

## Numbers 23

Verses 1 – 6

**Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here.”** <sup>2</sup> Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on *each* altar. <sup>3</sup> Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you.” So he went to a bare hill. <sup>4</sup> Now God met with Balaam, and he said to Him, “I have set up the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on *each* altar.” <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and this is what you shall speak.” <sup>6</sup> So he returned to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab.

**Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here**

God gave Balaam specific instructions about the altars and sacrifices

See Verse 4

**Then the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth**

This is the 1st of 7 prophecies by Balaam

**He was standing beside his burnt offering, he and all the leaders of Moab.**

We don’t know how many leaders of Moab were present but there were enough leaders that 7 altars were needed.

The King of Edom put a lot of effort, time and money into this plan.

The 1st delegation went 700 miles round trip from Edom to Pethor.

Then Balak sent a 2<sup>nd</sup> delegation that was more numerous and more distinguished.

Then the King went to the most northern border of his kingdom to meet with Balaam and offered him great riches.

Verses 7 – 10

1<sup>st</sup> Oracle

<sup>7</sup> And he took up his discourse and said,  
“From Aram Balak has brought me,  
Moab’s king from the mountains of the East, *saying*,  
‘Come, declare Jacob cursed for me,  
And come, curse Israel!’

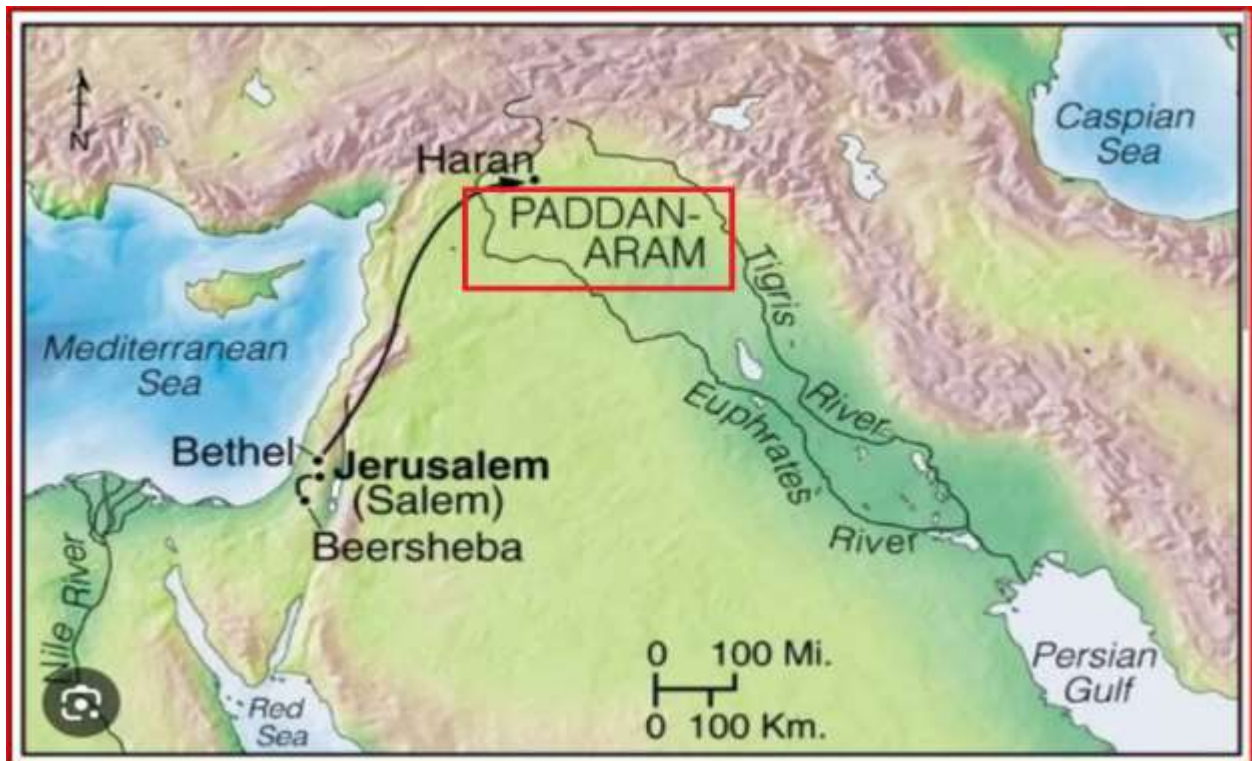
<sup>8</sup> How am I to put a curse on him upon whom God has not put a curse?  
And how am I to curse him whom the Lord has not cursed?

