

Numbers 24

Verses 1 - 2

When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek omens, rather he turned his attention toward the wilderness.

² And Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him

When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek omens.

We find out here that Balaam normally sought omens. An omen was a sign or warning from nature that something good or bad was about to happen.

When it says, “**he did not go as at other times to seek omens**”, it cannot be referring to the two previous messages from Balaam, because in both of these cases Balaam left Balak to meet with God and the messages came from God. Therefore, it has to refer to times when Balaam was helping others.

We are not told how Balaam was able to “read omens” to know if it was a good sign or a bad sign for those who sought his service but it seems he had a good reputation for doing this and the Midianites who lived 350 miles away knew about him.

So why did Moses make this point about Balaam? Balaam did not go to seek omens as he usually did because God intervened and told him not to go with the elders so he had no reason to seek an omen about this matter. Sometime after this he approached God again and he was told that he could go, but God stipulated that he could only speak what he was told so again there was no reason to seek an omen. By the time of this 3rd offering Balaam had recognized that God wanted to bless Israel so this ended any possible need for an omen.

² And Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

In the first two messages, God put a word in Balaam's mouth but here the Spirit of God comes upon him. Either way the message was the same but in this event the message took on a special significance because Balaam was divinely inspired to deliver the message rather than just reporting what God had told him.

Then he took up his discourse and said,

“The declaration of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the declaration of the man whose eye is opened;

⁴ The declaration of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered,

⁵ How pleasant are your tents, Jacob,
Your dwelling places, Israel!

⁶ Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens beside a river,
Like aloes planted by the Lord,
Like cedars beside the waters.

⁷ Water will flow from his buckets,
And his seed *will be* by many waters,
And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

⁸ God brings him out of Egypt,
He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
He will devour the nations *who are* his adversaries,
And will crush their bones,
And smash *them* with his arrows.

⁹ He crouches, he lies down like a lion,
And like a lioness, who dares to rouse him?
Blessed is *everyone* who blesses you,
And cursed is *everyone* who curses you.”

⁴ The declaration of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,

There are two different names for God here. Elohiym is translated God and El Shaddai is translated Almighty. Parallel verses with two words that mean the same thing is common in scripture.

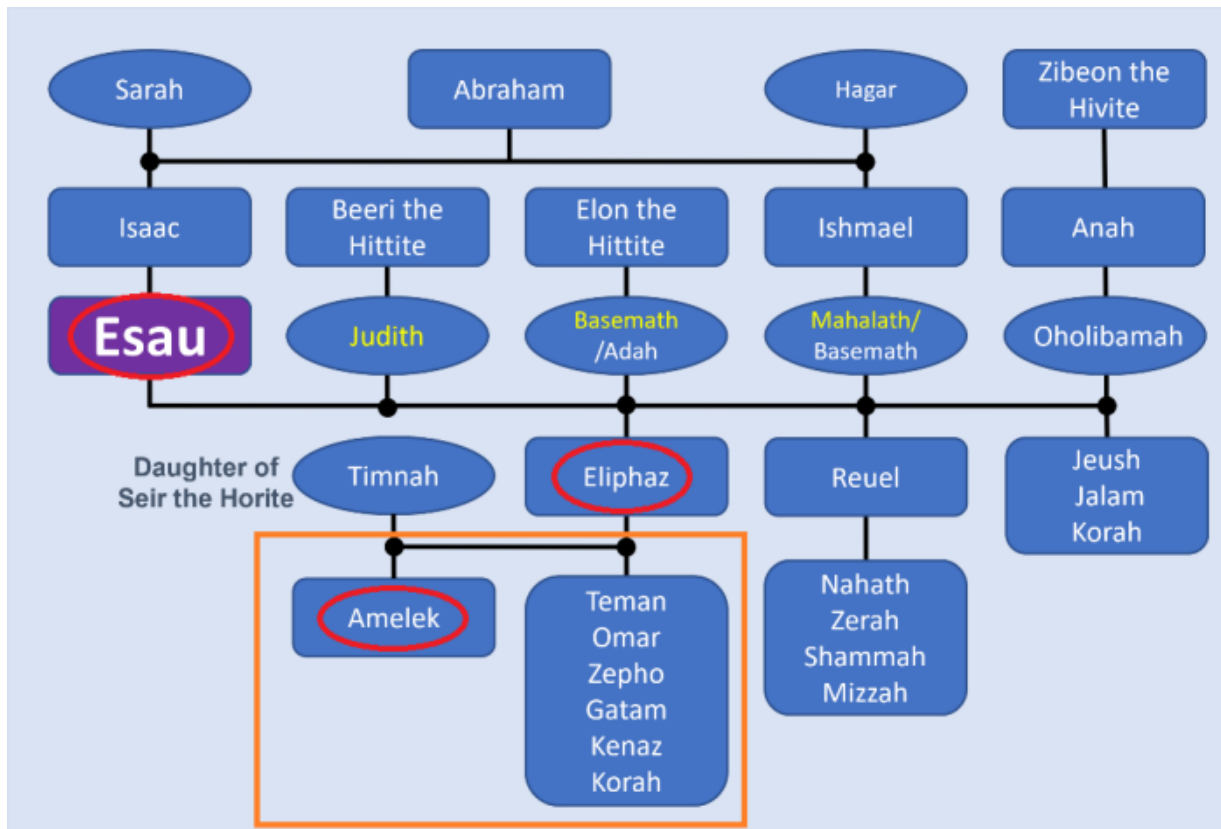
⁷ Water will flow from his buckets,
And his seed *will be* by many waters,

