

A Star Out Of Jacob & A Scepter Shall Rise Out Of Israel

As punishment for their lack of faith, the generation of Israelis who witnessed the miracles of the Exodus were forced to spend their lifetime wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, until that faithless generation had died out. Only Joshua and Caleb of that generation were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

When God finally permitted Israel to continue to the Promised Land, the journey was not without difficulty. They found themselves in a desert area containing poisonous snakes, a situation that God used to test the people's faith ... by giving them specific instructions on how they might receive healing ... Another difficulty came from people living in territory to which the Israelis wished to cross. In one case, Moses diplomatically petitioned the Edomites (Numbers 20:17), but he was refused entry and the Israelis found another route.

Later, the Amorites blocked their way, but Israel forced their way through with military might. Now they must deal with Moab.

Do you think even today our sexual sins have consequences? According to Genesis 19:30–38, the ancestors of the Moabites was Lot by incest with his eldest daughter. She and her sister, having lost their fiancés and their mother in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, decided to continue their father's line through intercourse with their father. The elder sister got him drunk to facilitate the deed and conceived Moab. The younger daughter did the same and conceived a son named Ben-Ammi, who became ancestor to the Ammonites the two peoples blocking Israel's way to the promise land.

The use of Magic was an acceptable method of ancient warfare and King Ba'-lak of Moab tried to cast a curse over the Israelis to stop their advance. Ba'-lak chose Ba'-laam, a diviner, who lived north of Moab to handle the matter. Balaam was not particularly interested but he found the pay irresistible. As the story unfolds, however, Ba'-laam uttered God's message rather than the curse, for which Ba'-lak had paid. At Tell Deir Alla ... perhaps biblical Succoth ... Trans Jordan

excavators found hundreds of fragments of a text written on plaster. After some of the fragments were joined, it was discovered that the text centers in the life of “Balaam, son of Beor”. The text describes a vision received by Balaam, “Lo, the gods came to him at night and spoke to him”. For some reason, the Canaanites retained the memory of Balaam but not the fact the true God had been involved with him.

Numbers 22:1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan [by] Jericho.

Numbers 22:2-3 And Ba’-lak the son of Zip’-por saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they [were] many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

“... Moab was distressed ...” The Israelites had just defeated Si’-hon and the Amorites who had wrested much of the Moabite territory away from them during the reign of a king preceding Ba’-lak.

Numbers 22:4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all [that are] round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Ba’-lak the son of Zip’-por [was] king of the Moabites at that time.

“[was] king of the Moabites at that time” This change in the monarchy of Moab was explained just like the apostle John explained when he said: "Caiaphas was high priest that year" (John 18:13) and this was added to indicate that a different king was then reigning over Moab.

Numbers 22:5 He sent messengers therefore unto Ba’-laam the son of Be’-or to Pe’-thor, which [is] by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:

" to Pe'-thor, which [is] by the river of the land of the children of his people, the literal reading in the Hebrew "The land of the children of Ammo," or "the children of Amaw," Pe'-thor, is identified in the Idrimi Inscription and also in the tomb of the Quen-amun of Egypt in the second half of the fifteenth century BC a date corresponding exactly with the time of the writing of the Pentateuch of Moses

"and they abide over against me ..." God struck fear in their hearts ...

Numbers 22:6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they [are] too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, [that] we may smite them, and [that] I may drive them out of the land: for I wot (know) that he whom thou blessest [is] blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

"Unto the elders of Midian ..." Numbers 22:4 & 7 Ba'-lak here acted for Midian as well as for Moab. The Midianites were a weak people and had probably placed themselves under the protection of Ba'-lak.

Numbers 22:7-9 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Ba'-lak. 8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. 9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men [are] these with thee?

"What men are these with thee ..." This is like the question in Genesis 4:9, "Where is Abel thy brother?" God already knew the answer to the question it was merely to warn Balaam of the evil purpose of the men.

