**Numbers 21-24**

Arad Destroyed

**21**When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. **2**Then Israel made this vow to the Lord: “If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroytheir cities.” **3**The Lord listened to Israel’s plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns; so the place was named Hormah.

The Bronze Snake

**4**They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; **5**they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

**6**Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. **7**The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

**8**The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” **9**So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

The Journey to Moab

**10**The Israelites moved on and camped at Oboth. **11**Then they set out from Oboth and camped in Iye Abarim, in the wilderness that faces Moab toward the sunrise. **12**From there they moved on and camped in the Zered Valley. **13**They set out from there and camped alongside the Arnon, which is in the wilderness extending into Amorite territory. The Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. **14**That is why the Book of the Wars of the Lord says: “. . . Zahab in Suphah and the ravines, the Arnon **15**and the slopes of the ravines that lead to the settlement of Ar and lie along the border of Moab.” **16**From there they continued on to Beer, the well where the Lord said to Moses, “Gather the people together and I will give them water.”

**17**Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! Sing about it, **18**about the well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people sank - the nobles with scepters and staffs.” Then they went from the wilderness to Mattanah, **19**from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, **20**and from Bamoth to the valley in Moab where the top of Pisgah overlooks the wasteland.

Defeat of Sihon and Og

**21**Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon king of the Amorites: **22**“Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway until we have passed through your territory.”

**23**But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the wilderness against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. **24**Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified.**25**Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements. **26**Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon.

**27**That is why the poets say: “Come to Heshbon and let it be rebuilt; let Sihon’s city be restored. **28**“Fire went out from Heshbon, a blaze from the city of Sihon. It consumed Ar of Moab, the citizens of Arnon’s heights. **29**Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captives to Sihon king of the Amorites.

**30**“But we have overthrown them; Heshbon’s dominion has been destroyed all the way to Dibon. We have demolished them as far as Nophah, which extends to Medeba.” **31**So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.

**32**After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there. **33**Then they turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei.

**34**The Lord said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hands, along with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.”

**35**So they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, leaving them no survivors. And they took possession of his land.

Balak Summons Balaam

**22**Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.

**2**Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,**3**and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites.

**4**The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”

So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, **5**sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said:

“A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. **6**Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.”

**7**The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. **8**“Spend the night here,” Balaam said to them, “and I will report back to you with the answer the Lord gives me.” So the Moabite officials stayed with him. **9**God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these men with you?”

**10**Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: **11**‘A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.’” **12**But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”

**13**The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak’s officials, “Go back to your own country, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you.” **14**So the Moabite officials returned to Balak and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.” **15**Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. **16**They came to Balaam and said: “This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, **17**because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me.”

**18**But Balaam answered them, “Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the Lord my God. **19**Now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the Lord will tell me.” **20**That night God came to Balaam and said, “Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you.”

Balaam’s Donkey

**21**Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. **22**But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. **23**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road. **24**Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. **25**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam’s foot against it. So he beat the donkey again.

**26**Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. **27**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. **28**Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and it said to Balaam, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?” **29**Balaam answered the donkey, “You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.” **30**The donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?” “No,” he said. **31**Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. **32**The angel of the Lord asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

**33**The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.” **34**Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.”

**35**The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials. **36**When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory.**37**Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?”

**38**“Well, I have come to you now,” Balaam replied. “But I can’t say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.” **39**Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. **40**Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and gave some to Balaam and the officials who were with him. **41**The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal,and from there he could see the outskirts of the Israelite camp.

Balaam’s First Message

**23**Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” **2**Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar. **3**Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you.” Then he went off to a barren height.

**4**God met with him, and Balaam said, “I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram.” **5**The Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this word.” **6**So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the Moabite officials. **7**Then Balaam spoke his message:

“Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains.
‘Come,’ he said, ‘curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.’ **8**How can I curse
those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced? **9**From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them.
I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations.
**10**Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my final end be like theirs!”

**11**Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!” **12**He answered, “Must I not speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?”

Balaam’s Second Message

**13**Then Balak said to him, “Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them all but only the outskirts of their camp. And from there, curse them for me.” **14**So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

**15**Balaam said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there.”

**16**The Lord met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this word.” **17**So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials. Balak asked him, “What did the Lord say?”

**18**Then he spoke his message: “Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor.
**19**God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? **20**I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it. **21**“No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them. **22**God brought them out of Egypt;
they have the strength of a wild ox. **23**There is no divination against Jacob, no evil omens against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘See what God has done!’ **24**The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till it devours its prey and drinks the blood of its victims.”

**25**Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!” **26**Balaam answered, “Did I not tell you I must do whatever the Lord says?”

Balaam’s Third Message

**27**Then Balak said to Balaam, “Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there.” **28**And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland. **29**Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” **30**Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

**24**Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness. **2**When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him **3**and he spoke his message:

“The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly,
**4**the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty,who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: **5**“How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel! **6**“Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters. **7**Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water. “Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted. **8**“God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces; with their arrows they pierce them.
**9**Like a lion they crouch and lie down, like a lioness - who dares to rouse them?

“May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!”

**10**Then Balak’s anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, “I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. **11**Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the Lord has kept you from being rewarded.”

**12**Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell the messengers you sent me,**13**‘Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the Lord - and I must say only what the Lord says’? **14**Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come.”

Balaam’s Fourth Message

**15**Then he spoke his message: “The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor,
the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, **16**the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: **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. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth.**18**Edom will be conquered; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, but Israel will grow strong. **19**A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city.”

Balaam’s Fifth Message

**20**Then Balaam saw Amalek and spoke his message: “Amalek was first among the nations, but their end will be utter destruction.”

Balaam’s Sixth Message

**21**Then he saw the Kenites and spoke his message: “Your dwelling place is secure, your nest is set in a rock; **22**yet you Kenites will be destroyed when Ashur takes you captive.”

Balaam’s Seventh Message

**23**Then he spoke his message: “Alas! Who can live when God does this?**24**Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus; they will subdue Ashur and Eber, but they too will come to ruin.” **25**Then Balaam got up and returned home, and Balak went his own way.