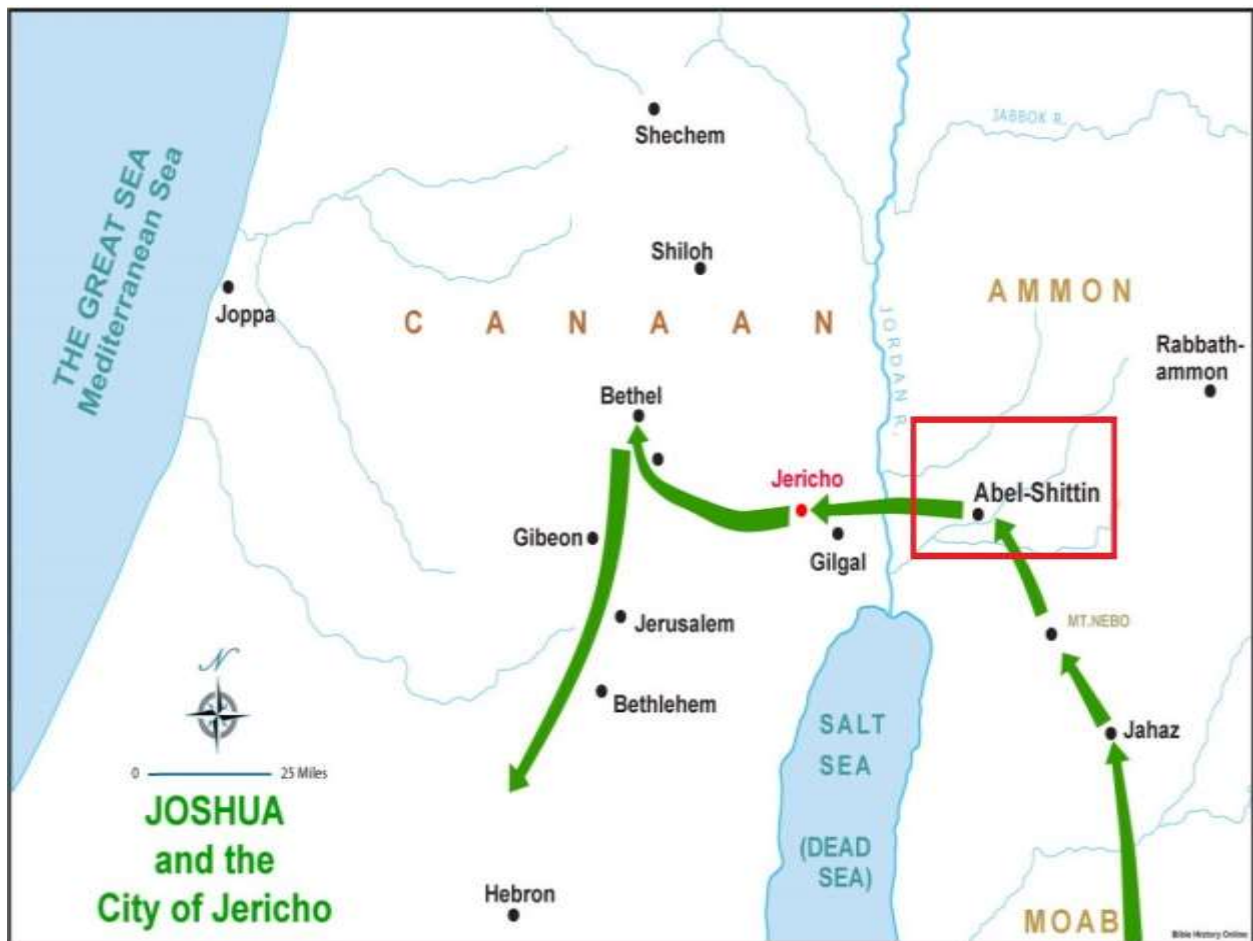


Numbers 22

Verse 1

Then the sons of Israel journeyed on, and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.