These are symbols of the blessings that Israel will receive from God.

⁷ And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

At that time the Amalekites were the most powerful of all the desert tribes. Agag was the king of the Amalekites who were descended from Esau.

See chart 2405



Amalek was one of 7 sons of Eliphaz the son of Esau.

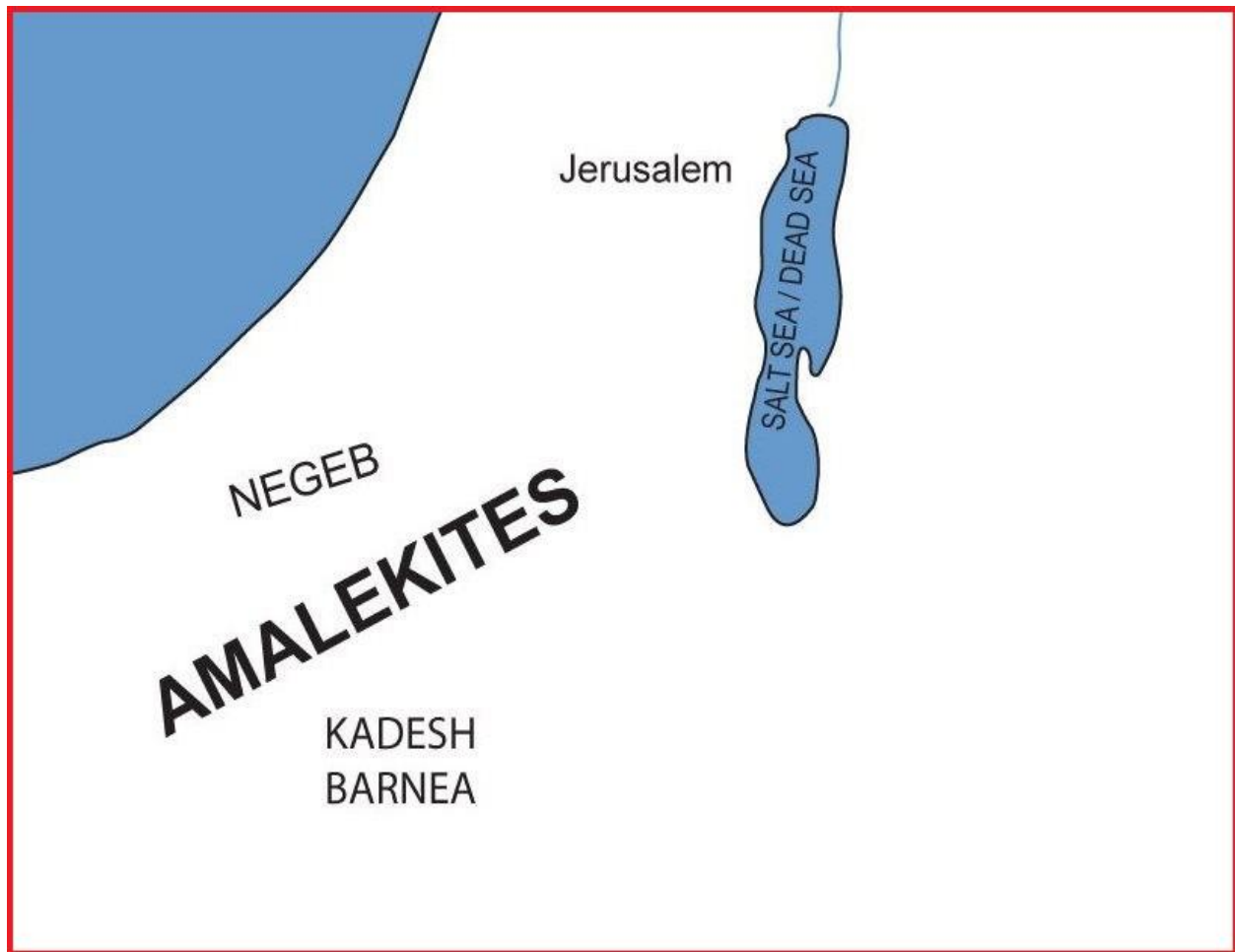
See Genesis 36:15 – 16

¹⁵ These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, ¹⁶chief Korah, chief Gatam, and chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah.

In time Amalek broke away from the other sons of Edom and became the father of the Amalekites. Perhaps his 6 half-brothers did not treat him as family.

The Amalekites lived in the Negev just below the Dead Sea.

