THE THEOLOGY OF THE BALAAM ORACLES:
A PAGAN DIVINER AND THE WORD OF GOD

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THE THEOLOGY OF THE BALAAM ORACLES:
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Ronald Barclay Allen, Th. D.

The aim of this thesis is to explore, exegete and display the riches of the oracles of Balaam (Numbers 22-24) as they related to the broad history of Old Testament studies, and more particularly to Old Testament theology. The oracles of Balaam are a fitting corpus for such a task as they have long been regarded as both a test case for literary criticism and as the quintessence of Pentateuchal theology.

The study begins with a survey of the employment of the oracles of Balaam as used at Qumran, and by Bar Kochba, the Church Fathers, and the Talmud. Possible references to Balaam in the Quran are also discussed.

Since the oracles of Balaam have long been regarded as the test case for literary criticism, a rather thorough study is made of the reconstructions of the Balaam materials by a number of leading scholars, including Wellhausen, Lohr, Mowinckel, Burrows, Albright, von Pakozdy, and Eissfeldt. Next, a thorough study is undertaken relative to the critical issues concerning Balaam from a positive, harmonistic viewpoint. Balaam is seen to be from North Syria (Pitru/Amau, near the Euphrates). He is best viewed not as a "true" or "false" prophet, but rather outside of biblical prophetism altogether. He was it a pagan diviner of the class *baru* (cf. *apilu*), who was used by Yahweh in a sovereign manner for His own glory. All passages relative to the oracles and person of Balaam are discussed.

Since the Balaam oracles have been regarded to be the quin--
tessence of Pentateuchal theology, the next task in the present thesis is
to exegete and display the theological contributions of this pericope. Each
of the oracles is exegeted in the context of the curse motif and the *masal*
Gattung. Then, within the context of sound methodology in theological
research, including the proper use of *Heilsgeschichte*, the oracles of Balaam
are seen to be an outstanding medium for the revelation of the center of
theology: Yahweh, the God of Israel. Yahweh is revealed in these materials
by appellation, attribute, and mighty act.

Finally, the oracles of Balaam are related to the current crisis
in inerrancy and the ongoing conflict of ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Readers of dissertations perhaps grow weary by expressions of gratitude; writers of dissertations know that these expressions are necessary as they are genuinely deserved.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Lord for having guided me to Dallas Theological Seminary for my theological training which culminates in the present paper. Moreover, I would like to single out two professors who were most influential in my life in the six years of study at Dallas Seminary, Dr. Bruce K. Waltke and Dr. Haddon W. Robinson. I find that there is scarcely a class that I teach in which I do not feel my keen indebtedness to you men for your profound influence in my ministry.

I also wish to thank in a public way Mrs. Betty Lu Johnstone and her staff at the Library of the Western Conservative Baptist Seminary for being most gracious in helping me receive scores of items on inter-library loans. I also wish to thank Mrs. Paul K. Jewett of Fuller Theological Seminary Library for her kind assistance to me in the summer of 1971. There must also be a special "nod of the hat" to my colleagues and students who paced the father's waiting room with me during this project.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest thanks to the members of my family for their help to me while writing this paper. I wish to thank

my mother, Mrs. Vantoria Norwood, who typed the bibliography for me.
Most especially I wish to thank my children and my wife--only they know
how much encouragement I needed--and they gave it.[1]

A word may be said at this point concerning Bible quotations
in the present paper. If no source is given, the translation is my own.
Where I have used the *New American Standard Bible*, I have taken the liberty
to substitute *Yahweh* for *LORD*, despite the disclaimer of the editor of that
edition on p. ix.

Now in the words of Horace, to my dissertation--these words:

Well, Book, how well I see

You want to look like a book

And be *liber*, be free of me:

Portland, Oregon. February, 1973

[1] With apologies to Carol Christ and Judith M. Plaskow Bolden-
berg; I am not sure how they would classify this *Gattung*. "For the Advance-
ment of My Career: A Form Critical Study in the Art of Acknowledgement,
Council on the Study of Religion Bulletin, III (June, 1972), 10-14.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGL	W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*
AH	W. von Soden, ed. , *Akkadische Handworterbuch*
AJSLL	*The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
AJT	*American Journal of Theology*
ANEP	J. B. Pritchard, ed. , *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*
ANES	*Idem*, ed. , *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*
ANET	*Idem* , ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts.*
AOF	*Archiv fur Orient-Forschund*
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
BA	*The Biblical Archaeologist*
BAG	C. Bezold, *Babylonisch-Assyrisches Glossar*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	F. Brown, , S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, ed. , *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BETS	*Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*
BHis.	*Buried History*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*

BK	*Bibel and Kirche*
BS	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BZAW	*Beiheft zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CAD	A. L. Oppenheim, ed., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CBQ	*The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CHAL	W. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
CJT	*Canadian Journal of Theology*
CQR	*Church Quarterly Review*
CS	*Cahiers Sioniens*
CT	*Christianity Today*
CTS	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTM	*The Concordia Theological Monthly*
CUL	R. Whittaker, *A Concordance of the Ugaritic Literature*
CV	*Communio Viatorum*
DISO	C. -F. Jean and J. Hoftizjer, *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Semitiaues de 1'Ouest*
DP	*Deutsches Pfarrerblatt*
EI	*Eretz Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies*
EQ	*The Evangelical Quartet*
ET	*The Expository Times*

Expos.	*The Expositor*
GKC	E. Kautzsch, ed. , *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. and ed. by A. E. Cowley.
HAED	J. G. Hava, *Al-Faraid: Arabic-English Dictionary*
HR	*The Homiletic Review*
HSN	B. Waltke, "Hebrew Syntax Notes."
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	S. R Driver and Alfred Plummer, ed., *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*
Int.	*Interpretation*
Jastrow, Dictionary	Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBC	R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer and R. Murphy, ed., *The Jerome Bible Commentary*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
BR	*Journal of Bible and Religion*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS	*The Journal of Jewish Studies*
Jouon, P. Grammaire	*Jouon, Grammaire de 1'Hebreu Biblique*
JQR	*The Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*

JTC	*Journal of Theology and Church*
KBL	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*
KBL. Supp.	*Idem, Supplementum ad Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*
KBL³	*Idem, Hebraisches and Aramaisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament,* 3d ed.
KHAT	G. Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebraischen Alten Testament*
KHAW	E. Konig, *Hebraisches and Aramaisches Worterbuch zum Alten Testament*
Lane	E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I in 8 Parts.*
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
NBD	J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*
OL	*Orientalistche Literaturzeitung*
OS	*Oudtestamentische Studien*
OTS	*The Old Testament Student*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
RE	*The Review and Expositor*
RYIDEL	J. Stein, ed. , *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language: The Unabridged Edition*
RS	*Revue Semitique*
RSP, I	*Ras Shamra Parallels*, Vol. I.
RSR	*Recherces de Science Religion*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*

Scr.	*Scripture*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SVT	*Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*
SWT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley
THAT	E. Jenni and C. Westermann, ed., *Theologisches Handworterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Vol. I.
TS	*Theological Studies*
TSFB	*Tyndale Student Fellowship Bulletin*
TT	*Theology Today*
TWAT	G. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Vol. I.
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UF	*Ugarit Forschungen*
UT	C. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WB	M. Avi Yonah and A Malamat, *The World of the Bible*
WBC	C., F. Pfeiffer and E. F. Harrison, ed., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*
WHS	R. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

WUS	J. Aistleitner, *Worterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Texts and Versions

BHK	R Kittel, ed. *Biblica Hebraica*
BHS	G. Elliger, ed., *Biblica Hebraica* (Stuttgartensia)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Mas(s)oretic Text
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Syr.	Syriac
Vulg.	Vulgate

English Translations of the Bible

A. 0. T.	*The Amplified Old Testament*
A. S. V.	*The American Standard Version*
A. T.	*Das Alte Testament*
B. V. M. E.	*The Berkeley Version in Modern English*
K.J.-II	*King James II Version*
J. B.	*The Jerusalem Bible*
L. B.	*The Living Bible, Paraphrased*
N. A. S. B.	*The Now American Standard Bible*
N. E. B.	*The New English Bible*
N. S. R. B.	*The New Scofield Reference Bible*

R. S. V.	*Revised Standard Version.*
S. B. J.	*La Sainte Bible . . . de Jerusalem*
S. B. S.	*La Sainte Bible . Seyond*
Torah	*The Torah, Jewish Publication Society* (1962).
Y. L. T.	R Young, *Young's Literal Translation*

Other Sigla

Symbols used in putative source analysis:

J	The Jawhist (Yahwist) (s)
E	The Elohist(s)
D	The Deuteronomist(s)
P	The Priestly Writer(s)
R	The Redactor(s)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of the Study

In the Context of Old Testament Studies

The writer is occasionally asked by a person to whom he is newly introduced, "Whatever led you to study the Old Testament?" Sometimes this question is stated with such incredulity, that the writer has had to pause a moment to frame an answer that would be in keeping with the niceties of social-introduction *Gattungen*. It is perhaps a good thing that such awakenings sometimes grip one, for they serve as reminders that for many in our age, even among believers, the Old Testament is regarded as a rather quaint field of study.