See Map 2205



Israel was poised to cross the Jordan and begin the assault on Canaan at Jericho

But before this happened Israel was caught up in a shameful act of rebellion

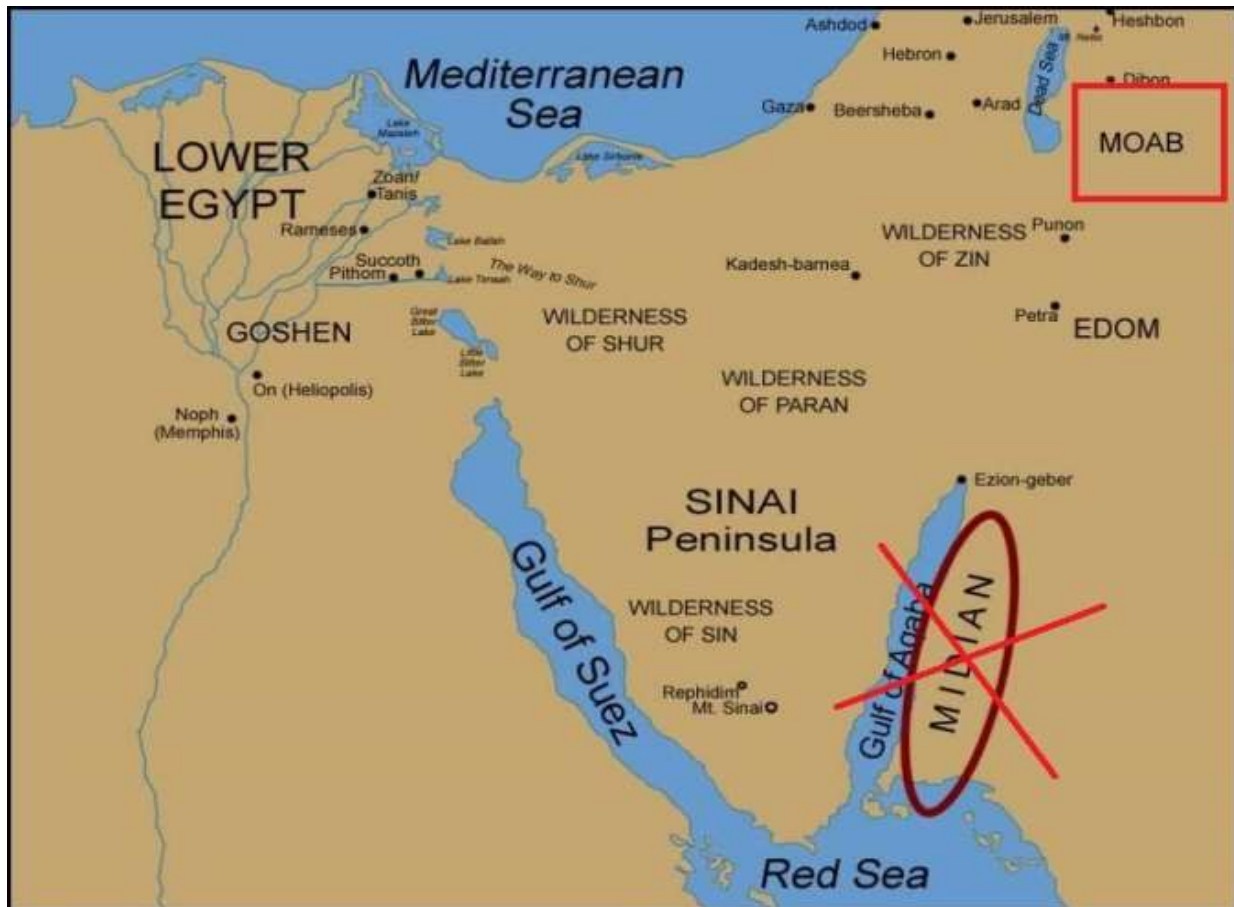
This generation will enter Canaan but they displayed many of the same traits that the previous generation showed.

Verses 2 - 6

² Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel. ⁴ Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this horde will eat up all that is around us, as the ox eats up the grass of the field!” And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. ⁵ So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the *Euphrates* River, *in* the land of the sons of his people, to call for him, saying, “Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they have covered the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. ⁶ Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

Moab said to the elders of Midian, now this horde will eat up all that is around us

See Map 2210



This is a map of Midian where Moses fled to get away from the King of Egypt. But this is not the group of Midianites that is talked about in this event. There is another group of Midianites that is living in the area around Edom.

