהִשְׁבַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם
וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה עִמָּךְ:
וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים בַּלַּק בֶּן־זִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ מוֹאֵב שָׁלַח אֵלַי:
הָאָרֶץ עַתָּה לָכָה קְבַה־לִּי אֲתוּ אוֹלִי אוֹכֵל לַהֲלָתָם בּוֹ וְגִרְשָׁתִּי:
הִנֵּה הָעָם הֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיָּקֶם אֶת־עֵינֵי
אֶל־בִּלְעָם לֹא תֵלֶךְ עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֹאדֹר אֶת־יְהִיעֶשׁ כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים

26 Once more the messenger of הוהי moved forward and stationed himself on a spot so narrow that there was no room to swerve right or left.
עבור וַיַּעֲמֹד בַּמָּקוֹם צָר אֲשֶׁר אִירְדֶּךָ, לִנְטוֹת יָמִין וּשְׂמָאוֹל: וַיִּזְסַף מִלֵּאֲרִי־יְהוָה

27 When the ass now saw the messenger of הוהי, she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam was furious and beat the ass with his stick.
יהוה וּתְרַבֵּץ תַּחַת בִּלְעָם וַיַּחֲרֹאֵף בִּלְעָם וַיֵּךְ אֶת־הָאֲתוֹן בַּמֶּקֶל: וַתֵּרָא הָאֲתוֹן אֶת־מִלְּאָךְ

28 Then הוהי opened the ass's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?"
וַתֹּאמֶר לְבִלְעָם מִהֲעִשִׂיתִי לָךְ כִּי הִכִּיתַנִּי זֶה שֶׁלֹּשׁ רַגְלָיִם: וַיִּפְתָּח יְהוָה אֶת־פִּי הָאֲתוֹן

29 Balaam said to the ass, "You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you."
לֵאמֹר כִּי הִתְעַלְלַת בִּי לֹא יִשְׁחַרֵּב בִּידִי כִּי עָתָה הִרְגַּנִּיךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם

30 The ass said to Balaam, "Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?" And he answered, "No."
עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הִסְכַּסְנוּ הַסִּלְכָנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ, כִּהָּ יֹאמַר לֹא: הָאֲתוֹן אֵל־בִּלְעָם הָלָא אֲנִכִּי אֶתְנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר־רִכַּבְתָּ עָלַי מִעוֹדךָ וְהָאֲמַר

31 Then הוהי uncovered Balaam's eyes, and he saw the messenger of הוהי standing in the way, his drawn sword in his hand; thereupon he bowed right down to the ground.*right down to the ground Lit. "and prostrated himself to his nostrils."
יְהוָה נָצַב בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּחַרְבוּ שְׁלֹפָה בִּידוֹ וַיִּקַּד וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאַפְיוֹ: וַיִּגַּל יְהוָה אֶת־עֵינָיו בִּלְעָם וַיֵּרָא אֶת־מִלְּאָךְ

32 The messenger of הוהי said to him, "Why have you beaten your ass these three times? It is I who came out as an adversary, for the errand is obnoxious*obnoxious Precise meaning of Heb. yarar uncertain. to me.
זֶה שְׁלוֹשׁ רַגְלָיִם הֵנָּה אֲנִכִּי יִצְאִיתִי לִשְׁטוֹן כִּי־יָרַט הַדָּבָר, לִנְגוֹדִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִלְּאָךְ יְהוָה עַל־מָה הִכִּיתָ אֶת־אֶתְנֶכָךְ

33 And when the ass saw me, she shied away because of me those three times. If she had not shied away from me, you are the one I should have killed, while sparing her."
אוּלַּי נִטְתָּה מִפְּנֵי כִּי עָתָה גִּסַּתְכָּה הִרְגַּנִּי וְאוֹתָהּ הִתִּייתִי: וַתֵּרָאֵנִי הָאֲתוֹן וַתֵּט לִפְנָי זֶה שֶׁלֹּשׁ רַגְלָיִם

34 Balaam said to the messenger of הוהי, "I erred because I did not know that you were standing in my way. If you still disapprove, I will turn back."
כִּי אָתָּה נָצַב לְקִרְאָתִי בְּדֶרֶךְ וְעָתָה אֲסִירָע בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲשׁוּבָה לִי: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל־מִלְּאָךְ יְהוָה חֲטָאתִי כִּי לֹא יָלַעְתִּי