Numbers 22:10-12 And Balaam said unto God, Ba'-lak the son of Zip'por, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, [saying], 11 Behold, [there is] a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them,

and drive them out. 12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they [are] blessed.

This should have ended the whole episode, but, the greedy heart of Balaam led him to solicit God's permission a second time. God said, "Thou shalt not go!" What is ambiguous or uncertain about that?

Numbers 22:13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Ba'-lak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

Balaam, omitted the fact that the people Ba'-lak desired him to curse were indeed blessed of God."

Numbers 22:14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Ba'-lak, and said, Ba'-laam refuseth to come with us.

The logical conclusion of Ba'-lak's messengers was predictable enough ... they thought that Ba'-laam merely desired more money ... a conclusion that Ba'-laam's incomplete answer fully justified.

Numbers 22:15 And Ba'-lak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

"Balak sent ... princes, more, and more honorable ..." This means a larger delegation and the delegates were of a higher rank.

Numbers 22:16-17 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Ba'-lak the son of Zip'-por, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: 17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

"I will promote thee ..." this means, I will reward thee richly.

Numbers 22:18-20 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Ba'-lak, If Ba'-lak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more. 20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, [and] go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

" If the men come to call thee, ..." This is an idiomatic expression with the meaning, "Since the men have come to call you." Balaam had already by his actions ... requested a higher reward, and Ba'-lak had responded with greater promises.

At this point Balaam had already compromised himself; and God gave his permission, in exactly the same manner as he granted Israel's request for a king. It was permitted, but it was still contrary to the will of God. Long before this, "Balaam should have dropped the matter, but he was lured on by the love of money."

Numbers 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

Although Balaam went "with the princes," it is clear that they did not travel together, perhaps the princes came on camels and traveled more rapidly. Ba'-lak's later coming to meet Balaam makes this plain.

Numbers 22:22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants [were] with him.

Balaam had decided in his heart that he would comply with Ba'-lak's request and "curse" Israel. This triggered the anger of God. "Because he went" means went with the intention of disobeying God.

Numbers 22:23-25 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall [being] on this side, and a wall on that side. 25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

Also, it is clear that the anger of god was kindled against Balaam, not at the start of the journey, but afterward, as the presence of walled vineyard indicated the approach to the city. Why?

Numbers 22:26-29 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where [was] no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. 28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

Can you imagine Ba'-laam waking up to the fact he's talking to an ass

Numbers 22:30 And the ass said unto Balaam, [Am] not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since [I was] thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

The countless comments on the mute donkey speaking gives us no information upon the incident. It is still a mysterious and miraculous providence through which God Himself warned the prophet and Peter in New Testament tells us how in comparing false prophets to Balaam

II Peter 2:15-16 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam [the son] of Bosor, who loved the

wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

When God granted visions, they were only for whom they were intended. Only they saw them, while others in the company saw nothing compare Daniel 10:7 and Paul in Acts 9:7.

It was true that, "Balaam knew that God would not permit him to curse Israel, but he did not tell the princes so. In this way, he was guilty of gross misrepresentation." It also appears in this narrative that, enroot, Balaam had decided to "curse Israel," sufficiently to earn Ba'-lak's money. Peters says he "loved the wages of unrighteousness"

Numbers 22:31-34 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. 32 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because [thy] way is perverse before me: 33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. 34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

Balaam's offer to return home shows that he already knew this journey to be contrary to God's will. However, he had already committed himself to go, and God permitted no turning back.

Numbers 22:35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Ba'-lak.

"Go with the men ..." There is a point of no return in every departure from the will of God. What terror must fill the hearts of men who,

launched upon an evil course, find that they have gone too far to turn back. At last, there came the time in the life of Judas when God commanded him, "What thou doest, do quickly!" cf: John 13:27. Many a sinner would like to turn back when the fruits of his wickedness begin to appear but there stands the angel of The LORD, always, with the drawn sword, "Go with the men!" When men make their bed with evil, God requires them to lie in it.

