***Numbers 23; The Prophesies of Balaam***

***“’Then Balaam said to Balak, ‘Build me seven altars here, and here prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.’ So Balak did as Balaam had ordered, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.”*** *(Numbers 23:1-2)*

* Balaam has Balak build seven altars to sacrifice a bull and a ram on each altar to appease God.
* God never instructed Balaam to have seven altars built to sacrifice a bull and a ram on each one.
* In addition to the seven altars, Balaam will pronounce seven oracles regarding Israel on seven high places.
* It is interesting to note that the number seven in the Old Testament is a number of covenant. A number of completion.

***“Then God met Balaam, and Balak said to him: ‘I have erected the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar,’ The Lord put an utterance in Balaam’s mouth, and said: Go back to Balak and speak accordingly. So he went back to Balak who was still standing by the burnt offering together with all of the princes of Moab.”*** *(Numbers 23:4-5)*

* That God met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth reflects that Balaam was spiritually gifted even though he was not spiritually mature.
* Balaam was an unworthy prophet, but he was not a false prophet.

***“Balaam recited this poem: From Aram God has led me here, Moab’s king, from the mountains of Qedem: ‘Come curse for me Jacob, come denounce Israel,’ How can I lay a curse on the one whom God has not cursed? How denounce the one whom the Lord has not denounced? For from the top of the crags I see him. Here is a people that lives apart and does not reckon itself among the nations.”*** *(Numbers 23:7-9)*

* In the first oracle, Balaam identifies Israel as a nation set apart form all other nations.
* Balaam blesses Israel as a distinct nation with great size. Israel is God’s chosen people.

***“’What have you done to me?’ cried Balak to Balaam. ‘It was to lay a curse on my foes that I brought you here; but instead, you have blessed them!’ Balaam replied, ‘Is it not what the Lord puts in my mouth that I take care to repeat?’”*** *(Numbers 23:11-12)*

***“Balaam recited this poem: Rise, Balak, and listen; give ear to my testimony, on of Zippor! God is not a human being who speaks falsely; nor a mortal, who feels regret. Is God one to speak and not act, to decree and not bring it to pass? I was summoned to bless; I will bless; I cannot revoke it! Misfortune I do not see in Jacob, nor do I see misery in Israel. The Lord their God is with them; among them is the war cry of their King. They have the like of a wild ox’s horns: God who brought them out of Egypt. No, there is no augury against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. Now it is said of Jacob, of Israel, ‘Look what God has done! Here is the people that rises up like a lioness, and gets up like a lion; It does not rest till it has devoured its prey and has drunk the blood of the slain.”*** *(Numbers 23:18-24)*

* At this point Balak should have realized that it was futile to curse Israel.
* He persists in taking Balaam to another high place in the hopes that Balaam will pronounce a curse on Israel.
* The second oracle of Balaam recalls the covenant and Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.
* Balaam proclaims that there is no divination against Israel. God is telling Balak that he can not curse that which God has blessed.

***“Then Balak said to Balaam, ‘Come, let me bring you to another place; perhaps God will approve of your laying a curse on them for me from there.’ So he took Balaam to Peor, that overlooks Jeshimon. Balaam then said to Balak, ‘Build me seven altars here; and here prepare me seven bulls and seven rams.’*** *(Numbers 23:27-29)*

* Balak’s hatred of Israel blinds him from coming to terms with reality. He chooses to believe that God may be agreeable to curse Israel from a different location.
* He goes to the expense of building seven more altars and sacrificing seven more bulls and rams.

The Navarre Bible; Pentateuch; Numbers 23; Scepter Publishers; New York; 1986

[Enduring Word Bible Commentary Numbers Chapter 23](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/numbers-23/)

William J. Murphy