

Chuqat/Balak: The Blessing That Cannot Be Cursed

Primary Texts: Numbers 19:1–25:9

Haftarah: Micah 5:6–6:8

Central Theme: *No enemy can overturn the blessings and purposes of The Almighty. However, His people can jeopardize their fellowship with Him through unbelief and disobedience.*

I. Introduction

A. Good morning. This week's Torah reading combines two portions, **Chuqat** and **Balak**. At first glance they seem unrelated.

1. Chuqat contains:

- a) the statute of the Red Heifer
- b) the death of Miriam
- c) water from the rock
- d) Moses striking the rock
- e) the deaths of Aaron
- f) the bronze serpent
- g) victories over Sihon and Og

2. Balak shifts to an entirely different setting:

- a) Balak fears Israel
- b) Balaam is hired to curse them
- c) Balaam's donkey speaks
- d) Balaam blesses Israel instead
- e) Israel later falls into sin at Baal Peor

3. It almost feels like two separate stories.

- a) Yet there is one thread connecting every event: The Almighty's covenant purposes cannot be overturned by human opposition—but His own people can still choose faithfulness or compromise.

II. Main Discussion

A. Israel Is Far from Perfect

1. One thing I appreciate about the Torah is that it does not sanitize Israel's history.
2. Even Moses is not portrayed as flawless.

B. During this portion we see:

1. continual complaining
2. impatience
3. rebellion
4. discouragement
5. Miriam dies.
6. Aaron dies.
7. Moses loses the privilege of entering the Land.

C. This should remind us that Scripture is honest.

1. Its heroes are human.
2. Our hope rests not in human perfection but in the faithfulness of The Almighty.

3. Moses Strikes the Rock. Numbers 20:7–12.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.” So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, “Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” ¹

a) Notice that Moses is told to speak to the rock.

(1) Instead, he strikes it.

(2) Water still comes.

(a) This is remarkable.

(b) The miracle still occurs.

(c) But Moses' disobedience still has consequences.

4. This teaches two important truths.

a) First: The Almighty can accomplish His purposes despite imperfect leaders. His work is larger than any individual.

b) Second: Faithfulness still matters.

5. Success in ministry never excuses disobedience.

III. Israel Continues to Receive Blessing

A. Despite repeated failures...

1. The Almighty continues providing.

2. He provides:

a) water

b) protection

c) military victories

d) guidance

3. Israel defeats:

a) Arad

b) Sihon

c) Og

4. Every victory reminds us that the covenant rests upon His promises, not Israel's, or our perfection.

IV. Balak's Fear

A. Now the scene shifts.

1. Balak sees Israel approaching.
2. He has watched what happened to Sihon and Og.
3. He concludes: "I cannot defeat these people."
4. So he turns to something else. He hires Balaam.
5. Notice the worldview behind Balak's actions.
 - a) Ancient Near Eastern kings often believed blessings and curses functioned almost mechanically. If the right ritual were performed by the right holy man, the gods could be compelled to act in a king's favor.
 - b) Balak assumes Israel's God can be manipulated in the same way.
 - c) But the God of Israel is not like the pagan deities of the nations.
 - (1) He cannot be bribed.
 - (2) He cannot be manipulated.
 - (3) He cannot be hired.
 - (4)

B. Balaam Learns an Important Lesson

1. Three times Balaam attempts to curse Israel.
2. Three times he blesses them instead.
3. One of the greatest statements appears in Numbers 23:8: "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?"
4. Later he says: "Behold, I have received a command to bless; when He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it."
5. That statement summarizes the entire Torah portion.
 - a) No man...
 - b) No king...
 - c) No prophet...
 - d) No demon...
 - e) can overturn what The Almighty has determined.

V. Even the Donkey Sees

A. One of Scripture's most unusual stories occurs here.

1. The donkey sees the angel.

2. Balaam does not.

B. Ironically...

1. The pagan prophet is spiritually blind.

2. The animal sees more clearly.

3. This is humorous—but also humbling.

C. Knowledge does not always produce spiritual sight.

1. Sometimes pride blinds us.

2. We should continually pray:

a) Hebrew (Westminster Leningrad Codex)

גַּלְעִינַי וְאַבְיָטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרַתְךָ:

b) **Transliteration:**

Gal- 'einai ve'abbīṭah nifla'ot miToratekha.

c) NASB 1995

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law."

d) Literal translation

"Uncover my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Torah."

VI. Balaam's Greatest Prophecy

A. Numbers 24:17 - "A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel..."

1. Historically, this points first toward Israel's future kingship, finding an initial fulfillment in David's victories over Moab and the surrounding nations.
2. Yet many ancient Jewish interpreters also saw this as pointing beyond David to the coming Messiah. The passage became one of the most important Messianic texts in the Second Temple period. This expectation is reflected in the name taken by Simon bar Kokhba, whose title means "Son of the Star."
3. As followers of Yeishua, we see this prophecy reaching its fullest expression in the promised Davidic King.
4. It is remarkable that one of Scripture's clearest Messianic prophecies comes from the lips of a pagan diviner who could not resist speaking what The Almighty placed in his mouth.

VII. So Why Does Israel Fall?

A. This is the critical question.

1. If Balaam could not curse Israel...

2. Why does disaster strike in chapter 25?

a) Because Balaam eventually discovers something.

b) He cannot destroy Israel from outside.

c) But Israel can destroy itself from within.

d) Later Scriptures indicate Balaam advised Moab to entice Israel into idolatry and sexual immorality (see Numbers 31:16). The strategy was tragically effective.

e) This is Satan's oldest strategy.

(1) If persecution fails, try compromise.

(2) If curses fail, try temptation.

(3) If armies fail, attack holiness.

VIII. The Lesson for Us

A. The greatest threats to believers today are often not external opposition.

B. Throughout history God's people have survived:

1. Pharaoh

2. Babylon

3. Rome

4. persecution

a) from the Roman Catholic Church and their Inquisitions

b) from the Nazis

c) from radical Muslims

d) from racists like

(1) Skinheads

(2) KKK

(3) Christian Nationalists

(4) White Supremacists

(5) Anti Zionist groups

5. exile through the Pogroms

C. What has consistently caused greater harm has been compromise with the surrounding culture.

1. The same danger exists today.
2. We may not be invited to worship Baal.
3. But we are constantly invited to compromise our convictions for acceptance, convenience, or comfort.
4. Our calling is to remain faithful to the covenant we have entered.

IX. The Haftarah Connection

A. Micah recalls this very episode: "My people, remember what Balak king of Moab planned, and what Balaam son of Beor answered him..." (Micah 6:5)

B. Why?

1. Because remembering this event teaches Israel that The Almighty remained faithful to His covenant even when others sought to destroy them.

C. Micah then asks what kind of worship pleases Him. The answer is not lavish sacrifices but a transformed life:

1. "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

(Micah 6:8)

2. The blessing of God is never intended to produce complacency. It is meant to produce faithful, humble obedience.

Conclusion

1) These two Torah portions leave us with three enduring truths.

a) **The Almighty keeps His covenant.** Even when Israel faltered, His purposes moved forward.

b) **No enemy can overturn His blessing.**

i) Balak tried.

ii) Balaam tried.

iii) Neither succeeded.

iv) What The Almighty blesses cannot be revoked by human schemes.

c) **The greatest danger is compromise.**

i) Israel was not defeated by a curse.

ii) Israel stumbled through its own unfaithfulness.

iii) That warning remains relevant today.

2) As we leave today, may **we** remember that **our** confidence rests not in our own strength but in the **faithfulness of The Almighty**.

- 3) At the same time, let us guard our hearts so that we do not surrender through compromise what no enemy could ever take from us.
- 4) **"When He has blessed, I cannot revoke it."** (Numbers 23:20)
- 5) May we live as a people who trust His promises, cherish His blessings, and walk faithfully in His commandments. Shabbat Shalom

HASOF!