<sup>9</sup> For I see him from the top of the rocks,  
And I look at him from the hills;  
Behold, a people that lives in isolation,  
And does not consider itself *to be* among the nations.

<sup>10</sup> Who has counted the dust of Jacob,  
Or the number of the fourth part of Israel?  
May I die the death of the upright,  
And may my end be like his!”

From Aram Balak has brought me

See Map 2305



Balaam lived at Pethor which was in Paddan-Aram (the ancient name of Mesopotamia).  
Abraham stayed in Haran (just north of Pethor) during his trip from Babylon to Canaan  
See Genesis 11:31-32

**Moab's king from the mountains of the East**

See 2310 thru 2313







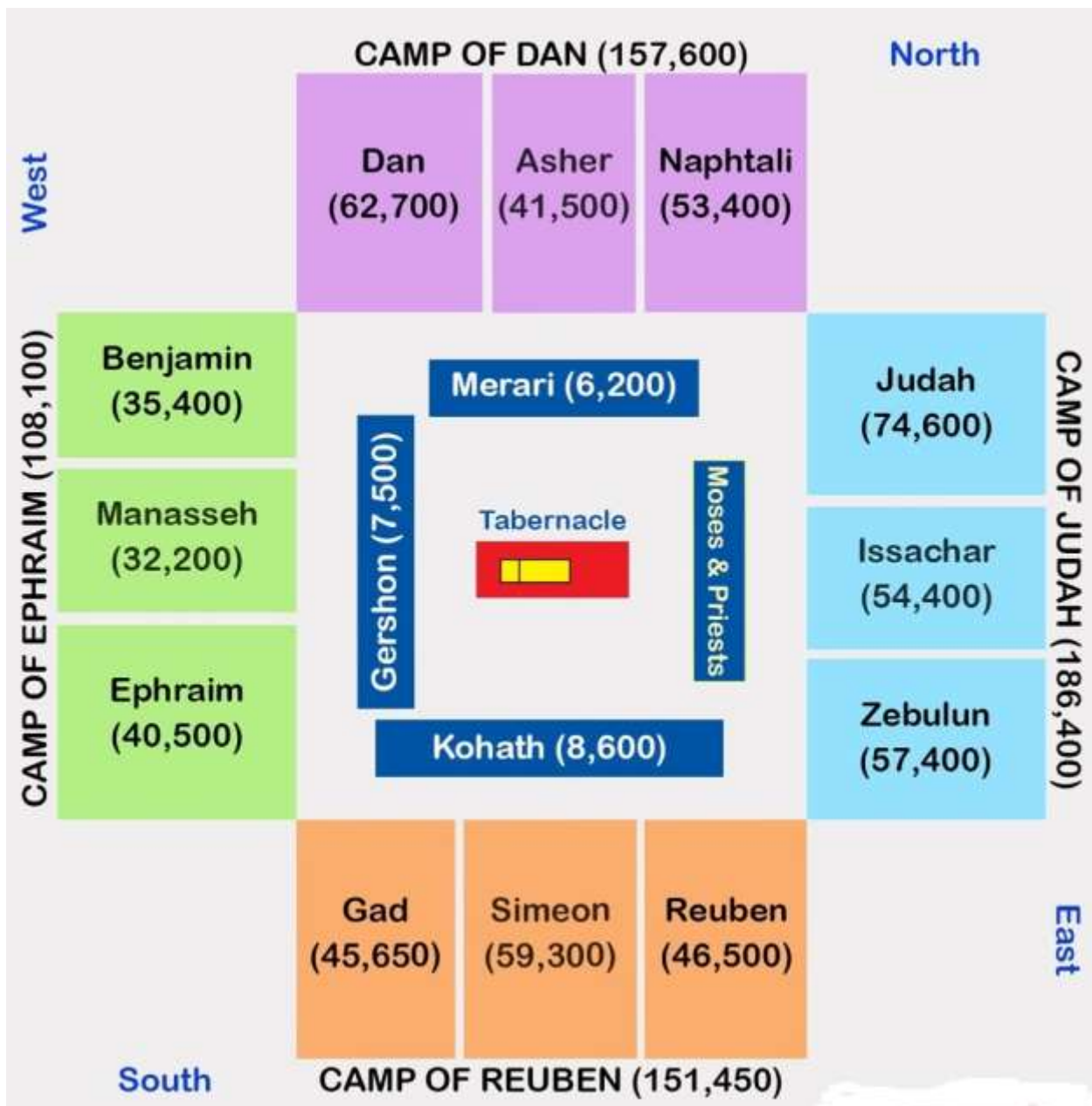
For I see him from the top of the rocks,