Numbers 22:36-37 And when Ba'-lak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which [is] in the border of Arnon, which [is] in the utmost coast. 37 And Ba'-lak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

Ba'-lak honored Balaam by going to meet him, but chided him for his delay, still assuming that the delay was occasioned by Balaam's desire for greater and greater rewards.

Numbers 22:38 And Balaam said unto Ba'-lak Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

Balaam explained that even though he had come, he would not be able to speak anything except that which God commanded; however, Ba'-lak did not for an instant believe him.

Numbers 22:39-41 And Balaam went with Ba'-lak, and they came unto Kir'-jath-hu'-zoth. 40 And Ba'-lak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that [were] with him. 41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Ba'-lak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost [part] of the people.

He proceeded to take the prophet up "into the high places of Baal." Now, Baal was one of the most detestable of pagan gods; and what a

place for the prophet who once knew the true God to find himself! The sacrifice of the animals was a usual procedure for those invoking the aid of their gods. The food shared by Balaam and others afterward was in the form of a "fellowship meal" in the bond of paganism.

In Numbers 23 there are various oracles and prophecies of Balaam are given in a highly dramatic and powerful style of poetry in the most ancient Hebrew manner with many parallel or contrasting lines. It is agreed among the most dependable scholars that, "These are authentic utterances in the most ancient form from about 1,500 BC.

The great mystery of this entire episode continues to be God's use of a wicked and corrupt man, such as Balaam ... as the heavenly spokesman for some of the grandest prophecies to be found in the entire word of God ... 4 times Balaam blesses instead of cursing Israel

Balaam's roots were pagan, he had the confidence of pagan rulers, he was in their employ, seeking their favor, when these prophecies were uttered. The pagan world should have accepted him as a competent witness, despite his acquaintance with and knowledge of the true God. What a devastating effect the prophecies of such a prophet must have had upon those pagan nations of that era. This, of course, would have been an enormous help for the Israelites in their coming conquest of the land / striking fear in the hearts of all the Canaanites.

Numbers 24:12-13 And Balaam said unto Ba'-lak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, 13 If Ba'-lak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do [either] good or bad of mine own mind; [but] what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

This would be good advice to all those modern diviners who seek to improve upon God's plans as found in the New Testament revelation.

Numbers 24:14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come [therefore, and] I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

"in the latter days," an always a term associated with the times of the Messiah, the last days of the Jews and their dispensation and the New Israel the Church or people of God in all the prophecies.

Numbers 24:15-16 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, [which] saw the vision of the Almighty, falling [into a trance], but having his eyes open:

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

**"but not now ... but not nigh" meaning "in the distant future."
This remarkable person the Messiah will surely come. We have seen He will come through the tribe of Judah ... King David was of Judah.**

"... smite ... Moab, ... destroy ... Sheth" King David the Arch-Type of the Messiah fulfilled the war part of this prophecy II Samuel 8:2. King David defeats and executes the Moabites. Also the Ammonites who humiliated David's messengers eventually ended in a war and a year-long siege of the capital of Ammon. The war ended with all the Ammonite cities being conquered and plundered, and the inhabitants being killed or put to forced labor at David's command.

This Leaves the heart of this fourth oracle, and is the outstanding prophecy of the whole Balaam narrative.

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise

out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

The focal point is that that a mysterious person found in the Parallelism Jacob and Israel. He shall come (as) a Star out of Jacob. Then He will (come as a) Sceptre and shall rise out of Israel ... later in V:19, He is "One who shall have dominion."

Interpreters of all ages, races, and persuasions of mankind have found in these verses a prophecy of the coming Christ the Jewish Messiah. Even the men of the Dead Sea Scrolls community regarded this passage as Messianic in 3 different scrolls.

The whole Jewish people also so received it as Messianic. The most notorious pretended false Messiah built up his claims by assuming a name Bar Kochba which means "son of a star." Jesus speaking to the Jews of this coming pretender said:

John 5:43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Bar Kochba came in his own name in 132-135 AD Bar kochba presented himself to the Jewish people as a warrior Davidic type King ... he came without proper prophetic credentials and he came "in his own name.

