

Torah: B'midbar (Numbers) 19:1 – 25:9
Haftarah: Mikhah (Micah) 5:6-6:8
B'rit Hadashah: Revelation 19:11-21

	<i>yr. 1 19:1-21:20</i>	<i>yr. 2 22:2-38</i>	<i>yr. 3 22:39-25:9</i>
1	19:1 – 9	22:2-4	22:39-23:5
2	19:10 – 17	22:5-7	23:6-12
3	19:18 – 20:6	22:8-12	23:13-26
4	20:7 – 13	22:13-20	23:27-30
5	20:14 – 21	22:21-27	24:1-13
6	20:22 – 21:9	22:28-30	24:14-25
7	21:10 – 20	22:31-38	25:1-9

and Balak the son of Tzippor saw all that Israel had done to the Emori	<i>va'yar' Balak ben-Tzipor et kol ashér-asah Yis'raél la'Emoriy</i>	וַיֵּרָא בְּלַק בֶּן-צִפּוֹר אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֹמְרֵי:
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Parashah Balak contains the popular story of the pagan prophet Bil'am and his talking donkey. Balak, King of Moav fears the approaching Israelites and seeks Bil'am to put a curse on them. On his way to serve Balak, an angel blocks Bil'am's way. He does not see it but the donkey does. HaShem tells Balaam not to curse the Israelites, and to say only what HaShem says. The time comes, but instead of cursing Israel, he blessed them. Part of his blessing is a standard Jewish prayer (Ma Tovu). But after this the parshah ends with the people suffering as many people turn to idolatry with a local god.

The Haftarah portion connects to the Torah portion referring to (6:5) the story of Balak and Balaam.

Year 1 Aliyah Highlights

1. **Nu. 22:2-4** Tradition holds that Midyan was a confederation of people (Ge. 36:35, Nu. 10:29), ruled in part by a council of elders and in part by the king of Mo'av, who came together against the Israelite threat. Balak, likely a Midyanite himself, was the primary leader of the united Mo'av/Midyan kingdom.
2. **Nu. 22:5-7** An ancient (c. 800 BC) inscription describes the seer, Bil'am the son of B'or. Historical geography suggests that the journey from P'tor to Mo'av was about 400 miles, which would take about 20 days. Israel is described as a plague of locusts that covers/hides the earth from view (Judg. 6:5, 7:12). Bil'am is a diviner/seer (one who predicts the future), not a sorcerer (one who can alter the future), as Balak sees him.
3. **Nu. 22:8-12** God appears two other times to non-Israelites in Torah to warn them not to carry out their intentions (Ge. 31:24 Lavan, Ge. 20:3 Avimelekh). Blessings from the times of the patriarchs cannot be reversed by a curse (Ge. 27:33)
4. **Nu. 22:13-20** Bil'am uses the name of the God of Israel (see also Ge. 26:28), omits the full reason for his refusal ("because they are blessed..."), and infers that the princes come back with a better offer. The princes, in turn, omit the full reason for Bil'am's refusal to Balaq ("HaShem refuses permission..."). They indeed come back with a greater offer. HaShem replies with a different answer to this second inquiry.
5. **Nu. 22:21-27** The princes of Mo'av have disappeared. Donkey-with-servants mode of travel was for short trips (Ge. 22:3, 1Sa. 28:8). *Ironies:* Bil'am who claims prophetic sight can't see what his donkey sees three times. Bil'am who desires to slay nations with words needs a sword to slay his donkey. The purpose for this irony is to show Bil'am a powerless fool.
6. **Nu. 22:28-30** Bil'am claims wisdom and prophetic speech is bested by speech from his stupid donkey.

Bil'am wishes to subdue Israel with words but cannot subdue his donkey with a stick. Bil'am who would kill his donkey if he had a sword doesn't see the sword that is about to kill him.

7. **Nu. 21:31-38** HaShem opens the eye to see spiritual realities. Bil'am who boasts prophetic knowledge has to say "I didn't know..."

Thought Focus

Because they are blessed: What is HaShem saying about "ha'am" (הָעָם), the people, when he says they are blessed (Nu. 22:12)? In what way are the people "blessed?" Traditional Jewish commentary might say they are blessed because of *the righteous deeds of the patriarchs and matriarchs*, that their goodness resulted in HaShem issuing irrevocable blessing (Ro. 11:29) which benefit every following generation to this day. *A rich memory* - identity stretching back to Avraham (Mat. 1:2) and Sarai; rites and traditions such as Passover. *A profound way of life* - The cycle of Appointed Times, Shabbat. Being messengers of HaShem's love and justice, through *tzedekha* (good deeds), *mitzvot* (commandments), and the notion that every human being is created in the image of HaShem. The Hebrew word for blessing, *barukh*, may be passive, but it can also be active - to be a blessing, to be a source of blessing for everyone; loving HaShem, loving each other and living in an honorable, productive and just fashion with compassion, patience and tolerance. Are you a blessing?

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

- (20:22) Is your journey difficult? Do you know God's care for you in the details? Have you "arrived?" (Deu 4:4, Mat 10:29, 2Ti 1:12, Psa 143:6-11, Luk 21:10-19)
- (20:24) What are your thoughts about life after death for yourself? For those you love? For all the world? (Gen 25:8, Isa 65:17, Eze 37:12, Dan 12:2, Mar 12:26-27, Mat 25:21, 1Co 15:19-20, Joh 6:40, Rom 4:16-17, Heb 11:13-16)
- (22:2) What does the enemy see in your past history? What does God see? What do you see? (Num 21:1-3, 21-32, 33-35, Eph 6:12, Mat 5:14, Jam 4:7, Heb 12:1-3, 1Pe 5:6-9)
- (22:13) How do you share what God speaks to you? What is your motivation? (Gen 22:3, Jos 8:14, Hos 6:4, 1Ki 22:11-23, Mat 5:37, 12:37, Eph 4:15, 2Th 2:11-12)
- (22:39) How are you influenced by the company you keep? Do you point fingers or take responsibility for your actions? (1Sa 15:14-20, Pro 28:13, 1Jo 1:8, Exo 32:21-24, 2Sa 12:7-14, Luk 15:21-24)
- (23:13) Do you experience temptation in the same three-fold pattern used by Balak to curse Israel? (Num 23:9, 19, 21, 23, 24:5-7, Mat 4:5, 8, Mat 26:69, 71, luk 22:59, 1Co 10:13, Eph 6:13, 2Co 11:1-4, Eph 6:10-18)
- (24:14) What excites you about "the Last Days?" Has the "morning star" arisen in your heart? (Gen 49:10, Num 24:17, Isa 14:26, Mat 2:2, 2Ti 3:1, Rev 22:16, 2Pe 1:19, Zec 14:4, 9:10, Mic 4:2, Hos 3:4-5, Rev 11:15-17)