Balaam was on a high hill and he had a view of Israel encamped in the plains of Moab below him

Who has counted the dust of Jacob, or the number of the fourth part of Israel?

Israel was divided into four groups around the tabernacle

See pic 2320



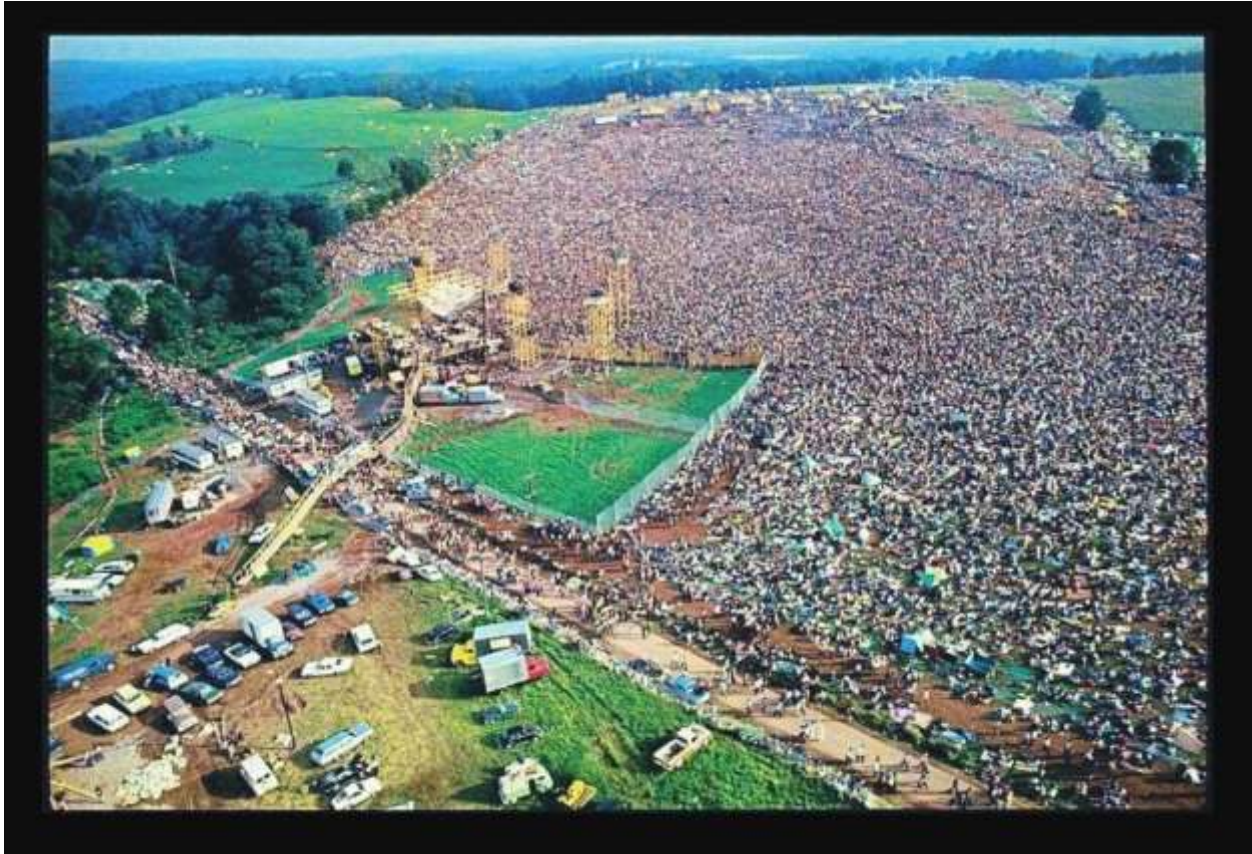


All of Israel numbered around 2 to 3 million people

One fourth (1/4) of Israel would have been around 500,000 to 700,000 people

To see this from an elevated distance would have been remarkable

See Pic 2321



This was Woodstock in 1969

400,000 people

**May I die the death of the upright, and may my end be like his!**

The end for a righteous man is peace, rest, and eternal life.