And **Balak** the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. ⁵ So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the Euphrates River

See pic 2215



Why did Balak, the king of Moab, send for Balaam?

It is likely that the King of Midian didn't want to join Moab in a physical battle against Israel but he was willing to help by suggesting a plan that would weaken Israel.

So Midian informed the king of Moab about Balaam.

As it turned out it was a very sneaky way of weakening Israel.

Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.

Balaam had quite the reputation.

He lived about 350 miles north of Moab but the King of Midian knew about his bonafides and told the King of Moab how he could help.

Israel did not go to war with Edom when they were refused passage, so why did the King of Moab assume Israel would go to war against him now?

Moab should have asked Balaam if Israel was a danger to them.

Verses 7 - 14

⁷ So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian left with the *fees for* divination in their hands; and they came to Balaam and repeated Balak's words to him. ⁸ And he said to them, "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you just as the Lord may speak to me." And the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam. ⁹ Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" ¹⁰ Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent *word* to me: ¹¹ 'Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt, and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I will be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" ¹² But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." ¹³ So Balaam got up in the morning and said to Balak's representatives, "Go *back* to your land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you." ¹⁴ And the representatives from Moab got up and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian left with the *fees for* divination in their hands

Midian and Moab were in cahoots with each other, and the elders of these two nations made the long journey together in order to stop Israel.

Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you just as the Lord may speak to me.

This sounds noble on the part of Balaam but his true motives will soon be revealed.

But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed

Was this message to Balaam unclear in any way?

So Balaam got up in the morning and said to Balak’s representatives, Go *back* to your land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you

So far so good, but temptation seldom comes with one attempt.

Verses 15 - 20

¹⁵ Then Balak sent representatives once again, more numerous and more distinguished than the previous. ¹⁶ They came to Balaam and said to him, “This is what Balak the son of Zippor says: ‘I beg you, let nothing keep you from coming to me; ¹⁷ for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you tell me. Please come then, curse this people for me.’” ¹⁸ But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, “*Even* if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do *anything, either* small or great, contrary to the command of the Lord my God. ¹⁹ Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the Lord will say to me.” ²⁰ And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, rise *and* go with them; but you shall do only the thing that I tell you.”

Then Balak sent representatives once again, more numerous and more distinguished than the previous

If the king was trying to show true respect to Balaam shouldn't he accept Balaam's refusal to curse Israel?

But Balak knew how to stroke a diviner's ego and sent a more impressive delegation.

For I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you tell me. Please come then, curse this people for me

Balak assumed Balaam wanted a larger reward so he offered him great riches if he would just do what he wanted.

Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do *anything, either* small or great, contrary to the command of the Lord my God

Again, this sure sounds noble.

Now please, stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the Lord will say to me

God had already said.....**Do not go with them.**

And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, rise *and* go with them; but you shall do only the thing that I tell you.”

God allowed Balaam to go but it was not His will.

There is a good example of this concerning Israel & God

When Israel requested a king, did God grant their desire?

Yes He did. But it was still contrary to the will of God.

See 1 Samuel 8:1-9

Verse 7 is quite revealing.

⁷ And the Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

The same thing may have happened here.

God gave him permission to go because that is what Balaam desired in his heart.

But it was still contrary to the will of God

Balaam is now told to **do only the thing that I tell you.**

Let's wait and see if Balaam will do what the Lord has told him to do.

Then we can decide if Balaam's word is as noble as it sounds.

Verses 21 - 30

²¹ So Balaam arose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the leaders of Moab. ²² But God was angry that he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand, the donkey turned off from the road and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey to guide her back onto the road. ²⁴ Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, *with* a stone wall on this side and on that side. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed herself against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again. ²⁶ Then the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right or to the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his staff. ²⁸ Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" ²⁹ And Balaam said to the donkey, "*It is* because you have made a mockery of me! If only there had been a sword in my hand! For I would have killed you by now!" ³⁰ But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing such a thing to you?" And he said, "No."

So Balaam arose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the leaders of Moab. ²² But God was angry that he was going

It is obvious that God allowed Balaam to go but only because Balaam had already decided that he was going to find a way to give the king of Edom what he wanted.

