

Lessons from the Life of Elijah



THE WORD OF
GOD IN THE LIFE
OF BELIEVERS



Gustave Doré

A BRIEF
INTRODUCTION
TO TYPOLOGY



BALAAM AND BALAK
NUMBERS 22:1-25:3










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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TYPOLOGY

BALAAM AND BALAK, THE STORY . . . NUMBERS 22:1-25:3

-  Around year 2500 (OT covers around 4000 years), and the Jewish people had spent the last 40 years in the desert. They were finally prepared to enter the Promised Land, and they camped at the border of Moab.
-  The Moabites were terrified of the Jews, especially after they defeated the Emori, the Moabites' guardians. Although natural enemies, Moab and Midian banded together and appointed a Midianite, Balak as king.
-  Balak knew the Jew's power was supernatural, so he sought the supernatural. With Midian elders, he hired Balaam to curse the Jews. Balak knew Balaam from his hometown of Pesor and could vouch for his powers firsthand.
-  Three times Balaam pressured God to allow him to go with Balak and his officials. And three times God blocked him, though in frustration God allowed him to go under strict requirement of only repeating what God said.
-  There is a threefold cycle of sacrifices (Numbers 23:1,14, 29-30), encounters with God (Numbers 22:12, 20, 22-35), and oracles (Numbers 23:7-10, 18-24, 24:3-9) that show Balaam incapable of performing the curses requested.
-  Balaam could not speak a curse against Israel because of God's promise to bless Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; Numbers 23:10, 24:9).
-  After he refused to curse Israel, Balaam blessed Israel and foretold Moab's doom at their hands (Numbers 24:14-15). Nevertheless, Balaam is killed by the Israelites in their destruction of the Midianites (Numbers 31:8; Joshua 13:22).



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BALAAM AND BALAK, THE CLIMAX . . . NUMBERS 22:28-33

Verse 28	The donkey asks . . .
Verse 29	Balaam answers . . .
Verse 30	The donkey asks . . .
Verse 30	Balaam answers . . .
Verse 32-33	The Angel of the Lord speaks . . .

WHY DOES THE STORY CLIMAX WITH A TALKING DONKEY?



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WHY? BECAUSE WHAT THE DONKEY IS TO BALAAM 22:21-34, BALAAM IS TO KING BALAK

7 SIMILARITIES UNITING THESE TWO EPISODES 22:1-25:3

1. Donkey sees the Angel of the Lord but Balaam cannot | Balaam sees the heavenly vision but Balak cannot 23:9, 24:3, 24:16
2. Donkey sees the Angel on three successive occasions and finally blurts out “You beat me these three times 22:28 | after Balaam saw God’s blessing on Israel three times, Balak exclaims “you have blessed them these three times” 24:10
3. Donkey becomes progressively more stubborn (Balaam is carried into the field, then squeezed against a wall, then the donkey simply lies down under him | Balaam’s blessing on Israel becomes progressively greater (Israel is spread out like the dust in number, then they crouch like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey, finally in the climax Israel’s king rises like a star 23:10, 23:24, 24:9
4. Balaam becomes increasingly furious with the donkey when she does not respond to his proddings 22:29 (Note God’s same response to Balaam 22:33) | Balak becomes increasingly furious with Balaam 23:11, 23:25, 24:10-11 (Note that Balaam is unable to kill the donkey and Balak is unable to kill Balaam)
5. The donkey speaks only when the Lord opens her mouth | Balaam can only speak what the Lord puts into his mouth 23:3, 12, 16, 26, 24:2, 12-13 (only when the Spirit of God comes upon him)
6. The donkey has heretofore served Balaam well 22:30 | Balaam must have previously served Balak well for the king to summon him 22:5-7 (apparently Balaam enjoyed considerable reputation as a prophet, note fee for services)
7. Balaam does not notice the miracle that his donkey is talking | Just as amazingly, Balak remains unmoved by the miracle of divine prophecy



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REPETITIVE TECHNIQUES | BALAAM AND HIS DONKEY

1. Key words – “see”, “words in mouth”, “blessing”, “curses”
2. Motifs – “morning”, servants with Balaam, princes with Balak
3. Theme – revelation and inspiration
4. Sequence of actions – 3 failures of Balaam to direct his donkey, 3 failures of Balaam to take direction from God, 3 failures of Balak to obtain curses from Balaam

So we see that Balaam’s journey to Moab on the back of his donkey becomes an integral part of the whole story.