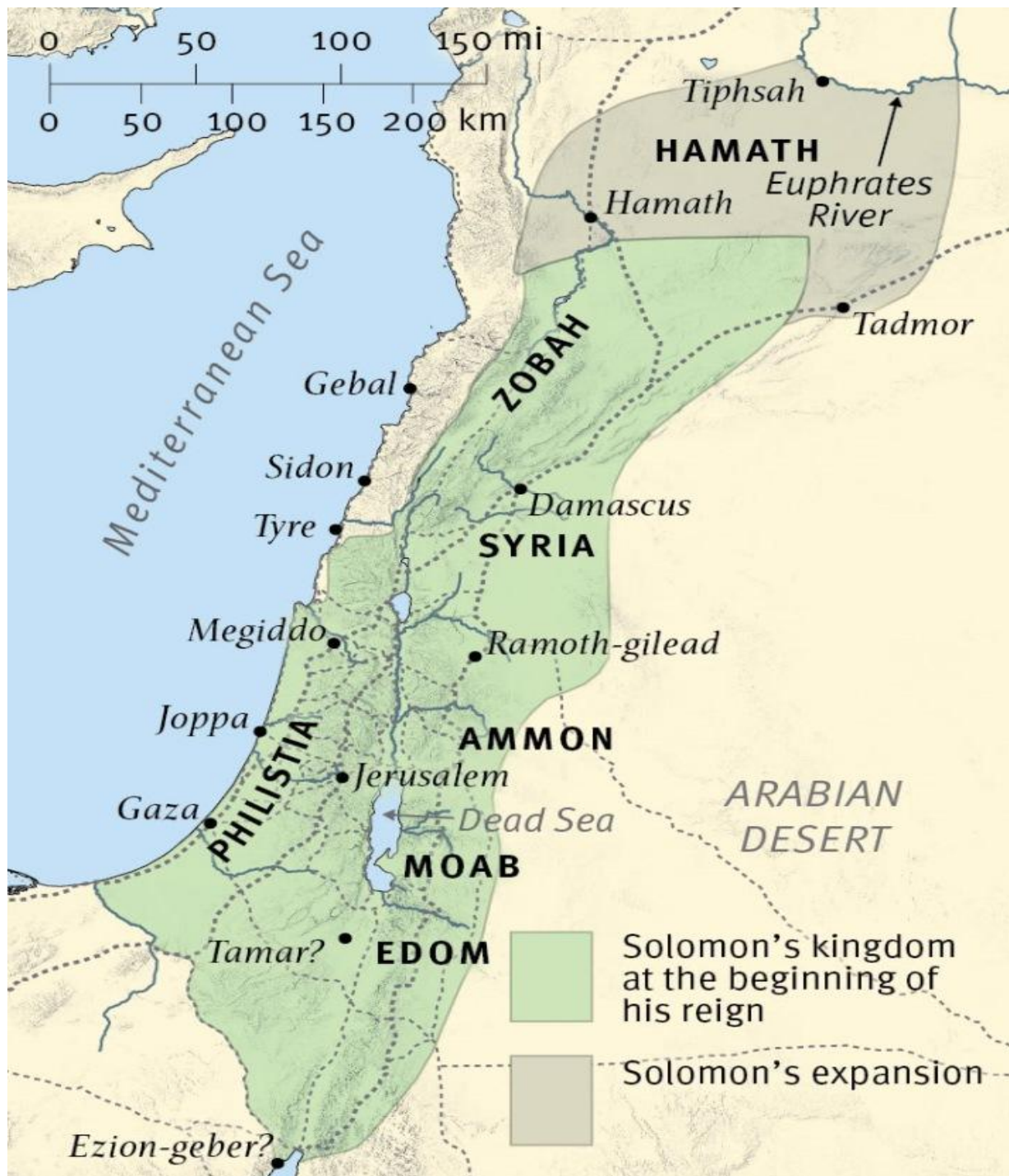
See Map 2406



⁸ God brings him out of Egypt,
He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.
He will devour the nations *who are* his adversaries,
And will crush their bones,
And smash *them* with his arrows.
⁹ He crouches, he lies down like a lion,
And like a lioness, who dares to rouse him?
Blessed is *everyone* who blesses you,
And cursed is *everyone* who curses you."

Balak had hoped that this 3rd effort to curse Israel would be successful but Balaam's words went further than the first two messages. Israel will subdue the land of Canaan and in time, during the reigns of David and Solomon, will rule all of the land that God promised to Abraham.

See map 2410



Verse 9 is almost a direct quote from Genesis 12:3 concerning Abraham.

³ And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
 And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Verses 10 - 14

¹⁰ Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! ¹¹ So flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the Lord has held you back from honor." ¹² And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not in fact tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, ¹³ 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do *anything* contrary to the command of the Lord, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the Lord speaks, I will speak'? ¹⁴ So now, behold, I am going to my people; come, *and* I will advise you of what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

¹² And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not in fact tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, ¹³ 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do *anything* contrary to the command of the Lord, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the Lord speaks, I will speak'?"

Balaam did tell them this.

See Numbers 22:18

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.*"

However, what he said was only a half truth.

See Numbers 22:12

¹² But God said to Balaam, "*Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.*"

He avoided telling them that he could not go and that he could not curse Israel. Balaam was guilty of deception because a half-truth has the same effect as telling a lie?

¹⁴ So now, behold, I am going to my people; come, *and* I will advise you of what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

Balaam says he is about to go home but first he will give Balak a glimpse into the future. This delay will cost him his life.

15 Then he took up his discourse and said,

**“The declaration of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the declaration of the man whose eye is opened,**

**16 The declaration of him who hears the words of God,
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered:**

**17 I see him, but not now;
I look at him, but not near;**

**A star shall appear from Jacob,
A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall smash the forehead of Moab,
And overcome all the sons of Sheth.**

**18 And Edom shall be a possession,
Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.**

**19 One from Jacob shall rule,
And will eliminate the survivors from the city.”**

17 A star shall appear from Jacob,

**A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall smash the forehead of Moab,
And overcome all the sons of Sheth.**

This prophesy has two rulers in mind. The first concerns King David. Moab will be defeated by Israel in the time of King David (998 BC).

See 2 Samuel 8:2

2 And He defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and a full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute.

The second ruler will be the Christ.

