



**#40 Balak Numbers 22:2-25:9
Torah Teaching
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Names

Bilam – Bilam
 Kefa – Peter
 Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ
 in the Greek means to be smudged
 Moshe – Moses
 Shaul – Paul
 Yeshua – Jesus' real name
 Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)
 Yochanan – John

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
 Menorah – 7 candle Israelite lamp
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
 Mishkan – tent of meeting in the desert
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
 Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the
 Torah
 (There are also transliterations from Hebrew)

The Torah portion for this week is Balak. Balak means, "devastator," "empty," or "wasting" (reference Wiki). In the portion, Balak, Moav and Midyan were afraid of Israel so Balak, the king of Moav hired Bilam (Balaam) to curse Israel.

It is the way of the unbelieving world to disregard the God of the Bible instead of listening to what God and the Bible has to say. They do not believe that there is truth except for science, yet the record of societies that subscribe to Communism, Atheism, and Humanism are the most evil and oppressive societies in the existence of humanity. They are religiously committed to their false ideals, and they should be identified as a religion because of the extreme dedication these people have to their cause that exists at the expense of those unfortunate to be part of their society. I sometimes refer to the Communist religion as an example of a false religion. They will believe in feel good causes, but not in the reality that there is a right and wrong way to live. Communism alone murdered nearly 100 million people in the 20th century and that does not include what happened to the many who were oppressed by these ungodly regimes.

What do we think authenticates truth?

Let's use the Bible as an example. Some 600 years before Yeshua came the book of Isaiah was written. Isaiah 53:6-7 NKJV says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." Years ago, I was watching someone interviewing people in Israel and they were asking the people there who this is referring to. Almost everyone was shocked and said that it sounded like Yeshua (Jesus).

This is just one example of the many things written in the Bible that lend to its authenticity. And of course, God's commandments in the Bible are good and relevant ideals for life that have helped millions upon millions of people to have a better life.

One principle for life from the Bible is having a good attitude in life. Communism teaches dissatisfaction with life and revolt as the basis for their religion. The Bible teaches the opposite. Shaul (Paul) briefly taught on what is called, the good eye in the book of Philippians, (in Hebrew it is called "ayin tovah"). These few verses are typical biblical Jewish teaching.

Philippians 4:8-9 NKJV says,

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

The God of peace will not be with those who have negative attitudes. It makes sense. Those who are negative in life are often dissatisfied with life. I watch the news and at times they talk about all the murders occurring in the United States. They have forsaken God and have made up their own ideas for life. It says in the Bible that murderers will be cast into the lake of fire at the time of judgement. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

How we view things is important. If we want truth, we must be willing to accept what the Bible teaches and understand it properly in its correct context, from a Jewish perspective. The ancient Israelites were given God's good commandments for life, so although the Bible should be understood as the words given to us by a good God, some believe these God given commandments are only for the Jews and that is not true.

I have heard people say the Bible does not have anything to do with being Jewish. How ridiculous. Yeshua (Jesus) was the Jewish Messiah to the whole world. All the writers of the Bible were Jewish. Luke's Jewish name at the top of his Hebrew gospel of Luke is Lukah. The Hebrew gospels were first put together around 150 AD. So, the truths for life were passed on to us from a Jewish society and must be understood within that context. They are truths that can be applied by anyone, and it was God's intention that the world would see the benefits of His commandments that Israel passed on to us.

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 NKJV says,

Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law.

People can lead us in ways that do not result in a good life; they lead us to a life which has no basis. Is there a basis for violence and murder instead of cool heads that try to work out solutions? Do we want anarchy and destruction that results in subservience? What do people

think anarchy turns into? That is what they saw happen in Russia back in the early 1900s and it resulted in oppression and murder, and the communist system of control and dictatorship; they went from one system of control to another. Their communist system was much worse than the monarchy they had. It is said that the Russian communist dictator Stalin executed some 20 million people. That was the result of their anarchy and unrest that they believe in.

What is wrong with doing things God's way instead of mankind's way? Jeremiah 2:13 NKJV says, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water." God's Torah (Torah means instruction) is like an endless supply of good refreshing water and can give us a good life. Mankind though creates their own ideas (cisterns) that can only give us a limited supply of water, but they are broken ideas (broken cisterns) that leave us nothing in the end.

God's ways give us life. Deuteronomy 11:8-9 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may prolong your days in the land." God wants us to accept His truths in the Torah. It says in this Old Testament scripture in Proverbs 3:5-8 NKJV: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones." So, trust in God's wisdom in the Bible with all your heart.