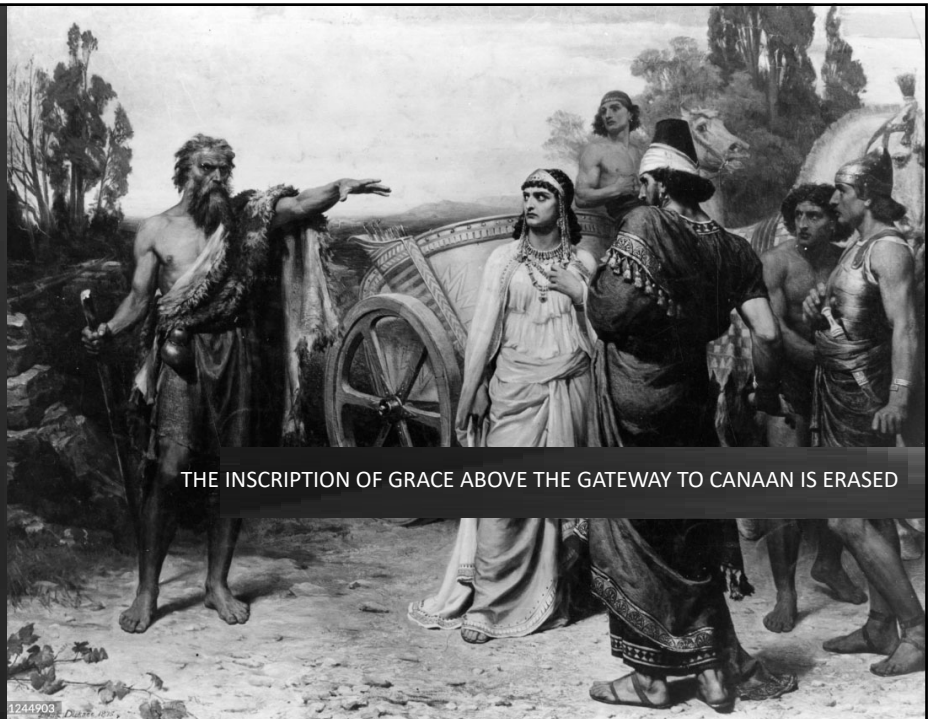
Note importance of the Word of God in the story 24:3-4

Note that Israel is described in terms reminiscent of Eden 24:6

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THE INSCRIPTION OF GRACE ABOVE THE GATEWAY TO CANAAN IS ERASED



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THE INSCRIPTION OF GRACE
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1 KINGS 16:29-34



Here the Spirit of the Lord attaches the story of the rebuilding of Jericho to the list of dark sins committed by Ahab, Israel's king.



Apparently this list was intended as a background to a particular deed that reveals the extent of the contempt for the Word of the Lord in those days. And depth of the misery into which the people had sunk.



Daring Ahab went farther than any king before him. Following in the footsteps of Jeroboam was the least of his offenses. In this passage we see a clear growth in sin.

First, Ahab marries Jezebel who had sworn to serve Baal.

Second, he became so completely misled that he joined her in paying homage to Baal of the Sidonians. Israel's theocratic king actually prostrates himself in the house of Baal.

Third, he introduces Baal worship in Israel. Israel's land and life were dedicated to Baal at the altar build for him in Samaria.

Fourth, the sin descends further with the setting up of the Asherah ("grove" in KJV). Astarte, the moon goddess, is given her place next to Baal, the sun god; the female power next to the male.

Finally, the text records the rebuilding of Jericho, which must be seen as the culmination of this sinful process. It is inevitable that the growing bond with Baal should be coupled with the sinful emancipation from the Word of God and from Yahweh, Israel's God.



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THE INSCRIPTION OF GRACE
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THE RIFT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND YAHWEH IS MOST CLEARLY SEEN WHEN AHAB GIVES THE ORDER TO REBUILD JERICO.



The text notes Hiel of Bethel rebuild Jericho but the hand and spirit of Ahab are clearly visible. Without Ahab's command or consent, no fortress could be built.