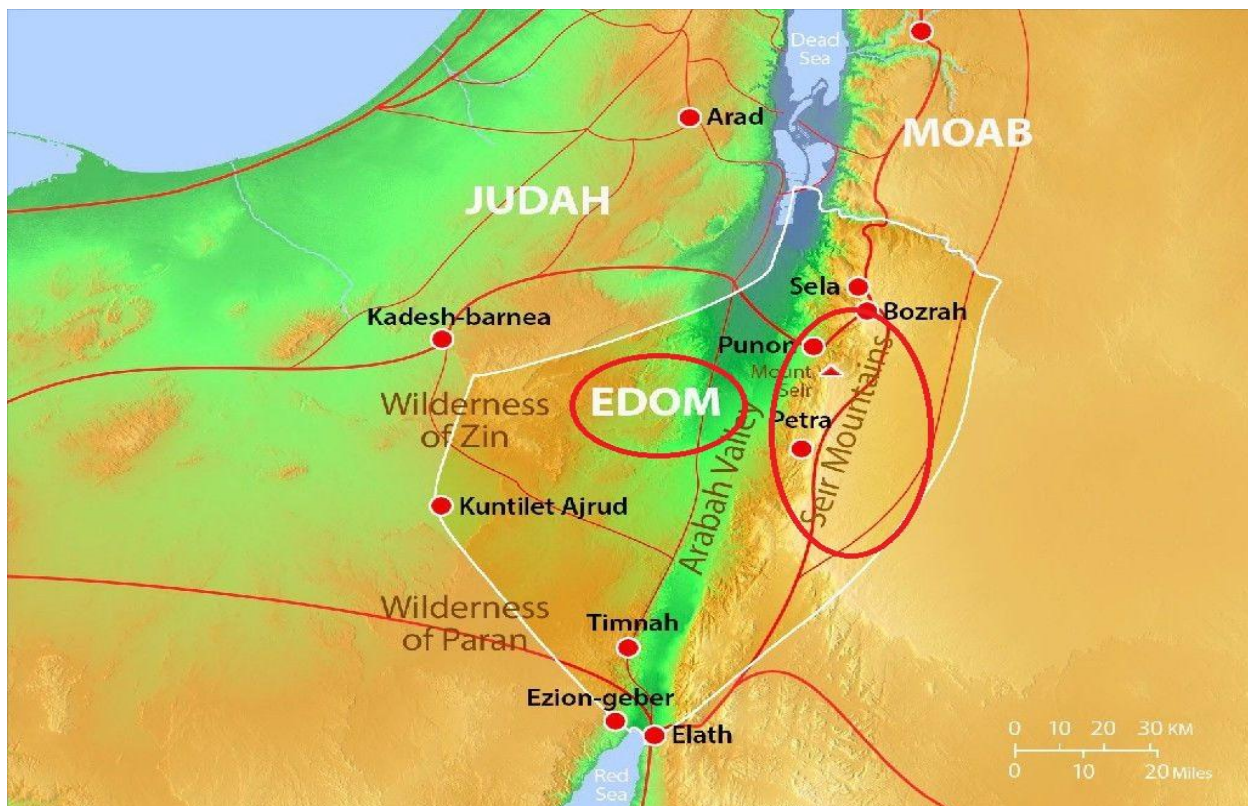
The phrase “all the sons of Seth” means all of mankind. Noah was a descendant of Seth and his three sons became the progenitors of mankind. So the fulfillment of this prophesy will take place when Christ returns and He judges all of mankind.

¹⁸ And Edom shall be a possession,
Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.

Some commentators believe the translation here is not good. Their main argument for that conclusion states that Seir was not an enemy of Edom; it was another name for Edom. That is true but they have missed the more obvious point. The phrase (its enemy) is a reference to Israel. Therefore the sentence reads Seir, "Israel's enemy" also will be a possession. As was mentioned in verse 4 parallel verses having the same meaning is quite common in Hebrew scripture.

The Seir Mountains were part of Edom.

See pics 2415



King David conquered Edom in 998 BC.

See 2 Samuel 8:14

¹⁴ He also put garrisons in Edom. In all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the Lord helped David wherever he went.

Verse 20 5th Oracle

²⁰ And he looked at Amalek and took up his discourse and said,

“Amalek was the first of the nations,
But his end *shall be* destruction.”

See 1 Samuel 15:7 - 8

⁷ Then Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah going toward Shur, which is east of Egypt. ⁸ He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and completely destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

Verses 21 – 22 6th Oracle

And he looked at the Kenite, and took up his discourse and said,
“Your dwelling place is enduring,
And your nest is set in the cliff.

²² Nevertheless Kain will suffer devastation;
How long will Asshur keep you captive?”

The Kenites were the descendants of Moses’ father-in-law.