Why not trust in God completely? Mankind and theology are not getting the job done. Don't rely on your own way but acknowledge God's ways as your way to live. We are not as wise as God; so, respect Him and do not lean toward evil. God's ways bring health and wellness it said. Ask anyone who is terribly sick, and they will tell you they would do anything to be well again. Why not trust in God? It says that God's ways can prolong your days.

God reaches down and wants to give us truth and goodness; instead, because we want to do things our way, we get the added entanglement of mankind's ways. Proverbs 1:29-32 NKJV says, "Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them." This was written a long time ago; perhaps some 3,000 years ago. It is still true today. People go after things the wrong way and what they do turns on them. We see it over and over in history. If we simply did things the right way, how much better we would all be.

God can reach us and speak to us through the darkness that we think we need for life. At times, the people of Israel resisted God, but God continued to be with them and help them. We live in a dark world where mankind does things their own way and allows the influence of the demonic. Yeshua sent Shaul (Paul) to deliver people from the dark ideals of this world. Acts 26:18 NKJV says, "To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." People need God and need to be rescued.

God has spoken to us through His word to rescue us; He can also speak to us through the Holy Spirit which the Messiah Yeshua gives us. If only we will hear His voice and listen and obey His

commandments and also receive the help of the Holy Spirit. Ya'akov said in James 1:19-22 NKJV, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Be a doer of God's commandments, that is what following God means. We follow His directions for life.

Our God is there, and He wants us to be in fellowship with Him. We fellowship with a person by listening to each other. We need to decide to listen to God and not faulty ideas made-up by people. Listen to God's words which are able to help us and keep us. People think they can be savvy and know what is best instead of doing what God says to do. There are lots of ways to live, but only the true God knows what is truly best for us. Do not just hear God's words; do them or you will be living in deception. It is God that sustains the world and not us.

Some of the Old Testament portion scriptures are pictures of spiritual things. The ritual sacrifices of the Israelites were to be pure, which is a picture for us to be pure. Yeshua the Messiah was pure. Moshe strikes the rock instead of speaking to it. He was not able to enter the promised land because of what he did. We should remember that God expects us to do exactly what He says. If we want truth, we need to be able to accept truth and do what the Bible says. People often produce their own ideas of life instead of the truths from the Bible. God wants what is best for us instead of the failure of mankind's ways. He can reach us even in the darkness and deception of this world.

Torah Study.

The Torah portion for this week is Balak and it means, "devastator," "empty," or "wasting" (ref. Wiki). In this portion, Balak, Moav and Midyan were afraid of Israel so Balak, the king of Moav hired Bilam to curse Israel. Bilam's English name is Bilam. Bilam first refuses, but inquires again and God says he can go, but he is to say only what God tells him to say. God was angry at Bilam probably for his selfish uncaring motives and He made an angel to stand in his way and had Bilam's donkey speak to him. The angel tells Bilam that he is to only speak what God tells him.

When it is time to curse Israel, Bilam ends up blessing Israel. King Balak takes Bilam to another place and he ends up blessing Israel again. The false prophet Bilam is taken to another place by Balak and Bilam realizes that he cannot use his incantations and allows God to speak blessings again for Israel. He says in Numbers 24:9 NKJV, "Blessed be all who bless you! Cursed be all who curse you." Balak is very angry with Bilam, but Bilam says there was nothing he could do about it. Further Bilam prophecies that a messianic king will come from Israel and destroy all their enemies someday. Yeshua will come back and do that sometime in the future.

In the meantime, Yeshua has given us peace through the Holy Spirit. John 14:26-27 NKJV says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." The world expects the Messiah to bring peace and Yeshua did that but not

how the world perceives peace, but how God chose to give us peace, namely, through the Holy Spirit.

Next in this portion, some in Israel met prostitutes who enticed them to commit sexual sin and they also made sacrifices to the pagan god Ba'al Pe'or. When we sin, we can cause a curse to fall on us. Because of Israel's sin, God allows a plague to fall on Israel. Moshe had the men hung who engaged with the prostitutes. A man brought one of these women near the Tent of Meeting and Pinchas went after him and speared him and the woman. As a result of the idolatry and sexual sin, 24,000 died from a plague, but the plague stopped because of Pinchas.

Ironically, some of the blessings that God made Bilam pronounce over Israel became part of the modern Jewish service and is called the Ma Tovu. Bilam even gives a prophecy about the future Messiah of Israel. Another irony in the Torah portion is that the donkey saw the angel, but Bilam didn't see it at first; Bilam should have been able to see, but continued on with his folly because he had an evil eye. God made the donkey to talk to Bilam and Bilam talked to the donkey; it is a humorous point – perhaps we could say that God made Bilam to look like his donkey.