God had a right to be angry because Balaam had chosen wealth over doing His will.

Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"

This should have shocked Balaam enough to bring him back to reality but he responds to the donkey like this was a normal event.

And then he actually complains to his donkey that he has been treated unfairly.

Who is being the donkey in this episode? ☺

But the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing such a thing to you?” And he said, “No.”

When a donkey uses better logic than his master, maybe he should reconsider.

Verses 31 – 35

³¹ Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground. ³² Then the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was reckless *and* contrary to me. ³³ But the donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I certainly would have killed you just now, and let her live.” ³⁴ So Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back.” ³⁵ But the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word that I tell you.” So Balaam went along with the representatives of Balak.

Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand

Balaam could not understand what was going on.

His eyes had to be opened by the Lord.

Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was reckless and contrary to me

God spells it out for Balaam.

He was not doing the will of God

So Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned

On the positive side, when Balaam realized he had sinned he confessed it.

Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back

This is like someone who says, if I have sinned then I am sorry.

But the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word that I tell you.

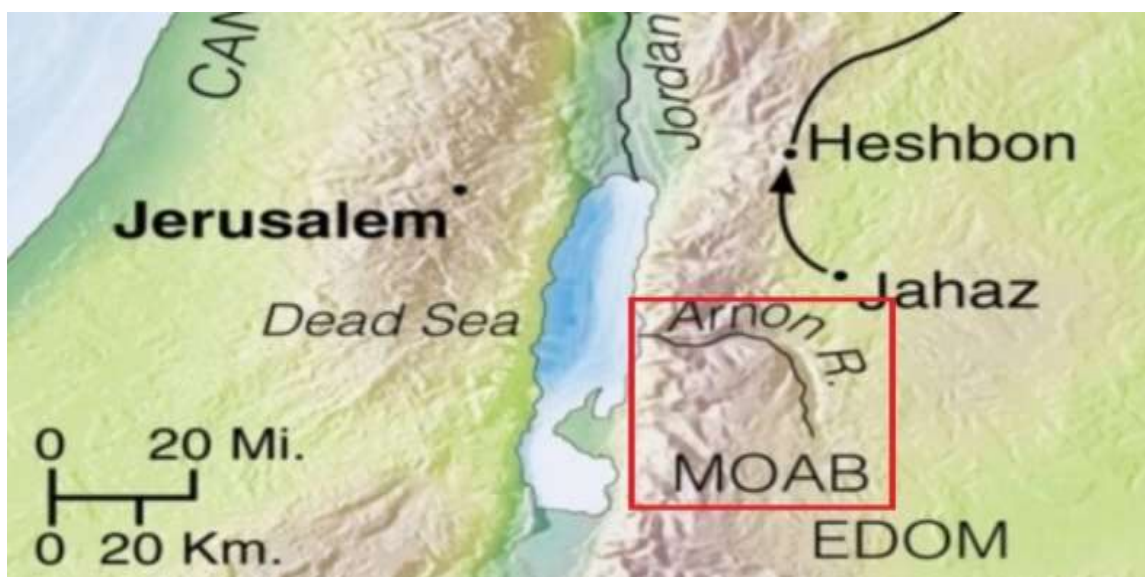
Balaam had made the wrong choice but God was giving him an opportunity to do the right thing.

Verses 36 – 38

³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border. ³⁷ Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not urgently send *word* to you to call for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?” ³⁸ So Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come to you now! Am I really able to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that *only* shall I speak.”

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border

See Map 2220



Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not urgently send *word* to you to call for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?”

Balak honored Balaam by going to meet him but rebuked him for his delay.

Behold, I have come to you now! Am I really able to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that *only* shall I speak

Balaam warns the King of Moab that he may not like the message.

Verses 39 - 41

³⁹ And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. ⁴⁰ Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and the leaders who were with him. ⁴¹ Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, and he saw from there a portion of the people.

⁴⁰ Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and the leaders who were with him.

This was more than a free lunch or dinner as we know it in our time.

The food shared by Balak was a fellowship meal.

⁴¹ Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, and he saw from there a portion of the people.

This sacrifice was to the pagan god Baal.

Can a man of God fellowship with demons?