35 But the messenger of הוהי said to Balaam, "Go with the men.*men (So NJPS.) See note to v. 9. But you must say nothing except what I tell you." So Balaam went on with Balak's dignitaries.
אֲשֶׁר־אָדְבָר אֵלָיו אֹתוֹ תִּדְבָּר וַיֵּלֶךְ בִּלְעָם עִם־יֹשְׁרֵי בִלְקִי: וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְּאָךְ יְהוָה אֵל־בִּלְעָם לֵךְ עִם־הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאַפְסִי אֶת־הַדָּבָר

36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, which is on the Arnon border, at its farthest point.
לִקְרָאתוֹ אֶל־עִיר מוֹאָב אֲשֶׁר עַל־גְּבוּל אֲרָזֵן אֲשֶׁר בִּקְצֵה הַנָּבוֹל: וַיִּשְׁמַע בִּלְקִי כִּי בָא בִלְעָם וַיֵּצֵא

37 Balak said to Balaam, "When I first sent to invite you, why didn't you come to me? Am I really unable to reward you?"
אֵלָיו לִקְרָאתֶךָ לָמָּה לֹא־הִלַּכְתָּ אֵלַי תֹּאמַנְסִי לֹא אוּכַל כְּבֹדְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְקִי אֶל־בִּלְעָם הֲלֹא שִׁלַּח שְׁלֹחָתִי

17 What I see for them is not yet,What I behold will not be soon:A star rises from Jacob,A scepter comes forth from Israel;It smashes the brow of Moab,The foundation of*The foundation of Samaritan "the pate of," cf. Jer. 48.45; others "breaks down." all children of Seth.
וְקִם שֹׁבֵט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֵץ פָּאֲתָי מוֹאָב וְקוֹרֵךְ כַּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת: אֲרָאֵנּוּ וְלֹא עָתָה אֲשׁוּכְנּוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב הָלֶךְ, כּוֹכֵב מִיַּעֲקֹב

18 Edom becomes a possession,Yea, Seir a possession of its enemies;But Israel is triumphant.
וְהָיָה אֱדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה וְהָיָה יְרֵשָׁה שְׂעִיר אֵיבָיו וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲשֵׂה חֵיל:

19 A victor issues from JacobTo wipe out what is left of Ir.
וַיֵּרָה מִיַּעֲקֹב וְהָאֲבִיד שְׂרִיד מְעִיר:

20 He saw Amalek and, taking up his theme, he said:A leading nation is Amalek;But its fate is to perish forever.
וַיֵּשָׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עָמְלָק וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ עֲדִי אֲבִד: וַיֵּרָא אֶת־עַמְלָק

21 He saw the Kenites and, taking up his theme, he said:Though your abode be secure,And your nest be set among cliffs,
וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הַקֵּנִיטִים וַיֵּשָׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיתָן מוֹשְׁבֶךָ וְשֵׁים בְּסֻלַּע קִנָּה:

22 Yet shall Kain*Kain I.e., the Kenites mentioned in v. 21. be consumed,When Asshur takes you captive.
כִּי אִם־יְהִיָּה לְבָעַר קִין עַד־מָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשְׁלָכֶךָ:

23 He took up his theme and said:Alas, who can survive except God has willed it!
וַיֵּשָׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אוֹי מִי יִחְיֶה מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל:

24 Ships come from the quarter of Kittim;They subject Asshur, subject Eber.They, too, shall perish forever.
וַצִּיִּם מִיָּד כִּתִּיִּים וַעֲנֹ אֲשׁוּר וְעַנְיָעָבָר וְגַם־הוּא עֲדִי אֲבִד:

25 Then Balaam set out on his journey back home; and Balak also went his way.
וַיָּקָם בִּלְעָם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב לְמִקְוָמוֹ וְגַם־בִּלְקִי חָלַךְ לְדֶרֶכּוֹ:

25

1 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the menfolk*menfolk NJPS "people"; cf. Exod. 14.6, Num. 21.33. See the Dictionary under 'am. profaned themselves by whoring*profaned themselves by whoring Others "began to commit harlotry." with the Moabite women,
וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּשְׁטִיִּים וַיַּחֲלֵל הָעָם לִזְנוֹת אֶל־בָּנוֹת מוֹאָב:

2 who invited the menfolk to the sacrifices for their god. The menfolk partook of them and worshiped that god.
וַתִּקְרְאוּ לָעָם לִזְבֹּחַי אֱלֹהֵיתָן וַיֹּאכֵל הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהֵיתָן:

3 Thus Israel attached itself to Baal-peor, and הוהי was incensed with Israel.
וַיִּצְמַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר וַיַּחֲרֹאֵף יְהוָה בַּיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

4 הוהי said to Moses, "Take all the ringleaders*ringleaders Lit. "heads of the people." and have them publicly*publicly Others "in face of the sun." impaled before הוהי's wrath may turn away from Israel."
וַהּוֹקַע אוֹתָם לִיהוָה נֶגֶד הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּשָּׁב חֲרוֹן אַף־יְהוָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה קַח אֶת־כָּל־רָאשֵׁי הָעָם

23	ולא־יקסם בישראל כֵּלֶת יֹאמֶר לִיעֲקֹב וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִה־פֶּעַל אֵל: כִּי לֹא־נָחַשׁ בְּנִעְלָב	Lo, there is no augury in Jacob, No divining in Israel:*No divining in Israel Cf. Deut. 18.10–15. Jacob is told at once, Yea Israel, what God has planned.*Jacob is told ... what God has planned Or, “Else would it be told to Jacob, / Yea to Israel, what God has planned.”
24	וּבְאֶרֶץ יִתְנַשֵּׂא לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֵאָכֵל טָרֶף וְהִסְחַלְלִים שְׂתוּהָ: הָרָעָם כִּלְבִּי־אִיִּם	Lo, a people that rises like a lioness,*lioness So traditionally; NJPS “lion.” Precise meaning of Heb. lavi’ uncertain; see next note. Leaps up like a lion,*lion So traditionally; NJPS “king of beasts.” Heb. ‘ari. Cf. previous note; this verse’s two terms distinguish either sexes or breeds. Rests not till it has feasted on prey And drunk the blood of the slain.
25	וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְקָן אֶל־בִּלְעָם גִּם־קֵב לֹא תִקְבְּנוּ גִם־בִּרְךְ, לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּ:	Thereupon Balak said to Balaam, “Don’t curse them and don’t bless them!”
26	הֲלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי אֵלַיִךְ לֵאמֹר כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אִתּוֹ אֲעֲשֶׂה: וַיַּעַן בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בִּלְקָן	In reply, Balaam said to Balak, “But I told you: Whatever הוּוֹי says, that I must do.”
27	אֶל־מָקוֹם אֲחֵר אוֹלִי יִישָׁר בְּעֵינֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְקָבְטוּ לִי מִשָּׁם: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְקָן אֶל־בִּלְעָם לִכְהִינָה אֶקְחָךְ.	Then Balak said to Balaam, “Come now, I will take you to another place. Perhaps God will deem it right that you damn them for me there.”
28	וַיִּקַּח בִּלְקָן אֶת־בִּלְעָם רֹאשׁ הַפְּעוּר הַנִּשְׁקָף עַל־פְּנֵי הָהָרִים:	Balak took Balaam to the peak of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.*wasteland Cf. note at 21.20.
29	בֵּהָה שִׁבְעָה מִזְבְּחֹת וְהָכִן לִי בָהֶן שִׁבְעָה פָרִים וְשִׁבְעָה אֵילִם: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל־בִּלְקָן בְּנִהְדִּילִי	Balaam said to Balak, “Build me here seven altars, and have seven bulls and seven rams ready for me here.”
30	וַיַּעַשׂ בִּלְקָן כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר בִּלְעָם וַיַּעַל פֶּרֶךְ וְאֵיל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ:	Balak did as Balaam said: he offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

24

- Now Balaam, seeing that it pleased הוּוֹי to bless Israel, did not, as on previous occasions, go in search of omens, but turned his face toward the wilderness.
- As Balaam looked up and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the spirit of God came upon him.
- Taking up his theme, he said: *Some of the poetic portions of this chapter are unclear. Word of Balaam son of Beor, Word of the man *man Heb. gever; more precisely, a man who makes his presence felt. whose eye is true, *whose eye is true Others “whose eye is (or, eyes are) open”; meaning of Heb. uncertain.