It seemed that Bilam repents, but like other wicked people, his repentance is only temporary. He opposes the purposes of God and Israel entering their land, but he is unsuccessful; instead, God made Bilam to bless Israel; Bilam's motives were wrong, and we should remember to be careful that our motives and values line up with the scriptures and not try to wrongly justify our behavior. Remember to have a good eye and not an evil eye and also be willing to accept how God says we should live.

Also, according to Revelation 2:14 it was Bilam who laid a stumbling block in front of Israel with the worship of Ba'al Pe'or. In Jewish thought, we are biblically commanded to not do anything that can cause a person to fail or sin. He could not curse Israel, so Bilam brought a curse on them through the sin of Ba'al Pe'or. He ends up dying shortly after this for his sin.

What can we learn from Bilam's behavior?

- * We should not just listen to what God says but do what He says.
- * We need to have deep godly values that we are willing to stand for.
- * We should never consider witchcraft or the occult. The Torah says not even learn to do what the pagans do. There are devil spirits behind these activities.
- * Watch out that we do not let power get to our head as Bilam did. Those who are proud are far from God. Psalms 138:6 NKJV says, "Yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar."
- * Protect your mind from wrong thinking. Have a good eye and not an evil eye.
- * Do not acquire money through evil gain (as Bilam attempted).
- * Do not be a stumbling block to others and cause them to sin. Instead think about how we can help people to do what is right. Romans 14:13 NKJV says, "Resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." Shaul is applying Leviticus 19:14 from the Old Testament portion.
- * Be patient with one another and be encouraging. Say encouraging things to each other. We need each other to stay strong.

Another thing this portion teaches us is that God is over all. God was over the evil of Bilam. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) said that Yeshua is over all in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:19-23 NKJV says.

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

It says there is great power to those who believe. If you lived in an ancient society, you probably wondered why things happened sometimes. Shaul says that Yeshua the Messiah is over all and that includes all the pagan gods and people who say they operate some kind of power (And from devil spirits like Bilam operated. Numbers 24:1 NKJV says, "Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery.") The Messiah is over all and none of these powers can touch us. What God blesses cannot be cursed if we stand on God's word in faith and keep His commandments.

Abraham trusted in what God told him to do and kept God's commands (see Genesis 26:5). God told Abraham that he would bless him and bless those whom he blesses in Genesis 12:2-3. Also, it said in Ephesians that Yeshua is the head over the believers. The head of your denomination or congregation is not the head over the believers, Yeshua is. Kefa (Peter) says leaders are to be examples as they serve God's people. 1 Peter 5:3 NKJV says, "Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

The Haftarah is Mikhah (Micah) 5:6-6:8 Micah talks about the future Israel, and says they are like the dew and rain from the Lord; like a lion. They will defeat their enemies and God will remove idol worship and cause havoc on those who would not listen to God. Micah says God brought them out of slavery and Bilam blessed them. God commands us in Micah 6:8 CJB, "To act justly, love grace and walk in purity with your God." Someday, God will perform what He said He will perform. Micah is in the Old Testament portion the grace it is referring to are God's commandments in the Old Testament portion. God's commandments at Mount Sinai were a gift of God's grace for mankind. Those who say they believe in grace should keep God's commandments. God's commands give us life the Bible says. Deuteronomy 11:1, 9 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always ... that you may prolong your days." Also see, Deuteronomy 5:33. We love our good God by keeping His commandments. They can prolong our days.

The Aaronic Blessing

ADONAI or LORD in all caps in our Bibles is the name for God which is pronounced Yě-hō-váh. Yě-hō-váh is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament portion. Since God's name is used that many times, it is evident that we should be using His real name.

According to Exodus 3:15, Yě-hō-váh is God's true name forever. Of course, we should use His name with respect. Yě-hō-váh is an acronym formed from the Hebrew verb hayah. Yě-hō-váh means, He existed, He exists, and He will exist. I want to honor God's name. Won't you also honor God's and use His true name with respect at times.

The ancient rabbis say that Yě-hō-váh (יהוה) is God's name. 2,363 different manuscripts of the Bible point God's name as Yě-hō-váh, once as Yě-hō-věh, never as Yahweh. The church Fathers said God's name is Yě-hō-váh.

Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Yeshua is quoting Psalm 118:26; the word "LORD" in that verse in Psalms is Yě-hō-váh (יהוה). Numbers 6:27 says we are to put God's name on His people.

Let's say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:

יְבָרֶכֶּךָ יְהוָה, וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ
 יְאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֶלֶיךָ, וַיַּחַנְךָ
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֶלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

Yě-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

Yě-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yě-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.