Further, the rebuilding of Jericho fit perfectly into Ahab's policies towards strengthening his kingdom. Aham wanted to finish the work his father Omri had begun. Omri with his military background realized the royal residence in Tirzah would have to be replaced inside an invincible fortress. So Omri bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer and built the city of Samaria. Samaria was both beautiful and defensible.



With a fortress city inherited from his father, Ahab now needed strong borders.

Jericho was a border city with the 10 tribes of Israel.

Jericho was strategic because of geography as three routes crossed in the city (East-west route through Canaan, great north-south highway (Numbers 20:17 calls it the "King's Highway")

To Ahab, a Jericho un-rebuilt represented a permanent threat.

Jericho was not in ruins for it had been inhabited since the time of the judges (Judges 3:13) and David's rule (2 Samuel 10:15). But it was an open city.

Hiel's task was not to make the city habitable but to rebuild the walls of the fortress. Note Hiel laid its foundations and set up its gates.



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THE RIFT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND YAHWEH IS MOST CLEARLY SEEN WHEN AHAB GIVES THE ORDER TO REBUILD JERICO.



Hiel of Bethel was commissioned to draw up the plans to rebuild the foundations of Jerico. But he was struck with a divine curse, a judgement of Yahweh in fulfillment of his Word through Joshua (Joshua 6:26).

To avoid any confusion the Scripture references the curse. The rebuilding of Jericho had a different meaning than the rebuilding of any other city. Only the Word of the Lord gave Jericho this meaning.

Not only for Ahab and Hiel, the Lord wanted his people for all time to pay careful attention to the rebuilding of Jericho.

The “cost” noted twice referencing Hiel’s oldest and youngest sons likely stands as bookends to the judgment. The curse began with the oldest but progressed as the building was completed reaching the youngest at completion. Hence, likely Hiel lost all of his sons in his defiance of the Word of God.

Similar to Achan’s sin which the Lord considered a “violation of the covenant” (Joshua 7:11). What covenant? The covenant of marriage, the covenant of the law – I will be your God and you shall be my people.



Why did all the kings before Ahab let this fortified city lie in ruins, untouched for more than 500 years? What message did Jericho’s fallen walls proclaim?



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JERICO’S WALLS CONTAINED A RICH MESSAGE.



Hiel of Bethel was commissioned to draw up the plans to rebuild the foundations of Jerico. But he was struck with a divine curse, a judgement of Yahweh in fulfillment of his Word through Joshua (Joshua 6:26).

They spoke of judgment and punishment. The Canaanites were being punished for their sins were too numerous and grievous to be tolerated any longer. Consider that Israel’s sin in rejecting the Lord the first time (after the 12 spies) worked a measure of grace for the Canaanites. Israel was punished by wandering 40 years. But the Canaanites received 40 years of grace and now the measure of their sins was filled up. And these ruins were a warning that future sins would receive the same punishment from a Holy God.

They spoke of grace. No Israelite could pass those walls without reading the inscription of God that this city was received as a gift of grace from Yahweh. Here we have the gospel for the gift was received by faith as Israel obeyed the precise Word of the Lord in taking the city. The Lord accomplished this salvation. And it was faith that lay hold of it.

Cursing and blessing, judgment and salvation echoed through these ruins. This was the gospel message proclaimed by Jericho even when God’s people were otherwise silent.








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WE SEE WHY THE LORD PREFERRED THESE WALLS TO THE WALLS OF A REBUILT FORTRESS. WHY DID AHAB DO IT?.

-  Because of the hardening effect of unbelief. Ahab had become deaf to the message of Jericho – he did not want to hear it, so he could not hear it.
-  Ahab put all his trust in weapons, armies and fortifications. A righteous king would have viewed Jericho's ruins as a source of comfort. But Ahab saw them as an unnecessary threat.
-  Ahab did not want to live dependent on grace through faith. He wanted nothing to do with the Word of the Lord. He no longer trembled.
-  Ahab decided to erase the inscription. Ahab would substitute his own message of the glory of man – only through the power of Ahab will Canaan be protected.
-  Hiel's and Ahab's fate will be governed by the Word they despised. They will be living testimonies to the truth of Psalm 2.