***Numbers 24; The Prophesies of Balaam; Part 2***

***“Balaam, however, perceiving that the Lord was pleased to bless Israel, did not go aside as before to see omens, but turned his gaze towards the wilderness.”*** *(Numbers 24:1)*

***“How pleasant are your tents, Jacob; your encampments, Israel! Like palm trees spread out, like gardens beside a river, Like aloes the Lord planted, like cedars beside water; Water will drip from their buckets, their seed will have plentiful water; Their king will rise higher than Agag and their dominion will be exalted. They have the like of wild ox’s horns: God who brought them out of Egypt. They will devour hostile nations, break their bones, and crush their loins. Crouching they are like a lion, or like a lioness; who will arouse them? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you!”*** *(Numbers 24:5-9)*

* To look for omens was a pagan practice. In the third oracle, Balaam does not use the pagan practices and he is granted a vision.
* In the oracle, Balaam’s eyes are opened.
* Israel is blessed with abundance, strength, and dominance over its neighboring nations.
* *“Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you!”*
* Israel is under God’s blessing. Common sense dictates that Balak would get the message and would no longer seek to curse Israel.

The Last Four Oracles; Numbers 24:10-25

***“In a blaze of anger at Balaam, Balak clapped his hands and said to him, ‘It was to lay a curse on my foes that I summoned you here; yet three times now you have actually blessed them! Now flee to your home. I promised to reward you richly, but the Lord has withheld the reward from you!’”*** *(Numbers 24:10-11)*

* 1st Oracle – Balaam failed to curse Israel.
* 2nd Oracle – Balaam blessed Israel
* 3rd Oracle – Balaam cursed Balak and blessed Israel again.
* *“I promised to reward you richly, but the Lord had withheld the reward from you!”*
* The money used to build the twenty-one altars and sacrifice twenty-one bull and rams was not well spent. Balak will not pay Balaam the divinization fee.
* In Balak’s mind the reward (honor) was in the riches he promised as opposed to being faithful to God.
* God initially advised Balaam not to go to Balak to curse the Israelites. In his greed, Balaam continued to ask God in prayer if he should go with the princes of Moab.
* Balaam should have followed God’s word and not his greed.

Fourth Oracle

***“I see him, though not now; I observe him, though not near; A star shall advance from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel, That will crush the brows of Moab, and the skull of all the Sethites,”*** *(Numbers 24:17)*

* The fourth oracle does not speak of the present but of a future time.
* *“A star shall advance from Jacob and a scepter shall rise from Israel,”*
* Jewish tradition links the coming of the messiah with the appearance of a star.
* With the appearance of a star a scepter will arise out of Israel.
* In Matthew 2:1-2, the Magi follow the star to Bethlehem to do homage to the newborn king.
* Early Jewish writers understood this oracle as a reference to the messiah.
* In 132 to 135 AD, Rabbi Akiba changed the name of the Jewish leader of the second Jewish revolt against Rome from Ben Kosheba to Bar Kokheba.
* The name Bar Kokheba means “son of the star.” Rabbi Akiba relieved that Ben Kosheba was the messiah and he changed his name to Bar Kokheba (son of the star) in reference to Balaam’s fourth oracle.
* The early church fathers interpreted the star that Balaam speaks about as being the one the Magi saw.

Fifth Oracle

***“Upon seeing Amalek, Balaam recited a poem: First of the nations is Amalek, but their end is to perish forever.”*** *(Numbers 24:20)*

* Amalek was at one time a prestigious nation but shall perish.

Sixth Oracle

***“Upon seeing the Kenites, he recited his poem: Though your dwelling is safe, and your nest is set on a cliff; Yet Kain will be destroyed when Asshur takes you captive,”*** *(Numbers 24:21-22)*

* The Kenites were a nomadic tribe that was often in conflict with Israel. The Kenite capital was Kain. The word “kain” in Hebrew means nest.
* Kain was on the rocky highlands of south Canaan. They put their faith in their geographical location.
* Kain would be destroyed, and its inhabitants sold into slavery.

Seventh Oracle

***“Upon seeing the Ishmaelites he recited his poem: Alas, who shall survive of Ishmael, to deliver them from the hands of Kittim? When they have conquered Asshur and conquered Eber, They too shall perish forever.”*** *(Numbers 24:23-24)*

* Israel’s strength and its ability to subdue its neighbors was the work of God.
* The last four oracles are curses. They are the kind of oracles that Balak wanted Balaam to pronounce against Israel. Instead, the curses are spoken against Israel’s enemies.

The Navarre Bible; Pentateuch; Numbers 24; Scepter Publishers; New York; 1986

[Enduring Word Bible Commentary Numbers Chapter 24](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/numbers-24/)

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