See Judges 1:16

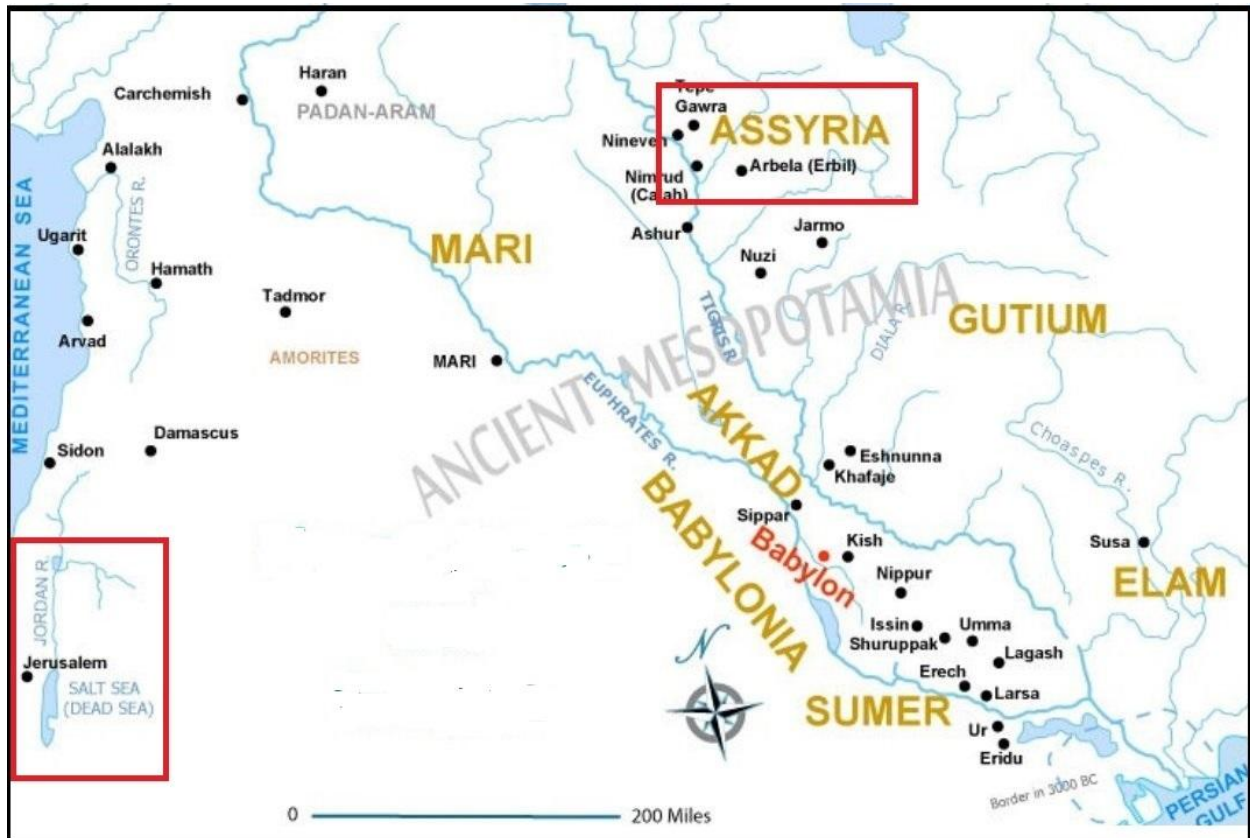
¹⁶ Now the descendants of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people.

See Map 2420



Asshur is another name for the Assyrians.

See map 2425



The Assyrians took the Kenites into captivity in 722 BC so this prophecy was spoken 685 years prior to its fulfillment.

Verses 23 – 24 7th Oracle

23 Then he took up his discourse and said,

“Oh, who can live unless God has ordained it?

**24 But ships *shall come* from the coast of Kittim,
And they shall oppress Asshur and oppress Eber;
So they also *will come* to destruction.”**

Oh, who can live unless God has ordained it?

God’s judgment of the nations is the center piece of these prophecies.

²⁴ But ships *shall* come from the coast of Kittim,

Kittim means the island of Cyprus.