10	Who can count the dust*dust Cf. Gen. 13.16. of Jacob, Number*Number Lit. “and the number of.” the dust-cloud of Israel? May I die the death of the upright,*upright Heb. yesharim, a play on yeshurun (“Jeshurun” in Deut. 32.15), a name for Israel. May my fate be like theirs!	אֶת־רִבְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּמָּת נַפְשִׁי מוֹת יִשְׁוּלִים וְתָהִי אַחֲרֵיתִי כִמְהוּ: מִי מִנֵּה עֶפֶר יַעְלֹב וּמִסַּפֵּר
11	Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? Here I brought you to damn my enemies, and instead you have blessed them!”	אֶל־בִּלְעָם מָה עָשִׂיתָ לִּי לִקְבֹּא אֵיבִי לְקַחְתִּילַי. וְהִנֵּה בִרְכַת בִּרְךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְקָן
12	He replied, “I can only repeat faithfully what הוּוֹי puts in my mouth.”	וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁים יְהוָה בְּפִי אִתּוֹ אֲשַׁמֵּר לְדַבֵּר:
13	Then Balak said to him, “Come with me to another place from which you can see them—you will see only a portion of them; you will not see all of them—and damn them for me from there.”	תֵּרְאֲנוּ מִשָּׁם אֶפְסֵי קִצְהוֹ תֵּרְאֶה וְכָלוּ לֹא תֵרְאֶה וּקְבִנְוִלִי מִשָּׁם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בִּלְקָן (לְכִהִינָה אִתִּי אֶל־מָקוֹם אֲחֵר אֲשֶׁר
14	With that, he took him to Sedehzophim,*Sedehzophim Or “Lookout Point.” on the summit of Pisgah. He built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.	אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַפִּסְגָּה וַיִּבֶן שִׁבְעָה מִזְבְּחֹת וַיַּעַל פֶּרֶךְ וְאֵיל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: וַיִּקְרְאוּהוּ שְׁמֵהּ צִפִּים
15	And [Balaam] said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offerings, while I seek a manifestation yonder.”	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בִּלְקָן הֲתִינִיב כֹּה עַל־עֲלִיתֶךָ וְאֲנִכִּי אֶקְרָה כֹּה:
16	הוּוֹי became manifest to Balaam and put a word in his mouth, saying, “Return to Balak and speak thus.”	אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיִּשָּׁם דְּבַר בְּפִיו וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֶל־בִּלְקָן וְכַה תְּדַבֵּר: וַיִּקֶּר יְהוָה
17	He went to him and found him standing beside his offerings, and the Moabite dignitaries with him. Balak asked him, “What did הוּוֹי say?”	נָצַב עַל־עֲלֹתוֹ וְשָׂרֵי מוֹאָב אִתּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בִּלְקָן מִה־דִּבַּר יְהוָה: וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו וְהָגִי
18	And he took up his theme, and said: Up, Balak, attend, Give ear unto me, son of Zippor!	וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר קוּם בִּלְקָן וּשְׁמַע הָאֲזִינָה עֲדִי בְנוֹ צִפֵּר:
19	God is not human to be capricious, Or mortal to have a change of heart. Would [God] speak and not act, Promise and not fulfill?	וּבְרִיאָדָם וַיִּתְּנָתָם הוּוֹי אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה וְדַבֵּר וְלֹא יְקִימָנָה: לֹא אִישׁ אֵל יִכְלֹב
20	My message was to bless: When [God] blesses, I cannot reverse it.	הִנֵּה בִרְךְ לְקַחְתִּי וּבִרְךְ, וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבָנָה:
21	No harm is in sight for Jacob, No woe in view for Israel. Their God הוּוֹי is with them, And their King’s*King’s A poetic figure; in the ancient Near East, this role ideally represented protection and caring help. acclaim in their midst.	וְלֹא־רָאָה עֵמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו עֲמָו וְתִרְעוּת מִלֶּךְ בּוֹ: לֹא־הִבִּישׁ אֲנִי בְּיַעְלָב
22	God who freed them from Egypt Is for them like the horns*horns Lit. “eminences,” used figuratively. of the wild ox.	אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרָיִם כְּתוֹעֶפֶת רֹאֵם לוֹ: