

# 34. Balaam and Balak

## *The Word of the Lord: The Old Testament for Young Children*

### Notes for Parents & Teachers

#### 34. Balaam and Balak

- a. Tell the story as it is. Balaam is a prophet, and in those days if a prophet cursed the people they would be cursed. So Balak was going to pay Balaam lots of money if he cursed the children of Israel.
- b. The Lord said Balaam could only say what He, the Lord put into his mouth.
- c. But, the Writings tell us, Balaam was trying to work out a way in which he could still make sure that the children of Israel were cursed. This is why the Lord was angry, and sent an angel to stand in his way.
- d. Note how the donkey saw the angel but Balaam did not. That was because Balaam was thinking bad thoughts.
- e. It's amazing that the Lord allowed the donkey to talk and point out that he had to have had a reason to do this because he had always been a good donkey.
- f. When Balaam was allowed to see the angel with a sword standing in his way, he realized he had sinned. How had he sinned? In trying to work out a way to make sure the children of Israel were cursed.
- g. The Lord told him to go on, but only say what the Lord put in his mouth.

- h. As a postscript, Balaam actually did bring a different kind of curse on the children of Israel. He got the people of Moab to get the children of Israel to worship false gods, and then to break the Ten Commandments, which brought a plague on them. When the plague was over, Balaam was killed because of his greed and because he was a bad prophet of the Lord.



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## The Lord Is Angry When Balaam Does Not Listen

The children of Israel journeyed and camped near Jericho. Now Balak was the king of the Moabites. Balak was very afraid of the children of Israel because there were so many of them. He sent messengers to Balaam, who was a prophet of the Lord, and he said, “There is a people come from Egypt and they are many. Come and curse them so that I may fight them and drive them out of the land.” When Balaam heard the king’s messengers he said, “Stay here tonight and I will tell you what the Lord says to me.”

Then God came to Balaam in the night and said, “You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the children of Israel for they are blessed.” In the morning Balaam said, “Go home. The Lord God will not let me go.” The messengers went back to Balak and said, “Balaam refuses to come.” So Balak sent more messengers to Balaam to say, “I will do whatever you say but, I pray you, curse these people.” Balaam answered, “If Balak gives me his house full of silver and gold, I can only say what the Lord tells me to say.” Then Balaam said, “Stay tonight and I will see what the Lord God says.” And God came to Balaam that night and said, “If the men come to you, rise up and go with them, but you shall only do what I say.”

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went to see the king. Then God was angry because Balaam went without listening to Him. So an angel of the Lord, with a sword in his hand, came and stood in Balaam’s way. Balaam could not see the angel, but the donkey could, and she turned away into the field. Balaam was angry. He hit the donkey to make her go back on the path, but she wouldn’t. So Balaam led the donkey on a path through a vineyard where there was a wall on each side of the path. Again the angel of the Lord stood on the path. When the donkey saw the angel, she tried to turn away and she crushed Balaam’s foot on the wall. Balaam hit the donkey again. The angel went a little further and stood in a narrow place where there was no place to turn. Then the donkey fell down under Balaam as Balaam was hitting her.

Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth and she spoke to Balaam and said, “Why do you keep hitting me? Have I not been a good donkey? Have I ever done this before?” Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes so he could see the angel standing with his sword drawn and he knew the donkey had saved him from being killed. And Balaam said to the Lord, “I have sinned. Shall I go home?” But the Lord said to him, “Go to Balak but you shall only say the words that I tell you to say.” So Balaam went on his way to Balak, and this time instead of listening to Balak the king, he did as the Lord commanded him. He blessed the people of Israel.

Numbers 22, 23