See Map 2430

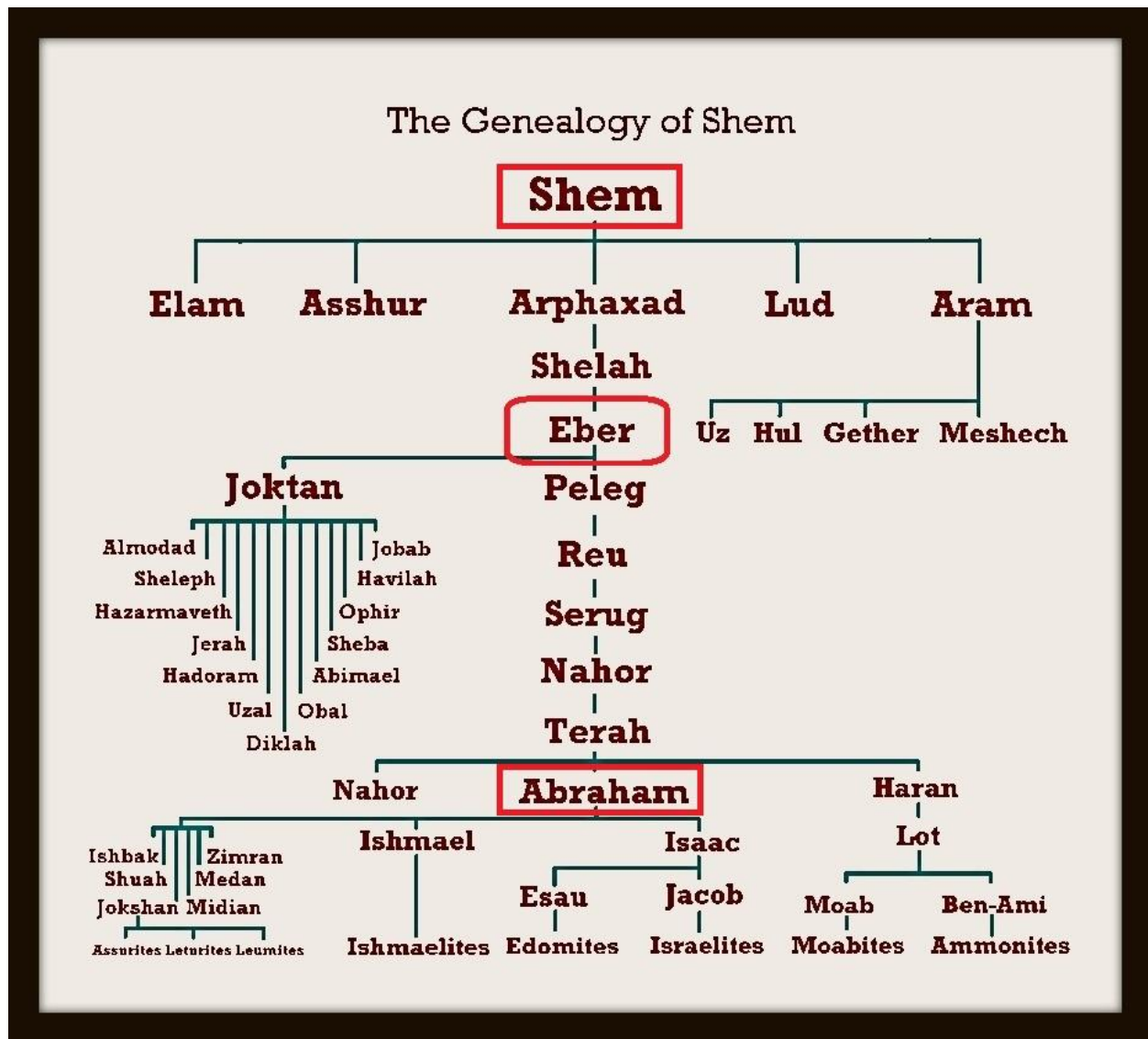


The ships came from Greece, and after a stop at Cyprus the invading army of Greece continued on to conquer the rest of the known world of that time.

**And they (Greece) shall oppress Asshur (Assyria) and oppress Eber (Israel):
So they (Greece) also *will* come to destruction."**

While Abraham is recognized as the patriarch of the Jewish people and the one God make His covenant with, Eber is also an important figure in their lineage. He is a descendant of Shem, Noah's son, and his name is linked to the term "Hebrew," suggesting a connection to the region "across the river" (The Euphrates).

See Chart 2440



This prophecy was spoken in 1407 BC and the events covered here cover a period of nearly 900 years (1026 BC to 146 BC).

1. Moab was destroyed by David in 998 BC.
2. Edom was conquered and made to serve King David. 998 BC.
3. The Amalekites were destroyed by Saul in 1026 BC
4. The Kenites were taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 BC.
5. Greece conquered Mesopotamia (which included Assyria and Israel) in 331 BC.
6. Rome conquered Greece in 146 BC.

This prophecy stands out as one of the great prophecies of the O.T.

Verse 25

Then Balaam arose, and he departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went on his way.

At the time Balaam was at the northern border of Edom and it says he returned to his place. Does this mean his residence in Mesopotamia (350 miles) or had he established a place to stay while he was in Moab. If he traveled to Mesopotamia then he must have traveled back to Midian before the events in Chapter 31 when he dies at the hands of Israel.

See Numbers 31:8

⁸ They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest of* those killed: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

Balaam first appears in chapter 22 and is killed in chapter 31. The time frame between those chapters is a maximum of 4 months.