One does not have to search long for reasons for such views about the Old Testament as a discipline. The average Christian has a shocking lack of insight into the worth of the Hebrew Scriptures. In part, at least, this is due to the neglect of the Old Testament in the pulpits of the churches of our Gleason L. Archer, Jr., recently expressed his chagrin over this lamentable fact:

> Curious to observe and hard to understand is the relative neglect of
> the Old Testament by Christians in our day as Sunday after Sunday the

average church attendant in the average evangelical, Bible-believing church hears no message at all from the Hebrew Scriptures. Such Scriptures may be referred to with respect, or cited as proof in confirmation of New Testament teaching; but nearly all the expository messages are taken from the Greek Scriptures.[1]

We have indeed "gone a long way since Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University, himself taught the freshmen and other classes Hebrew, and In 1781 delivered his commencement address in Hebrew."[2] It, is not going too far, moreover, to compare the present lack of emphasis on the Old Testament with a nascent return to Marcionism. As a matter of fact, John Bright insists that there has always been a Marcionist strain in our churches:

> This Marcionist strain, so clearly evident in the centuries that preceded us, has never died out but has continued on down to the present day. And always it has voiced the complaint that there is so much in the Old Testament that is alien and unedifying to the Christian, and that cannot be normative for him, that he would probably be better off without it.[3]

At another point he clarifies:

> Let us not magnify the dangers. But let us not minimize them either, for there is--if I know the situation at all--not a little neo-Marcionism in our churches. It has no official standing--indeed, under that name it scarcely exists at all--but it is unofficially present none-theless: call it a practical Marcionism, an implicit Marcionism, an inconsequent Marcionism, or what you will. That is to say, there are

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[1]Gleason L. Archer, Jr. , "A New Look at the Old Testament, " *Decision* XIII (August, 1972), 5.

[2] Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament, " *Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. Ernest Wright, Anchor Books (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday 1965), p. 141.

[3] John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville and Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 64.

many of our people who never heard of Marcion and who would be horrified to learn of the company they are in but who nevertheless use the Old Testament in a distinctly Marcionist manner. Formally, and no doubt sincerely, they hail it as canonical Scripture; but in practice they relegate it to a subordinate position, if they do not effectively exclude it from use altogether.[1]

It is the impression of the present writer that this is also the case in many churches of a more evangelical and fundamental nature than the churches its the purview of Professor Bright of Union Seminary, Richmond, Virginia. Church members--and pastors--who would shrink from any designation containing the preformative "neo-" [with its connotations of "Neo-Orthodox, " "Neo-Liberal, " or even "Neo-Evangelical"] are nonetheless rightly to be identified as "Neo-Marcionite. "

The relative neglect of the Old Testament by the Christian public in general, and by evangelical pastors in particular, seems to the present writer to be a disgrace, and certainly must be considered as dishonoring to God. But beyond these factors, the writer cannot help but to call attention to the loss the individual suffers who neglects the delights of the Hebrew Scriptures, which are indeed sweeter than honey from the comb and more precious than refined gold. The writer can understand with sympathy the sentiment noted by W. B. Riley as he described a visitor of the grandfather of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. "He found the old man of eighty-eight summers so intent upon reading the Holy Book that he only welcomed the stranger with a

[1] Ibid. , p. 74.

word, and then went on reading to himself, 'Wonderful!' 'Wonderful!"[1]

The writer certainly does not want to pit the Old Testament against the New Testament, with the resulting impression that one could "get along without" the New Testament if one just uses the older section of the Bible. He concurs with Walther Eichrodt in seeing that the "Old Testament religion, ineffaceably individual though it may be, can yet be grasped in this essential uniqueness only when it is seen as completed in Christ."[2]

Indeed, to stress the importance of the Old Testament over that of the New would be both reactionary and heretical, a sort of anti-Marcionite movement in the extreme. Often the excuse is given, however, that one cannot learn everything, so the best choice is to study the New Testament. Such is a false choice. Again we are reminded by the sharp wit of Bright:

> Lest I be misunderstood, let me say that were I obliged to choose whether students should be required to master the Old Testament *or* the New, I should without hesitation opt for the New. But the choice is a false one. I am confronted with no such choice--any more, I should say, than on sallying forth in the morning I am obliged to choose between wearing my trousers or my shirt: the decently dressed man requires both. Just so, the well-prepared minister must know both Testaments.[3]

Nevertheless, let it be said at the outset that the writer has a

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[1] W. B. Riley, "Is the Bible 'a Human or a Divine Book?" *The Christian Fundamentalist*, V (December, 1931), 213.

[2] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. by J. P. Baker (2 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), I, 27.

[3] Bright, *Authority*, p. 75, n. 46.

love-affair with the Old Testament Scriptures. While not agreeing with his

critical presuppositions, he does echo the view of the late H. H. Rowley who

wrote in the preface to a book by M. A Beek:

> I share Professor Beek's view that the Bible is the most wonderful
> book in the world. Within the Bible the Old Testament has a range and
> variety far greater than the New, and the human interest that belongs
> to its contents and persons whereby the rich and enduring word of God
> was mediated to men makes it unique among the world's sacred litera-
> ture.[1]

He further concurs with another reminder by the same author:

"He is wise if he remembers to read, not only all these books about the Old

Testament, but the text of the Old Testament itself; for it is a far more wonder-

ful book than all that has been written about it."[2]

The reference given above to a book by M. A Beek,[3] however,

also serves to remind one of another reason for the loss of excitement in some

readers of the Old Testament. This is the logical legacy of the critical school

of approach of much of contemporary Old Testament scholarship. Though this

critical approach has many forms, it has one child: the loss of *simhat torah*.

In a magnificent article in *Christianity Today,* Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis

University comments on the loss of the delight of the Scripture to many heirs

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[1] H. H. Rowley, in the "Foreword, " to M. A. Beek's *A Journey
Through the Old Testament*, trans. by Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Hodder and
Stoughton, 1959), p. 8.

[2] H. H. Rowley, "A Year's Work on the Old Testament, " *Interp*.,
VI (1952), 93.

[3] M. A. Beek, of the University of Amsterdam, is a devotee of
the German school of Alt and Noth.

of the critical school:

> If there is any expression in the Hebrew language that is charged
> with meaning for the intellectual person devoted to his biblical heritage,
> it is *simhat torah,* "the delight in studying Scripture. " I am familiar
> with this delight and I like to see others have the opportunity of
> experiencing it. I am distressed to meet ever so many intelligent and
> serious university students who tell me that their teachers of Bible have
> killed the subject by harping on the notion that biblical study consists
> of analyzing the text into JEDP. The unedifying conclusion of all such
> study is that nothing is authentic. That this type of teaching should
> go on in our age of discovery when biblical scholarship is so exciting
> is, so to speak, a perverse miracle.[1]

Recently, Samuel Sandmel of the Hebrew Union College--Jewish
institute of Religion, Cincinnati, expressed chagrin at the loss of enjoyment
of the Old Testament Scriptures by those whose sole preoccupation seems to be
source analysis and redaction criticism. He admitted that he had no desire to
disassociate himself from the critical school, but at the same time he insisted
(with evident emotion), "I love the Hebrew Bible!" Often Pentateuchal scholar-
ship has so concentrated on isolating the putative sources, he maintained, the
synthesis of the whole, and its possible esthetic import has been lost.[2]

Hence, we find the Old Testament mutilated by its enemies and
ignored by its friends. The present paper is being written by one who cherishes
simhat torah, and who feels that the study of an Old Testament subject has a

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[1] Cyrus H. Gordon, "Higher Critics and Forbidden Fruit, " *CT*,
IV (November 23, 199), 6.

[2] Samuel Sandmel, "The Enjoyment of Scripture: An Esthetic
Approach, " (unpublished paper presented at the International Congress of
Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles,
Calif. , September 4, 1972).

magnificent *raison d'etre*: the study of the text is its own reward.

The Subject in Itself

If one might grant the reasonableness of an Old Testament subject, there still remains the question, "Why a study of Balaam?" To this question several lines of answer will be proposed.

It is a story to be enjoyed. --To many, if the mention of the name "Balaam" evokes any response, there comes an almost involuntary smile as one remembers, "Is not he the character with the donkey?"[1] Balaam for some might be regarded as a precursor of television's almost forgotten series, "Mr. Ed." In this case, however, we have a Sunday School story. At once we feel our cultural distance from a pre-Walt Disney context in which it is reported that a man and his donkey had a conversation on the care and treatment of animals of burden. Despite our "culture shock, " however, we sense at once that this is a story to be enjoyed.

More than one writer has seen the genuine humor in the narrative and has commented thereon. Eakin, for example, says that "this story should

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[1] Eising suggests that this story is common knowledge to anyone at all aware of the Old Testament: "Wer im Alten Testament Bescheid weiss, kennt die Erzahlung von der sprechenden Eselin des Propheten Balaam." Hermann Eising, "Balaams Eselin, " *BK*, XIII (1958), 45. One has to be aware of *something* of the Old Testament, however, to ho able to associate the name "Balaam" with the donkey incident. On more than one occasion the present writer has been the subject of his thesis and has responded, only to confront a rather blank expression on the part of the questioner.

be read as a didactic humor narrative."[1] Similarly, though from a different

perspective, Stevenson speaks of "the delightful, humorous tale of Balaam."[2]

Although remarking on the "strange" nature of the story of Balaam, Morley adds

that it caught the imagination of the Hebrews, and among liturgical churches

which, follow the pericope calendar, it has its place in the church year--the

Third Sunday After Easter. "The reason is clear," he states. "It is full of the

stuff of life. It is an elemental human story."[3]

Again, Westermann suggests that "the whole account is permeated

by a jubilant and grateful exultation over the blessing that God has granted, his

people, surrounded as they are by the superior might of other nations."[4] One

writer has gone so far as to suggest that the story of Balaam is "one of the

most fascinating in the whole of the Old Testament."[5] Hence, one fine reason

[1] Frank E. Eakin, Jr., *The Religion and Culture of Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Thought* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971), p. 121, n. 89. George W. Anderson classifies the story as an example of *Marchen*, the German term for "fairy-tale" (though he does say that this term may be misleading). The aim of *Marchen*, he avers, is to amuse rather than to instruct or to edify. *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1959), p. 228.

[2] Dwight E. Stevenson, *Preaching on the Books of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), p. 36.

[3] R. Wragge Morley, "Third Sunday After Easter. Balaam--Desire in Conflict with Conscience, " *ET*, LIII (1941-42), 234.

[4] Claus Westermann, *Handbook to the Old Testament*, trans. by Robert H. Boyd (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), p. 75.

[5] J. S. Stewart, "Third Sunday After Easter--Balaam, " *ET*, XLVI (1934-35), 324.

for a study of this section of the Old Testament lies in the simple fact: it is a story to be enjoyed.

It is a story that is exceptionally well-written. --This too is noted by scholars of diverse theological persuasions. Throughout his article on the Balaam narrative, the Hungarian scholar von Pakozdy comments on the rare art of the one he takes to be the final redactor of the story. Note, for instance, the words of his conclusion:

> In conclusion we may ascertain how masterful the skill of the narrator is and the theological revision technique of the final redactor, who, forming so artfully of his ancient and written tradition, and in the spirit of the prophetic religion, was able to create such a unity out of diverse theological concepts.[1]

Another scholar who has remarked on the literary style of the narrative is the Paulist father Frederick L Moriarty. He speaks of the art of the story, and concludes that it is "one of the most fascinating stories of the Old Testament."[2]

A writer dramatically different to the above in theological outlook was the Brethren author who chose to retain semi-anonymity as "C. H. M." He

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[1] His words are: "Zusammenfassend konnen wir feststellen, wie meisterhaft die Erzahlunoskunst und die theologische Umarbeitungstechnik des Endredaktor ist, der die sicher uralte mundliche and schriftliche Uberlieferung so kraitvell und im Geiste der prophetischen Religion zu gestalten, aus vielerei theologisch so Einheitliches zu shaffen vermochte." Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy, "Theological Redactionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope (Num 22-24), " *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, p. 176.

[2] Frederick L. Moriarty, *The Book of Numbers, II: With A Commentary*, "Pamphlet Bible Series" (New York: Paulist Press [Paulist Fathers] , 1960), p. 5.

wrote, "It is impossible to conceive anything more magnificent than these parables."[1] Again, by contrast in theological position, we may cite Heinrich Ewald who is reported to have described our narrative as "unparalleled in effectiveness and unsurpassed in artistic finish."[2] Such statements could be compounded several times over, but the point remains: the Balaam narrative is exceptionally well-written.[3]

It is a story from which one is warned.--Many know of Balaam primarily from New Testament references to him. There are three of these, and they speak in unison of the warning to be made to the New Testament believer from the story of Balaam. Peter denounces false prophets in words of unrelieved severity:

> Forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.   [II Peter 2:15-16, N. A. S. B.]

Jude, the brother of our Lord, also cites Balaam as an horrible

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[1] C. H. M[ackintosh] , *Notes on the Book of Numbers* (Reprint of 1880 ed.; Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Publishers [n. d.]), p. 423.

[2] Cited [without documentation] by Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters: Adam to Achan* (10th ed.; London: Oliphants, Ltd. [n. d.]), p. 264.

[3] James A. Wharton begins a recent study on the Samson stories by asserting that "only a Philistine can deny that the Samson stories are superb examples of ancient narrative art." "The Secret of Yahweh: Story and Affirmation in Judges 131-16, " *Interp*., XXVII (January, 1973), p. 48. We might paraphrase, "only a Moabite can deny that the Balaam stories are superb examples of ancient narrative art."

example out of the past respecting false prophets:

> Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.   [Jude 11, N. A. S. B.]

Finally, our Lord Himself, in His series of messages to the churches, warned the Assembly in Pergamum by these words:

> But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality.   [Rev. 2:14, N. A. S. B.]

Hence, in three different books, three separate writers (Peter, Jude and John) use Balaam as the example par excellence of false teachers, and warn their readers accordingly. No section that is cited three times by New Testament writers may be thought of as unimportant, even on a sliding scale of value. Nevertheless, it is not the New Testament use of the Old Testament section which "makes" the older passage important. Rather, the citation of the passage three times in the New Testament seems to be from a common recognition by these New Testament writers (and our Lord) of the intrinsic illustrative worth of the story. Truly--it is a passage from which one is warned.

It is a story containing great poetry. --It has not always been recognized that the oracles of Balaam are cast in poetry. The device of parallelism in these sections seems to have escaped notice in post-biblical writers until the time of Ibn Ezra, and then it was noted only haltingly. But it seems that he was the first "modern" (A. D. 1093-1168) who pointed to the

parallelism in the Balaam oracles.[1]

Since the publication (in 1753) of *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* by Bishop Robert Lowth, the features of Hebrew poetry have become a subject of detailed study. This study has become intense since the discovery of the large body of poetic texts at Ugarit in 1928 and following. The relationship of the Ras Shamra texts to our passage is striking, for the Balaam oracles "are full of Ugaritic parallels."[2]

The poetry of the Balaam oracles has value in its own right, but also, as will be seen, in relationship to the relative dating of early Israelite poetry in the Old Testament. For the moment, though, we may remark with Unger that the poetry of the Balaam oracles is superb, however one may regard Balaam as a man.

> The question is, Was Balaam, the soothsayer, the diviner, also a prophet of Jehovah? Nowhere is he called a prophet, though plainly he does the work of a prophet, and it is scarcely possible to conceive of anything more magnificent in all prophetic literature than the parables he delivered, which bear, in every detail, the superlative seal of divine inspiration.[3]

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[1] George Buchanon Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry: Considered With Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament*, "The Library of Biblical Studies," ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (Reprint; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), p. 18. Gray states, "so far as I am aware, similar observations in writers earlier than Ibn Ezra have never yet been dis-overed."

[2] Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 630.

[3] Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Studv of the Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest* (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1952), p. 215.

The poetry of the enigmatic Balaam is indeed superb poetry.

It is a story presenting significant theology. --Jewish readers
of these chapters of the Book of Numbers have sensed the theological impli-
cations of the oracles for generations. Gordon writes:

> It is of more than passing interest to note that Numbers 22-24 represents
> the gentile prophet Balaam as inspired by God; and his utterances, such
> as "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; thy tabernacles, O Israel"
> (Numbers 24:5) have remained among the most cherished passages in
> Scripture throughout Synagogue history.[1]

That these chapters are cherished is utterly proper and fitting.
A mere perusal of the Book of Numbers should show the reader the relative
importance of the Balaam pericope. The principle of the economy and selec-
tivity of Hebrew historiography (a theological principle) militates against the
inclusion of lengthy sections unless the concern of such a section is of
overriding theological importance. The issue leading to the inclusion of the
Balaam materials in the Book of Numbers must be seen to be theological.
"This story was evidently preserved in such length because of its demon-
stration of the greatness of God."[2]

Though the point seems to be missed by some, the importance
of the section to Old Testament Theology is striking indeed. Moriarty, writing
in *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, avers: "Textual difficulties disregarded,

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[1] Cyrus H. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background
of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 41.
[2] Note in *The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible*
(Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), p. 224.

few sections in the Pentateuch are more important theologically than this remarkable narrative. In a real sense the Balaam story may be said to summarize the revelation of God's purpose as it was communicated to Moses."[1]

The theological thrust of the Balaam narrative is noted forcefully in the estimation of the Czeckoslovakian scholar Zdenek Sousek:

> The Balaam pericope is a weighty component of the message concerning the salvation work of Yahweh. The superiority of Yahweh over all his foes is there demonstrated. The incident is a mighty comfort to the threat and quaking in the presence of wicked powers and is an eloquent testimony that no annihilator, no destroyer, no death has the last word, but Yahweh, who intervenes entirely unexpectedly to save his community, to open to it new horizons and to give to it new hope.[2]

Hence, the Balaam oracles and the narrative in which they are cast play a major role in Old Testament *Heilsgeschichte*. The oracles and their setting contain concepts that are tangent to many critical areas of Old Testament theology. Some of these include the knowledge of Yahweh by a non-Israelite, reception of revelation, blessing and cursing motifs, magic

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[1] Frederick L. Moriarty, "Numbers, " *JBC*, I, 95. [It may be noted that this is the same author, but a different work, than that cited on page 9, n. 2.]

[2] His words are: "Die Bileam-Perikope ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil der Botschaft uber das Heilswerk Jahwes. Es wird da die Ubermacht Yahwes uber alle seine Gegner demonstriert. Das Ereignis ist ein machtiger Trost den Bedrohten und den vor bosen Machten Zitternden und ist ein beredsames Zeugnis, dass das letzte Wort kein Vernichter, kein Verderber, kein Tod hat, aber Yahwe, der ganz unerwartet eingreift, seine Gemeinde zu retten, ihr neue Horizonte zu offnen und neue Hoffnung zu geben." Zdenek Souek, "Bileam and seine Eselin: Exegetische-theologische Bemerkungun zu Num. 22," *CV*, X (1967), 185.

and divination, sacrifice, miracle, prophetism, messianic hope, eschatology, and others but mainly, the concern within the oracles is with the person and work of Yahweh and how He relates to His people.

Further, a major ramification of these oracles is to be found in whit they contribute to the current crisis and debate concerning the concept of the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

In summary, then, it may be reaffirmed: the oracles of Balaam present significant theology.

It is a story that impinges dramatically on the critical issues of Old Testament studies.--As will be seen in the sampling of critical studies of the Balaam section, this pericope has become a cause celebre in the issue of literary criticism of the Pentateuch. It is in fact a major battleground for Pentateuchal-source theories; indeed--a veritable test case. Witness the number of major articles and commentaries dealing with this basic issue. Studies have been written on the critical issues of the Balaam section by von Gall, van Hoonacker, Wellhausen, Gray, Nestle, Gressmann, Lohr, Mowinckel, Edelkoort, Eissfeldt, Albright, Coppens, and many others. A number of these articles will be surveyed in the following chapters. It may be stated without exaggeration that the questions of literary analysis alone justify this section of the Old Testament as worthy of major investigation.

Summary. --In the general context of the supreme worth of the

Old Testament as a whole, the Balaam story has been seen to be a section worthy of serious investigation. It has its own unique features and problems, as well as inherent high interest level. It is a story to be enjoyed, it is remarkably well-written, it includes the substance of significant warning, it contains great poetry, it presents significant theology, and it impinges on major critical issues of Old Testament studies.[1]

Limits of the Study

As may be inferred from a reading of the preceding pages of the introduction, a perusal of the table of contents, and a paging through the bibliography--many of the theological problems and categories related to the oracles of Balaam are immense and are themselves the subjects of extended scholarly studies. The primary investigation of this paper will be of the Balaam oracles and the person and work of Balaam. There will be an extensive study of the critical approaches to the literature of the pericope because of the pervasive influence such studies have exerted in the past and still press in the present. There will then be a thorough--going presentation of the

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[1] It may be surprising that this story with all of its drama has not been the subject of great paintings more often than is the case. It is not entirely lacking in art, however. Witness "The Story of Balaam's Ass," a painting by the young Reirbrandt dating from 1626. The picture is characterized by dramatic action and vivid contrast of light and dark. The ass is on its knees, Balaam's rod is extended, and the angel's sword is raised over Balaam. The two servants are stilled in the background. This painting is now housed in the Musee Cognacq-Jay, Paris. It is reproduced conveniently in H. W. Janson and Dora Jane Janson, *The Picture History of Painting: From Cave Painting to Modern Times* (Now York: Harry NT. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1957), plate 267.

historical problems attendant to the narrative from a positive viewpoint. This will be followed by a full treatment of the oracles proper from an exegetical standpoint. Then the theological issues that are implicit and explicit in the text will be explored, with reference to other literature.

It is the desire of the writer that this paper will be of worth in terms of the conclusions reached as well as in terms of the methodology used.

CHAPTER II

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY:

BACKGROUND, SUMMARY, AND EARLY TRADITION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for the rest of the study by giving an historical introduction to the Balaam materials in the pre-critical era. In this manner, the critical approaches to be surveyed in the following chapter may be seen in historical context.

First, there will be given a survey of the background of our narrative in the Book of Numbers. This will be followed by a summary of the events of Numbers 22-24. At this point, attention will shift to the uses made of the Balaam materials in early tradition. We will look at the use made of the fourth *masal* at Qumran, and then by Bar Kochba in the period of the Second Revolt. Next we will turn to two representatives from the Church Fathers to note their use of this same *masal*. Attention will then be given to the characterization of Balaam in the Talmud. Finally, there will be a survey of Balaam *vis-a-vis* the Qur'an.

This chapter is meant to be but a survey. Any one of these several issues could itself be the subject for a far more extensive study.

The Background of the Narrative

We may begin this chapter by surveying the outlines of the

story of Balaam and Balak in Numbers 22-24, as well as noting the antece-

dents thereof. Numbers 22 begins with the Israelites having recently de-

feated the Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og, kings of Heshbon and Bashan,

respectively.

In two quick assaults Israel had conquered Transjordan north

of the Kingdom of Moab and was now encamped in the Plains of Moab, oppo-

site Jericho. The presence of this formidable foe within its borders brought

terror to Moab. The intensity of Moab's fear is expressed with considerable

feeling In Numbers 22:3:

וַיָּגָר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם מְאֹד כִּי רַב־הוּא

וַיָּקָץ מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they
were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

The verb גוּר III, "to fear," is intensified by the adverb מְאֹד.

This is then brought into even sharper relief by the very strong term of fear

קוּץ "to be in dread," "to feel a sickening dread."[1]

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[1] Cf. , e. g., *KBL*, p. 833. [A list of abbreviations for scholarly
reference tools is included at the beginning of the paper.] *BDB*, p. 880,
reads, "to feel a loathing, abhorrence, sickening dread." Rabbi Hirsch
explains that the word is quite strong in connotation: "קוץ, vomit, the
highest degree of dislike, they became sick of everything, all that they had

In one sense this fear Moab had of Israel was quite unnecessary, although Moab could not have known it at the time. Israel had been charged by Yahweh not to take so much as the space of a footprint [עַד מִדְרַךְ כַּף־רָגֶל] of land from that nation. Yahweh had granted Mount Seir to Esau and He had given Ar to Moab--an expression of His sovereignty over the nations (Deut. 2:4-9). Deuteronomy 2:9 states Israel's lack of claim to the land of Moab in absolute terms:

וַיֹּאמֶר יהוה אֵלַי אַל־תָּצַר אֶת־מוֹאָב

וְאַל־תִּתְגָּר בָּם מִלְחָמָה

כִּי לֹא־אֶתֵּן לְךָ מֵאַרְצוֹ יְרֻשָׁה

כִּי לִבְנֵי־לוֹט נָתַתִּי אֶת־עָר יְרֻשָׁה:

And Yahweh said to me, Do not show hostility to Moab,
and do not engage in war with them,
for I will not give you any part of its land as a possession,
for I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.

In this significant passage we are reminded that Israel, though under God's blessing, had divine limits upon it. Yahweh is sovereign in all Israel's acts.

There is another level, however, in which the sickening fear

became distasteful, despicable, yea repulsive מפני בני ישראל, at the thought of the children of Israel. " Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch: and Explained*, Vol. IV: *Numbers*, trans. by Isaac Levy (2d ed., rev.; London: L. Honig & Sons, Ltd. , 1964), p. 390. Cf. also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1339, who reads the meaning of this word: "to shrink, to feel aversion, to loath, fear." He then gives a citation of *Sifra K'dosh*: כאדם שהוא קץ ממזונן" like a man that is sick of his food (and vomits)."

Moab felt for Israel was fully in keeping with the divine economy; in fact it may be said to be a fulfillment of prophecy. We read in Deuteronomy 2:25:

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָחֵל תֵּת פַּחְדְּךָ וְיִרְאָתְךָ

עַל־פְּנֵי הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל־הַשָּׁמָיִם

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּן שִׁמְעֲךָ וְרָגְזוּ וְחָלוּ מִפָּנֶיךָ׃

> This day I will begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you
> on the faces of the peoples under all the heavens,
> who, whenever they may hear report of you, will quiver and writhe
> in terror at your presence.[1]

Moreover, the fear Moab felt was accentuated by the news of the defeat by Israel of the Amorite kings to the north of Moab, viz. Sihon and Og (Num. 21:21-35; cf. Deut. 2:26-3:11). This put Moab in an especially difficult position, for the newly conquered lands had formerly belonged to Moab. Numbers 21:26 indicates such, as it states that Heshbon, the capital city of Sihon, had been wrested by the Amorites from a former Moabite king (perhaps Zippor, the father of Balak). Hence, the taunt song of Numbers 21:27-30 was especially galling to Moab,

> Therefore those who use proverbs say,
>> "Come to Heshbon! Let it be built!
>> So let the city of Sihon be established.
>> For a fire went forth from Heshbon,
>> A flame from the town of Sihon,
>> It devoured Ar of Moab,
>> The dominant heights of the Arnon.[2]

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[1] Compare. Exodus 23:27.

[2] The phrase בַּעֲלֵי בָּמוֹת אַרְנֹן is difficult to interpret. The

> Woe to you, O Moab!
> You are ruined, O people of Chemosh!
> He has given his sons as fugitives,
> And his daughters into captivity,
> To an Amorite king, Sihon.
> But we have cast them down,
> Heshbon is ruined as far as Dibon,
> Then we have laid waste, even to Nophah,
> Which reaches to Medeba.
>   [N.A.S.B.]

As van Zyl indicates, the singing of this song may well have a principal cause for the excruciating dread Moab had of Israel. He states, "In this song we can therefore ascertain a primary cause for the king of Moab's summoning Balaam."[1] Similarly, Geikie summarizes:

> Moab had never relinquished the hope of winning back from the Amorites the lands taken by them for a time. But the appearance of

R. S. V. renders "the lords of the heights of the Arnon"; the Torah renders, "the lords, of Bamoth of the Arnon." [See the table of abbreviations for an explanation of the sigla used for Bible translations and versions.]

[1] A. H. van Zyl, *The Moabites*, "Praetoria Oriental Series," ed. A. van Selms, Vol. III (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 7. Van Zyl discusses this passage at some length (pp. 8-10), arguing against critical reconstructions which would have the song refer to the defeat of Mesha, king of Moab, by Omni, king of Israel. The latter is stated, e. g., by Bruno Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri*, "Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, " ed. W. Nowack (Gottingen: Vandcnhoeck and Ruprecht, 1903), p. 584. Van Zyl states, "to transfer this incident to the period of king Mesha^c conflicts with the historical context of this poem and there is no reason to doubt the historicity of this context." The Moabites, p. 9. George Buchanan Gray is quite vague on the significance of this poem: "The one thing that is clear is that the poem celebrates a victory over Moab. Everything else is more or less uncertain." *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers,* ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 300.

Van Zyl's conclusion is that "the author of this pericope cited

Israel as a new owner, by right of conquest, seemed to cloud their prospect, and substitute another victorious people as the wrongful holders of the territory they still counted theirs.

> The position of Moab was, indeed, in every way full of alarm. Already stripped of more than half its territory, it seemed now in danger of losing the rest. Zippor--"The Bird, " father of Balak, the reigning king--had lost his life in the battle with Sihon, which had cost him also the greater and richer part of his kingdom. Seeing the utter overthrow of the Amorites, the conquerors of his own people, Balak, in "sore distress," sent messengers to the elders of Midian, a related tribe, urging them, in a figure well suited to a pastoral race, to come to his help, else "this people will lick up all round us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field."[1]

it to magnify the Israelite victory over Sihon. Thus this song was transformed by the Israelites into a mocking song, by which they demonstrated their own superiority over the Moabites. Perhaps we may suggest that this song was originally intended to be an Amorite mocking song, sung by their משלים after they had defeated the Moabites. This may be indicated by the sarcastic invitation to Moab to return to the recently destroyed city of Heshbon and to rebuild it. In ancient times the mocking song played a prominent part in warfare. This interpretation of the song conforms to its context, and it does not require inherent alterations of the text. By re-using this Amorite mocking song directed against the Moabites, the Israelites by implication uttered a threat against Moab. Thus they urged the king of Moab to acquire the help of Balaam." Van Zyl, *The Moabites,* p. 10.

It is further to be observed that chapter 21 of Numbers makes use of other older material, viz. the quotation from the Book of the Wars of the Lord (vv. 14-15) and the Song of the Well (vv. 17-18). The use of the taunt song of verses 27-30 is only one element in a larger collection.

[1] For a more detailed presentation of the difficulties than this cited from Cunningham Geikie, *Old Testament Characters* (New York: James Pott & Co. , 1897), pp. 112-113; consult Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography,* trans. by A. F. Rainey (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 184-92. Aharoni sees two traditions with entirely different conditions in Numbers 21 as against Numbers 33. He does state, however, that "already during the reign of the first Moabite King, Sihon, the King of Heshbon, carried out a sweeping campaign and conquered all of the Mishor as far as the Arnon. Heshbon, which had managed to hold its own against Moabite pressure, finally fell before the stormy

Such then is the setting for our narrative: the sickening dread of Moab concerning the people of Israel. A despair seized the nation, and that despair led to a desperate act--an appeal to supernatural power, the power of the curse.[1]

A Summary of the Narrative

Balak, King of Moab, felt that there was no military means by which he might conquer the Hebrew forces. Hence, he turned to the super-natural means of the effective curse. He consulted with the Midianite elders and then, with their advice guiding him, sent for an internationally

attack of the Israelite tribes who then assumed for themselves the privilege of taking over all of its land as far as the Arnon. . . . Henceforth, the Arnon was the traditional border for the Israelite tribes in eastern Transjordan. On the other hand, the Moabites considered this an enchroachment on their land. The pressure of their expansion was always directed northwards, and in different periods they succeeded in restoring this region to themselves as far as Medeba on the border of Heshbon and sometimes as far as the southern end of the eastern Jordan Valley, which was known even in Israelite tra-dition by the name 'the plains of Moab'." Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, p. 189.

Noth relates the victory song of Numbers 21:27-30 to the "extension of the land holdings of the tribe of Gad." Martin Noth, *The Old Testament World*, traps. by Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 75. In this view, Noth is relating the victory song of Numbers 21 to the events of Numbers 32:28-36. For a brief survey of the geography and history of Moab, the reader may be directed to the article by William H. Morton, "Moab, Moabites, " in *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer (London: Pick-crinq & Inglis, Ltd. , 1966), pp. 392-96.

[1] The concept of the curse in the ancient world will be noted below in chapter V. The precise character and role of Balaam, the sooth-ayer, will be developed in chapter IV, in the section on his function.

known soothsayer to curse the armies of Israel. This was predicated on the belief in the power of the spoken word, so prevalent in the ancient Near East. The diviner with the remarkable reputation was Balaam.

Chapter 22 concerns the story of the call of Balaam from his home, some four hundred miles distant, and the vacillations and equivocations of the prophet. At first God refused permission for Balaam to go. By stalling and by other deceitful means, however, Balaam rejected the directive will of Yahweh and opted for His permissive will. All the while, he was induced by offers of magnificent remuneration.

It was on the trip by donkey to Moab that there occurred the famous encounter between Balaam and the Angel of Yahweh. Further, here was the even more famous incident of the talking donkey. The Angel sent Balaam on his way, but only after giving him a firm adjuration that he was to speak only the word which Yahweh would tell him (v. 35). Balaam and Balak then met, and began their preparations for the intended curse on the people of Yahweh.

In chapters 23 and 24 of Numbers we have the actual oracles at the pagan soothsayer who is under the control and the inspiration of the Spirit of Cod. After cultic acts of preparation, Balaam begins to curse Israel. Then, to his utter amazement, and to Balak's stunned chagrin, only blessing comes forth. There is a series of attempts to curse Israel, with only the blessings coming forth. Balaam finds it impossible to curse

whom God has not cursed. Finally, in an act "entirely beyond his control one final word, one of the most glorious prophecies in the Old Testament:"[1]

> I see him, but not now;
> I behold him, but not near;
> A star shall come forth from Jacob,
> And a scepter shall rise from Israel,
> And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
> And tear down all the sons of Sheth.
> [Num. 24:17, N. A. S. B.]

Subsequent to these oracles, Balaam is seen using a new tack. what he has been unable to do by cursing, he then manages to do by more subtle means. Chapter 25 of Numbers relates the infamous incident when the men of Israel "yoked themselves to Baal Peor" (Num 25:3), giving rise to the severe anger of Yahweh which resulted in a judgment of plague in which some 24, 000 were killed. It was after the act of zeal by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, when the anger of Yahweh was stayed. He stabbed a copulating couple with his spear (vv. 7-8). The names of the offending couple are given: Zimri the Jew and Cozbi the Midianitess. The citation of the names seems to lend even more severity to the aggravated picture. Why their names? Perhaps to record for all time that "this was the first contact with the immoral fertility cults of Canaan, the very essence of which was

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[1] Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament* (Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1966), p. 125.

sexual aberration of all kinds."[1] This is then an issue of history and of
of great moment.

       Finally, there is the account in Numbers 31 of the holy war
with Midian in which Balaam was killed (Num. 31:8, 16). There is in
this chapter a summary of Balaam's involvement in the incident of Numbers
25, where the name "Balaam" does not appear:

> Have you spared all the women? Behold these caused the sons of
> Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Yahweh
> in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation
> of Yahweh. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones,
> and kill every woman who has known man intimately. But all the
> little girls who have not known man intimately, spare for your-
> selves. [Num. 31:15b-18, N. A S. B.]

The Balaam Oracles at Qumran

       With this sketch of the events in mind, we may now move
to a consideration of the use of the Balaam materials in early tradition.
The earliest extra-biblical use of the Balaam materials is to be found in
the literature of Qumran, the so-called "Dead Sea Scrolls."[2] There are

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[1] *Ibid*. , p. 126.

[2] The literature on Qumran is now so immense that it would
be difficult for one person to wade through it in a lifetime. Major general
treatments of the scrolls would include the following: Millar Burrows, *The
Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955); *idem*, *More Light
on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: The Viking Press, 1958); F. Bruce,
Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls (2d ed.; London: The Paternoster
Press; 1961); *idem, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: The
Tyndale Press, 1959); Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qum-
ran and Modern Biblical Studies*, "The Haskell Lectures, 1956-57,"
Anchor Books (Rev. ed.; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc.,

three citations from the Balaam oracles in the Qumran materials. Each of these quotations includes Numbers 24:17, the magnificent verse quoted above. We shall now turn to these citations seriatim.

4Q Testimonia (4QTest)

The Testimonia document from Cave 4 is a brief collection of four passages without intervening commentary. Each of these passages is prophetic; three are biblical and one is apocryphal.

The first text is a combination of Deuteronomy 18:18-19 and Deuteronomy 5:28-29. This famous coupling of texts concerns the promise of a prophet like Moses. The Samaritan text of Exodus 20:21b includes the conflate reading of these two passages as an interpolation.[1] In the Qumran scroll, the text reads:

I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to

1961); William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Faith* (Rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody Press, 1962); *idem, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972); Manahern Mansoor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A College Textbook and a Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964). LaSor estimates that the total number of publications (books, articles, reviews, notices) is now "around 6, 000 items, written by about 1,000 scholars, in 25 or more languages." LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament,* p. 43. A carefully annotated and selected bibliography is to be found in this volume on pp. 265-69.

[1] Bruce K. Waltke speaks concerning interpolations from parallel passages in SP in his article, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, Tex. , and London: Word Books, Publisher, 1970), pp. 222-24.

you; they have rightly said all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them, and with their children for ever. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.[1]

After this text there follows, without commentary, Numbers 24:15-17, the first three verses of Balaam's fourth *masal*, containing the "Star" passage. Then there is the citation of Deuteronomy 33:8-11, the Blessing of Levi. Finally, there is a quotation from an apocryphal work titled "The Psalms of Joshua," a work found in other texts at Qumran.[2]

Interpretation of the significance of this listing of verses varies. Hayden declares that he is in wholehearted agreement with the analysis of Allegro, who states that they have their point of contact in the final words of each passage:

> These foretell destruction on those who do not listen to the divinely inspired words of the Prophet . . . , the enemies of the Star and Scepter, and the opponents of the Levitical priesthood, and lastly, the city which had been rebuilt under a curse, and whose walls would be covered with blood in the last days. Thus the whole collection is not so much 'messianic' as eschatological.[3]

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[1] Quoted by Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible,* "Baker Studies in Biblical Archaeology" (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), op. 117-118.

[2] *Ibid*.; cf. Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 82; Cross, *Ancient Library*, pp.147-48.

[3] John Allegro, "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature," *JBL*, LVXV (September, 1956), p. 187; cited by Roy Edmund Hayden, Concept of Messiah) in the Qumran Literature in the Light of the Modern Prophetic-Apocalyptic Controversy" (unpublished master's thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1959), p. 89. We would not agree with the last line of Allegro's quote as being a necessary conclusion.

The emphasis on the point of contact in the several passages quoted in *4QTest* also relates to the question of the putative *testimonia* used by the early Christians, particularly in the composite quotations to be found in the New Testament. Osborn may be cited as representative of those scholars who point to *testimonia* at Qumran as examples of the kind of lists that the early Christians used.[1] There are others, however, who would disagree with this conclusion. Ellis suggests that the manner of quotation in the New Testament does not point so much to *testimonia*, as to a kind of Bible study.[2] Moreover, the compilation of the lists of passages at Qumran may have been based on something other than a mere "catch-word" concept.[3] It is sufficient for our present purposes merely to note

[1] E. F. Osborn, *Word and History: Three Lectures on New Testament Themes,* "Lectures in Biblical Studies, " I (Nedlands, West Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1967), p. 8.

[2] Ellis follows and develops the concept of C. H. Dodd regarding the use of testimonia among the early Christians. He writes: "the NT evidence points not to a 'Testimony Book' as such but to a method of Bible study which found literary expression only sporadically and which only later resulted in the composition of 'Testimony Books'." E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 104.

[3] Compare, e. g., Prigent who argues against the principle of catch-word associations on a simplistic level. He rather feels that the association of various prophecies preceded the activities of the scholars of Qumran and, in fact go back to the cult prophets. It was only by a secondary systematization that the "anthologies" of prophecies developed. Mene Prigent, "Quelques testimonia messianiques. Leur histoire litterarie de Qoumran aux Prees de 1'eglise, " *TZ*, XV (1959), 419-30. Cf. also Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, "Ein Beitrag zur Messiaslohre der Qumransekte," *ZAW*, LXVIII (1956), 234-43.

the employment of Numbers 24:15-17 in this *testimonia* at Qumran.

The Damascus Document (CD)

One of the Qumran texts was found first not at Qumran in 1947 but in Cairo in 1897. In its first publication (1910) it was known as the *Zadokite Fragments*, but is today known more widely as the *Damascus Document*, or *CD*. Fragments of CD have been found in Cave Four and Cave Six of Qumran.[1]

The passage relevant to our discussion is CD:vii. 9-20, which is given by Bruce as follows:

> But all the despisers [shall be visited with extinction] when God visits the earth to cause the recompense of the wicked to return upon them, when the word comes to pass which is written among the words of the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz: 'There will come upon you and upon your father's house such days as have [not] come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah' (Isa. vii. 17)--when the two houses of Israel separated, Ephraim became ruler over Judah--and all those who turned back were delivered to the sword, but those who held fast escaped to the land of the north, as He said: 'And I will exile Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your[star-god, your] images, from my tent to Damascus' (Amos v. 26 f.). The books of the law are meant by 'the booth (sukkath) of the king', as He said: 'And I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen' (Amos ix 11). The 'king' denotes the assembly. The 'pedestals (kanne) of the images' . . . are the books of the prophets, whose words Israel despised. The 'star' is the Expounder of the Law who is to come to Damascus, as it is written: 'A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel'--the 'sceptre' is the prince of all the congregation, and when he stands up he will 'break down all the sons of Sheth' (Num. xxiv. 17).

[1] LaSor, T*he Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, pp. 32-34.
[2] F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1959), p. 37. For the text, see Chaim Rabin, *The Zadokite*

Hayden comments on this Qumran text in the following manner, the problem of the teacher versus the prince:

> Thus far the writer has been concerned with a description of the past, Ephraim departed from Judah and those who stood firm escaped to the land of the north. The books of the law are interpreted as the 'booth of David that is fallen;' the king is the assembly; the *kiyyun* are the books of the prophets, whose words Israel despised; and the star is the interpreter of the law who came to Damascus. The scepter is the prince of the whole congregation who will 'break down all the sons of Seth.
>
> The text seems to distinguish between the teacher and the prince of the congregation. Immediately after this passage appears the phrase, the 'anointed one of Aaron and Israel' (19:10). The reference seems to equate the anointed one and the prince. Both seem to execute judgment on 'those who turned back.'[1]

This passage thus relates to the ongoing debate concerning the number of Messiahs expected among the sectarians of Qumran. Some argue for three Messiahs, some for two, and others for but one. David Noel Freedman may be cited as representative of those scholars who posit three Messianic figures in the eschatological hope at Qumran. He writes:

> Messianism was a prominent feature of the eschatology of Qumran. While the expectation differed in detail from the views attributed commonly to the Jews of the first century whether in the New Testament, Josephus, or early rabbinic literature, it conforms closely to traditional Old Testament patterns. Thus, in accordance with the Law and the

Documents. I. The Admonitions. II. The Laws (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. 27-31.

[1] Hayden, "The Concept of Messiah at Qumran, " pp. 43-44. Note that this writer refers to our passage as "section 19" whereas Bruce listed it as "vii." Two systems are used for references to this text. Rabin lists the text as "VII (XIX)," *The Zadokite Documents,* p. 27.

Prophets, three eschatological figures were expected: the eschato-logical prophet, i, e. the prophet like Moses, who would announce the inauguration of God's rule on earth and identify and designate both the high priest of the line of Zadok and the king of the house of David.[1]

Pfeiffer follows the prevailing view, that this passage relates to two eschatological personages, or Messiahs, in the eschatology of Qumran.

The Qumran commentators were convinced that God had revealed the mysteries of the latter days in the prophetic writings of Scripture. They also looked upon their Teacher of Righteousness as one raised up of God to give a correct interpretation of the prophetic predictions. The Balaam prophecy, "a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17) is interpreted in the Zadokite Work as a reference to two eschatological personages: "the star is he who searches the Law. . . . The scepter is the prince of the whole congregation. . . . " (5:19-20).[2]

LaSor, however, demurs from the position that there are two Messiahs to be found in the literature. He concludes a lengthy section on the arguments relative to the issue with these words:

The question of two Messiahs in sectarian Judaism is beyond

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[1] David Noel Freedman, "The Old Testament at Qumran," *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), p. 123. One must observe that Freedman is guilty of question-begging in this instance when he writes, "it conforms closely to traditional Old Testament patterns."

[2] Pfeiffer. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 124; cf. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* who writes that the "star and sceptre are dissociated in the interpretation, the star being identified with the "Ex-pounder of the Law and the sceptre with a military conqueror called the 'prince of all the congregation.'" (p. 50.).

my field of specialization; scholars seem to be in general agreement that two Messiahs are found in the literature in view. But whether two Messiahs are found in Qumran Literature is, in my opinion, an entirely different matter. The most lucid discussion I know is given by Millar Burrows who favors the thesis of two Messiahs. I find myself still not convinced.[1]

In his latest book on the subject, the same writer explains his

position more fully relative to our passage;

> The "Star" and the "Sceptre" are mentioned in the War Scroll, and Dupont-Sommer notes that in the Damascus Document, where the same scriptural quotation is used, these figures are identified with the Seeker of the Law and the Prince of the Congregation, respectively. In the War Scroll, however, the parallelism of the passage is preserved, and a verbal form in the singular is used, indicating that the "Star" is also the "Sceptre"

> > A star has marched forth from Jacob,
> > > A sceptre has arisen from Israel;
> > And he will shatter the temples of Moab,
> > > And destroy all the Sons of Seth.
> > > > (IQM 11:6; cf. Num. 24:17-19)

In the Damascus Document this citation is used as follows:

> And the star is the Seeker of the Law who is coming to Damascus; as it is written, "A star has marched forth from Jacob, and a sceptre has arisen from Israel." The sceptre is the Prince of all the Congregation, and when he arises he will destroy all the sons of Seth. (CD 7:18-21).

To attempt any identification of this passage with the Teacher of Righteousness is precarious.[2]

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[1] LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Faith*, p. 156.
[2] LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, p. 111.
LaSor discusses the concept of the Teacher of Righteousness in the book at some length (pp. 106-130), and argues for caution against the rash claims made by some enthusiasts who have taken events recorded about Jesus and

Order of Warfare (IQM)

One of the most well-known non-biblical scrolls found at Qumran is the *War Scroll*, or *The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*. The architect of the Shrine of the Book in modern Jerusalem has conceptualized the thrust of this scroll in his use of the black wall and the white scroll jar to form the buildings of the museum. The scroll itself describes a war between two opposing armies. One party consists of the tribes of Levi, Judah, and Benjamin. The other is made of the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites, plus some others. With these protagonists in the battle, it comes as little surprise that reference would be made to Numbers 24:17-18. The relevant passage is to be found in section VII of the document:

> Thine is the battle, and from with Thee is the might, not ours. Neither our strength nor the power of our hand have done deeds of valour, but *it was* through Thy strength and the might of Thy great valour (OR: army), as Thou hast told us from of old, saying:
>
> > 'There shall come forth a star out of Jacob, a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all sons of Sheth, and he shall go down *to battle* from Jacob and shall cause to perish the remnant [out of] the city, and the enemy shall be a possession, and Israel shall do valiantly'.
>
> By the hand of Thine anointed ones, the seers of things ordained, Thou hast foretold us the e[pochs] of the wars of Thy hands, that Thou mayest be honoured upon our enemies, by felling the troops of Belial, the seven nations of vanity, by the hand of the poor ones that are to

have tried to read these back into the figure of the Teacher of Righteousness. Compare also in this regard the judicious treatment by F. F. Bruce, *The Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran Texts* (London: The Tyndale Press, l956), pp. 36.

be redeemed by Thee [with powe]r and retribution, for wondrous might, and a heart that melteth *shall* be for a door of hope. Thou wilt do unto them as unto Pharaoh and the captains of his chariots in the Red Sea. Thou wilt cause the law of spirit to burn like a torch of fire in a sheaf, devouring the wicked, which shall not (OR: Thou wilt not) return until the guilty are annihilated. From of old Thou hast announced to us the time appointed for the mighty deed of Thy hand against the Kittim, saying:

> 'Then shall Asshur fall with the sword not of man, and the sword, not of men, shall devour him.' [Italics in original][1]

This is not the place to attempt to deal with the many bristling questions concerning the theology of the Qumran community. Suffice it to remark that eschatological feelings were very high among the members of the community. They seem to have believed that they were living in the last days. And in this concern for the last days, they turned again and again to Balaam's prophecy of Numbers 24:15-18, particularly verse 17--a prophecy of the Star and the Scepter. Bruce observes:

> For, the community of Qumran believed, the prophets had all spoken of the time of the end rather than of the days in which they lived. If Balaam spoke of 'a star out of Jacob' which would 'smite through the corners of Moab' (Nu. xxiv. 17); if Ezekiel described the aggression and overthrow of Gog, of the land of Magog' (Ezek. xxxviii. 1 ff.); if Isaiah announced the Assyrian's fall 'with the sword, not of men' (Is. xxxi. 8); if Habakkuk witnessed the advance and decline of 'the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation' (Hab. i. 6)-- these prophets were not concerned about persons and events of their own times, but with the defeat of the Kitti'im by the sons of light at

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[1] Yigaeal Yadin, ed. , *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*, trans. by Batya Rabin and Chaim Rabin (Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 310-12. The second quoted passage from Isaiah 31:8. See also Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, pp.). 50-51.

the time of the end.[1]

Summary

From this brief survey of the citations from Balaam's fourth *masal* at Qumran, we may conclude that this passage was a favorite among the community members. Roth adds that it should come as no surprise that this prophecy was such a favorite, for it concerns itself with the End of Days, a subject of intense concern to the people at Qumran:

> There are indeed other prognostications of the End of Days in the Bible, but this is the only one which may be considered in any sense detailed, passing in review as it does, one by one, the various peoples which were within the purview of the seer and detailing their ultimate fate. Hence, it could not fail to be considered as it were *the essential prophecy of the End of Days*, to which men turned for guidance in the hour of darkness and oppression.[2] [Emphasis added.]

The Balaam Oracles and Bar Kochba

In the very lovely volume, *A History of the Holy Land*, Michael Avi-Yonah describes the events of the Second Roman War in 132 A. D.[3]

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[1] F. F. Bruce, *The Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran Texts,* p. 10. The word *Kittim* is a matter of great dispute. Bruce concludes in the work: "On the whole it seems more probable that they are Romans, " p. 11. This is also the conclusion of Mansoor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 66-68.

[2] Cecil Roth, "Star and Anchor: Coin Symbolism and the End of Days," *EI*, VI (1960), 13*; cf. *idem*, "The Subject Matter of Qumran Exegesis," VT X (1960), 51-68; *idem*, "The Era of the Habakkuk Commentary, *VT*, XI (1961), 451-55.

[3] Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., *A History of the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Publishing House, Ltd.; and New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), pp. 162-67.

Among the factors he mentions in the preparations for the war, is the element of Messianic fervor among the members of the Jewish community under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba:

> The man who led the new generation, the saintly scholar Rabbi Akiba, son of Joseph, had his finger on the pulse of popular feeling, having risen to eminence from very humble origins as a shepherd. Under his influence, most of the seniors of the Sanhedrin agreed to renew the war. While a surge of Messianic emotion stirred the country, the architects of the Second Revolt planned it coolly and carefully. They were, above all, concerned to avoid the errors which had brought about the collapse of the First Revolt: the wrong and haphazard choice of its timing, just when the Orient was full of Roman troops, the fratricidal war between the insurgents themselves, the lack of proper preparation of men and arms, the tendency of the rebels to lock themselves up in fortresses and there passively await an inevitable doom.[1]

We may not delay in the present paper to describe the short-lived and ill-fated war. But it is tangent to our study to cite the same writer's introductory paragraph on the war proper. For here we find reference made to the "Star" passage of Balaam:

> In the autumn of 132 AD the moment came. Once the harvest had been safely gathered in, the chosen commander, Simon, son of Kosiba, was proclaimed Messiah by Rabbi Akiba himself, who ecstatically applied to him the verse in Numbers 24:17: 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob'. From the Aramaic word for star (Kochba), Simon is known in history as Bar-Kochba; it has been surmised that this new prince (nassi) of Israel was descended from David, and his kinship with Rabbi Eleazar of Modein suggests that he had Hasmonaean blood.[2] Bruce writes that not all were happy with the name "Bar-Kochba.

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[1] Ibid. , p. 162.
[2] Ibid.

This would be especially true of Jewish Christians. "They preferred to call him Simeon Bar-Koziba, which means 'Simeon the son of falsehood.'"[1] In fact, not all the rabbis were happy with what Rabbi Akiba had done. Rabbi Jonathan ben Tortha is reported to have told Rabbi Akiba, "Akiba, grass will grow on your cheeks and the Messiah will still not have come."[2]

It has only been since 1951-52 that the correct pronunciation of the original name of the leader of the Second Roman War has been known. Letters were found in the winter of 1951-52 in a cave on the Wadi Murabba[c]at written by "Simeon ben Koseba"--the authentic spelling of his name. One of the letters reads as follows:

> From Simeon Ben-Kosebah to Yeshua Ben-Galgolah and to the men of your company. Peace! I call heaven to witness against me that if one of the Galilaeans whom you have protected troubles us, I will put fetters on your feet as I did to Ben-Aflul. Simeon Ben-Kosebah, Prince of Israel.[3]

Thus we may see that long after the genuine Messiah had come, those who had rejected Him were still looking for a "messiah. " Moreover, when they thought they had found what they wanted in a "messiah, " they

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[1] Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 32.

[2] Quoted by Mansoor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls,* p. 166.

[3] Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 32. Compare also, Martin Noth *The History of Israel*, trans. by P. R. Ackroyd (2d ed.; New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1960) p. 451 and n. I; J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology* (London: The Paternoster Press, 1962), p. 299; F. Notscher, "Bar Kochab Ben Kosba: Der Sternsohn, Der Prachtige, " *VT*, XI (1961), 449-51.

applied the Messianic designation from Balaam's fourth *masal*: "the Star." Sadly rejecting the Truth, they chose a Lie--the ben Koseba whom they named bar Kochba turned out to be just another bar Koziba.

Sadder still, the forlorn hope of Israel for another messiah, one other than the genuine Messiah, still found expression in the theology of Maimonides--and was still based in part on the promise uttered by the agency of Balaam. Item number twelve in a series of thirteen fundamental doctrines in the theology of the great. Moses ben Maimon reads as follows:

> 12. We are to believe that Messiah will come, and, though he tarry, to wait for him. Nor may we fix any time for his appearance out of Scriptures. Our wise men said (Sanhedrin, fol. 97), May the spirit of those who compute the time, when Messiah will come, be extinguished. We are also to believe that his glory and honor will surpass that of all other kings who have ever existed, as all the prophets, from Moses to Malachi have prophesied. And. whosoever doubts it or diminishes the Messiah's glory denies *God's word which is plainly told in Num. xxiv.* 17-19, and Deut. xxx. 3-10. This article includes also, that the Messiah is to be from the Davidic house and of the seed of Solomon, and any one who opposes this family denies the word of God and the word of his prophets.[1]

Ah, but there is One who has filled all the requirements. This One said of Himself:

> I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David,
> *the bright and morning star*.
> [Rev. 22:16]

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[1]Quoted by Alexander Meyrowitz, "Maimonides's Creed," *OTS*, IV (October, 1884), 86.

