

## **Balak** **“Balak”**

Torah Reading: Numbers 22:2-25:9

Haftarah Reading: Micah 5:6-6:8

### **Study Notes**

While Israel played the harlot with Moabite women on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho; God was spreading Israel's reputation among the nations, stifling Israel's enemies, sanctioning the supernatural, surrounding Israel with His grace, and speaking.

### **Reputation among the Nations**

Even though Israel was busy acting as ungodly people act God still demonstrated His grace by creating a different Israel in the eyes of their enemies. God desired that the ungodly nations get a glimpse of His Israel, the Israel of God's doing, His precious, peculiar holy community. Often, God grants us His mercy; despite how we appear in the flesh, people may still see us as we really are inside as new creations. Then they fear God because of what and who He has made us to be.

### **Stifling Enemies**

We see that Balak has called upon Balaam to curse Israel so that his armies might defeat them. In Numbers 22 we see that although Balaam is a powerful sorcerer, he still is aware of who God is and that he is powerless against God. In fact God reveals His desires to Balaam and instructs him to bless Israel instead of cursing them, as Balak as asked him to do. Even when Balak takes him to different locations so that he may feel a desire to curse them, Balaam realizes that he can not go against God's wishes and each time blesses Israel.

### **Sanctioning the Supernatural**

God may have instructed Balaam to go to Balak as he had requested, but he also told him to do only as He told him. God knew Balaam's heart and knew that he had all intentions of doing Balak's bidding, so he sent an angel to take Balaam's life during his travels. But being a God of mercy and grace he saved Balaam's life by allowing his donkey to see the angel of death and avoid it for Balaam's sake; but Balaam punished the donkey for each move because he didn't see the angel. Because of this God gave the donkey the gift of speech so that he could explain himself to Balaam, then He allowed Balaam to see the angel. Another supernatural event was the turning of potential curses into blessings.

### **Surrounding Grace**

In Numbers 25, Israel deserved wrath and annihilation for their immorality and idolatry. To be sure the Moabites and their allies, the Midianites, who worked hard for their destruction, hoping to accomplish it through their curses. God displayed His mercy by justly punishing those who were guilty, while sparing the nation from being totally

consumed by His anger. Not only did God grant mercy, but he poured out His grace by turning curses to blessings that they did not deserve. “ “ Grace” is God giving us what we do not deserve. “ Mercy” is God not giving us what we do deserve.”

### **God Speaks**

In this parasha God is almost silent to Israel, while they were wandering away from Him. Instead He talks to the idolatrous Balaam. First speaking through an angel and then a donkey; next He speaks through a picture, a picture of His magnificent glory when Balaam sees the camp of Israel, and finally God speaks through His Holy Spirit as He fills Balaam. God speaks to Israel through Balaam, an idol worshiper, when He opens Balaam's eyes and allowed him to see the glory of Israel (Numbers 24:5-9). We also see God using Balaam to speak of the Messiah in Numbers 24:17, “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”