The leading Rabbi Akiva said that Simon was the Jewish messiah, and gave him the surname "Bar Kokhba" meaning "Son of the Star" in Aramaic, from this Star Prophecy of Numbers 24:17.

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, ...

This prophecy possibly influenced the belief that the birth of the Messiah would be heralded by a star which it was ...

Matthew 2:1-6 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard [these things], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, [in] the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

Matthew 2:7-12 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found [him], bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. 9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Jesus was born under a star but the true meaning He is the star.

II Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Christ Himself and not the star that was seen at his birth is the primary fulfillment of the prophecy.

Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and morning star.

“I am the root and the offspring of David ...” This ties the end of the New Testament with the very first verse of the New Testament

Matthew 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

... the morning star ... the mention of the star recalls the light that led the wise men to the manger in Bethlehem.

The bright, the morning star ... "Christ is the Star of the Dawn ... This pair of metaphors the root and the star, occurs separately but never are they put together as here in the entire Bible.

CHRIST; THE ROOT AND THE STAR

Can anyone imagine two things more unlike than a root and a star? This proves that the Holy Spirit gave these words, for no man would ever have dared to describe the Lord in one breath as a root and a star. Yet, both terms are frequently applied to Christ in Scripture. Else where the metaphor of the root appears in

Revelation 5: 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Romans 15: 12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Isaiah 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

Else were the metaphor of the star metaphor appears in

Matthew 2: 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

II Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Let's examine the contrast in these metaphors.

Here is the contrast between the near and the far.

A root is near, but a star's distance is measured in light years!

Is it not so with Christ?

Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he and yet he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Here is the contrast between the visible and the invisible.

The root is hidden beneath our feet,

but the star blazes forth in the sky.

That is the way it is with Christ.

His influence is hidden and works secretly like leaven in the three measures of meal

but it also blazes forth in all creation.

The influence of Christ is so universal and extensive that a fool can see it and yet it is hidden from the eyes of the wise and powerful

Here is a contrast between the earthly and the heavenly.

Jesus Christ is both perfect man and perfect God.

The New Testament has many examples of the humanity of Christ.

He was hungry, tired, sorrowful, etc., like all men;

but his miracles proclaim him as The LORD God Almighty ...

Here is the contrast between the local and the universal.

A root is fixed. It cannot move, except to creep a short distance from its humble beginning

but a star sweeps through the outer reaches of the universe in an orbit of incomprehensible distances. Its light travels 186,000 miles per second.

A root may be localized and contained in an earthen jar

but a star rises for the whole world to see and hangs a blazing lantern in the sky where none can miss it.

Is not also Christ like this?

To me the individual Christ is "my Saviour," "my shepherd,"

but to the world he is the Christ of the Ages, the Christ of the first century and of the last; he is the Christ of Damascus Road, and the

Christ of Every Road. He is the Christ of a little child's bedside and the Christ of all races and conditions of man.

He is here; he is also everywhere.

Here is the contrast with that which is small and that which is great.

A root may be so small that an eye can hardly see it

a star may be so large that a million worlds cannot be compared with it.

Jesus Christ is so great that time and space cannot contain him

**but he was also wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.
Mary clutched him to her breast" and little children sing of the "Little
Lord Jesus"
but multitudes of the heavenly host fall down in his presence.**

**Here is the contrast between the high and the low.
A star is high; a root is low. Christ is both:
There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus;
No friend like him is so high and holy;
And yet no friend is so meek and lowly**

**Here is the contrast between that which needs man's care and that
which needs nothing.**

**A root must be watered and cultivated ...
a star needs absolutely nothing from man.
Just so, Christ is above and beyond all people.
Nothing that men can do can either cause or prevent the everlasting
glory that pertains to him
and yet Christ needs people.
There are certain phases of his work that cannot get on without men
for this gospel is committed to earthen vessels.
Christ works through his human children,
**YOUR LABORS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE ETERNAL EVERLASTING
HARVEST****

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Coffman commentary,