However, the journey to that place is often filled with struggles and suffering.

See 1 Peter 2:21

Verses 11 – 17

<sup>11</sup> Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to put a curse on my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed *them!*” <sup>12</sup> He replied, “Must I not be careful to speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?” <sup>13</sup> Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from where you may see them, *although* you will only see the extreme end of them and will not see all of them; and put a curse on them for me from there.” <sup>14</sup> So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on *each* altar. <sup>15</sup> Then he said to Balak, “Stand here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet *the Lord* over there.” <sup>16</sup> Then the Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and this is what you shall speak.” <sup>17</sup> So he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the leaders of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, “What has the Lord spoken?”

**Please come with me to another place from where you may see them, *although* you will only see the extreme end of them and will not see all of them**

There is some controversy about the translation of this verse.

Some say this text should read:

**For you have seen a large part of them, but have not seen them all**

**Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place and put a curse on them. So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah**

Pisgah is a mount that is 2330 feet high.

From this vantage point it was likely he could see all of Israel

So where was Balaam at the first viewing of the people?

See Numbers 22:41

He was at the high places of Baal, and he saw a portion of the people from there.

This would seem to support the alternate translation that says, **For you have seen a large part of them, but have not seen them all**

**18 Then he took up his discourse and said,**

**“Arise, Balak, and hear;  
Listen to me, son of Zippor!**

**19 God is not a man, that He would lie,  
Nor a son of man, that He would change His mind;  
Has He said, and will He not do it?  
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?**

**20 Behold, I have received a *command* to bless;  
When He has blessed, I cannot revoke it.**

**21 He has not looked at misfortune in Jacob;  
Nor has He seen trouble in Israel;  
The Lord his God is with him,  
And the joyful shout of a king is among them.**

**22 God brings them out of Egypt,  
*He is* for them like the horns of the wild ox.**

**23 For there is no magic curse against Jacob,  
Nor is there any divination against Israel;  
At the *proper* time it shall be said to Jacob  
And to Israel, what God has done!**

**24 Behold, a people rises like a lioness,  
And like a lion it raises itself;  
It will not lie down until it devours the prey,  
And drinks the blood of those slain.”**

**21 He has not looked at misfortune in Jacob;  
Nor has He seen trouble in Israel;  
The Lord his God is with him,  
And the joyful shout of a king is among them**

The "king" in view here is God

God is saying to Balak, I have already blessed this people in bringing them out of Egypt

And I will continue to do so.

It is odd that Edom has forgotten the fact that Israel asked for passage thru their land using the King's Highway and when Edom refused they went another way.

Maybe he never heard the expression, let sleeping dogs lie.



**Behold, a people rises like a lioness,  
And like a lion it raises itself;  
It will not lie down until it devours the prey,  
And drinks the blood of those slain.**

This is not the picture of a cursed nation, but one that is about to destroy its enemies

What God did for Israel will never be forgotten.

A whole nation was delivered from slavery in a single night, and for a while He made them the greatest nation on earth.

Verse 25 – 30

**<sup>25</sup> Then Balak said to Balaam, “Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!”**

**<sup>26</sup> But Balaam replied to Balak, “Did I not tell you, ‘Whatever the Lord speaks, I must do’?”**

**<sup>27</sup> Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God that you curse them for me from there.”**

**<sup>28</sup> So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the desert. <sup>29</sup> And Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here.” <sup>30</sup> Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on *each* altar.**

**Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will be agreeable with God that you curse them for me from there**

Balak never heard the expression, when you find yourself in a hole stop digging.

One commentator suggested that Balak, like most people of that time, believed there was a different god in each location?

If he did, then why did he call for Balaam who lived 350 miles away?

And why did the king of Midian who lived 550 miles away recommend this prophet of God.

Every nation or area may have had their own god but it seems that those who knew the true God believed his sphere of influence was not limited to one area.