The Balaam Oracles and the Church Fathers

If it is true that many among the sons of Israel failed to apply
the promise of the Star of Numbers 24:17 to the Lord Jesus Christ, the same
cannot be said concerning the Church Fathers. We will cite just two Fathers
in this section to show representative examples of the use of the prophecy
of Numbers 24:17 by leaders in the early Church.

Justin, the Martyr (d. 166 A D.)

"Justin is the first among the fathers who may be called a learned
theologian and Christian thinker." Such is the estimation of this man by
Philip Schaff.[1] One of Justin's major works was The First Apology, a work
addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (137-161). This was written about
147 A. D. and contains sixty-eight chapters. We shall turn to the closing
section of chapter 32, in which he cites a few words from Numbers 24:17
as well as Isaiah 11:1 and 51:5:

> The first Power after God the Father and Master of all, even [his]
> Son, is the Word--how he was made flesh and became man we shall
> describe below. As the blood of the grape was not made by man, but
> by God, so it was testified, that [his] blood should not come from
> human seed, but from divine power, as we said before. Isaiah,
> another prophet, prophesying the same things in other words, said:
> "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a flower will come forth from the
> root of Jesse, and upon his arm will the nations hope." The shining

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[1] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (8 vols.; 5th
ed.; reprint of 1910 ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
1963), II, 715.

star has risen and the flower has grown from the root of Jesse--this is Christ. For he was by the power of God conceived by a virgin of the seed of Jacob, who was the father of Judah, the father of the Jews, as been explained; Jesse was his ancestor, according to the oracle, and he was the son of Jacob and Judah by lineal succession.[1]

Athanasius the Great (d. 373 A. D.)

A second Father whom we may cite in his use of the prophecy of Balaam of the Star is from a later period, the Nicene age.[2] We quote from one of his apologetic works, produced in his youth (before 325 A. D.), "On the Incarnation of the Word," section 33:

For prophets proclaimed beforehand concerning the wonder of the Virgin and the birth from her, saying: "Lo, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." But Moses, the truly great, and whom they believe to speak truth with reference to the Saviour's becoming man, having estimated what was said as important, and assured of its truth, set it down in these words: "There shall rise a star out of Jacob, and a man out of Israel, and he shall break in pieces the captains of Moab." And again: "How lovely are thy habitations, O Jacob, thy tabernacles, O Israel, as shadowing gardens, and as parks by the rivers, and as tabernacles which the Lord hath fixed, as cedars by the waters. A man shall come forth out of his

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[1] Justin, the Martyr, "The First Apology," *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. I. *Early Christian Fathers*, trans. and ed. by Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 262-63. Richardson comments on the citation of our passage as from "Isaiah" by saying "Justin's Old Testament quotations combine the Prophets as freely as his Gospel quotations mingle the Evangelists," p. 262, n. 99.

[2] For a brief biographical sketch, see Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III, 884-93. Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, it will be remembered, was the chief defender of biblical orthodoxy during the period of the Arian controversy.

seed, and shall be Lord over many peoples."[1]

Although he attributes the passages to Moses rather than more specifically to Balaam, we find Athanasius relating not only elements from fourth *masal* to our Lord, but elements from the third *masal* as well. Thus, at least two of the leading Church Fathers, from two ages, used elements of the Balaam oracles Messianically. Both Jews and Christians recognized in Numbers 24:17 a prophecy of Messiah--they could not agree on the proper designee--but they did agree on the import of the passage as Messianic.

Balaam in the Talmud

Writing in *The Century Bible,* N. H. Snaith notes that Jewish tradition in general was quite critical of Balaam.[2] Indeed, some have adduced that Balaam in Jewish writings became a figure of Christ for anti-Christian polemics [but see below for discussion]. A sampling will now be made of the references to Balaam in the Talmudic writings. These will be taken seriatim from the standard edition of the Babylonian Talmud.[3]

[1] Athanasius, "On the Incarnation of the Word," *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. III. *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Rochie Hardy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 87.

[2] N. H. Snaith, ed., *The Century Bible: Leviticus and Numbers* (New ed.; London: Thomas Nelson and. Sons, Ltd. , 1967), p. 286.

[3] All citations in this section are from *The Babylonian Talmud*, and ed. by Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (18 vols. ; London: The Soncino Press, 1952). The volumes are not numbered and the pagination is not successive; Standard manner of citation from the Talmud will be used in the text.

A brief note is made of Balaam in the tract *Berakoth*, 7a:

> *A God that hath indignation every day* [Ps. 7:12]. And how long does this indignation last? One moment. And how long is one moment? One fifty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-eighth part of an hour. And no creature has ever been able to fix precisely this moment except the wicked Balaam, of whom it is written: *He knoweth the knowledge of the Most High* [Num 24:16]. Now, he did not even know the mind of his animal; how then could he know the mind of the Most High? The meaning is, therefore, only that he knew how to fix precisely this moment in which the Holy One, blessed be He, is angry. [Italics in original.]

This citation sets the stage, as it were, for the Talmud's very negative view of Balaam. The adjective "wicked" is prefaced to his name in another brief note in the tract. *Ta^canith*, 20a: "But Balaam the wicked blessed them by comparing them with the 'cedar,' as it is said, *As cedars beside the waters . . .* " [Num. 24:6]. [Italics in original.]

Balak, not Balaam, is mentioned in the tract *Nazir*, 23b, in the following rather strange way: "For as a reward for the forty-two sacrifices which the wicked Balak offered, he was privileged to be the progenitor of Ruth, for R. Jose son of R. Hanina has said that Ruth was descended from Eglon [the grandson of Balak] king of Moab. "

Balaam is grouped with rather infamous company in the citation of *Sotah*, 9b:

> Similarly do we find it with Cain, Korah, Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, Gehazi, Absalom, Adonijah, Uzziah and human, who set their eyes upon that which was not proper for them; what they sought was not granted to them and what they possessed was taken from them.

This citation is of interest in that the first three, "Cain, Korah, and Balaam,"

are linked in a similar fashion by Jude in verse 11.

Later in the same tract, 10a, we read that R. Johanan also said, "Balaam was lame in one leg, as it is said, *And he went shefi*; Samson was lame in both legs, as it is said, *An adder in the path*." In this passage the difficult Hebrew word of Numbers 23:3 [שְׁפִי] is explained to mean "lame."

In 11a of *Sotah*, Balaam is linked with two others who attempted destroy Israel; surprisingly the others are Job and Jethro. "There were three in that plan, viz. Balaam, Job, and Jethro. Balaam who devised it was slain; Job who silently acquiesced was afflicted with sufferings; Jethro, who fled merited that his descendants should sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone."

The tract Gittin, 56b, theorizes as to the final destiny of the false prophet Balaam in a vivid manner.

> He then went and raised Balaam by incantations. He asked him: Who is in repute in the other-world? He replied: Israel. What. then, he said, about joining them? He replied: *Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever*[Deut. 23:7]. He then asked: What is your punishment? He replied: With boiling hot semen. [Italics in originate]

In the tract Sanhedrin Balaam is discussed a number of times. The first reference is in 39a and is to Balaam's testimony concerning Israel in Numbers 23:9 that Israel was not to be reckoned among the nations. Then in 90a, Balaam is linked with Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi:

> Three kings and four commoners have no portion in the world to come: the three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh. R. Judah said: Manasseh hath a portion therein, for it is written, "And he prayed unto him, and was intreated of him, and he hearkened to his

supplication and they restored him to Jerusalem, to his kingdom." They [the sages] answered him: they restored him to his kingdom, but not to [his portion] in the world to come. Four commoners, viz. Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi.

105a constitutes the Gemara on the inclusion of Balsam among

the group of evil men. In this section there are two word plays on the name

Balaam, as well as the name of his father.

Belo^c-am [denotes without the people]. Another explanation: Balaam denotes that he corrupted a people.[1] *The Son of Beor* [denotes] that he committed bestiality;[2] *Cushan-rishathaim*, that he perpetrated two evils upon Israel: one in the days of Jacob, and the other in the days of the Judges. But what was his real name? Laban the Syrian. [Italics in original.]

This same tract continues, that although other heathen will enter the future

world, "Balaam will not enter. " It also repeats the explanation of R. Johanan

of Numbers 23:3 as referring to Balaam being lame.

A rather foul explanation of the manner of divination practiced

by Balaam is given in 105a-105b of the same tract:

It was stated, Mar Zutra said: He practised enchantment by means of his membrum. Mar the son of Rabina said: He committed bestiality with his ass. The view that he practised enchantment by means of his membrum is as was stated. The view that he committed bestiality with his ass [is because] here it is written, *He bowed, he lay down as a lion and as a great lion* [Num. 24:9]; whilst else-where it is written, *At her feet he bowed,* he fell [Num. 24:16]. [Italics in origiinal]

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[1] I. Epstein comments: "בלא עם Belo^{c}am, i, e. , he has no portion in the future world together with other people."

[2] Epstein comments: "בלה עם *Balah^{c}am*, [or בלע עם *Bala^c ^{c}m*, devoured the people."

This tract goes on to explain why Balaam rode on an ass instead of a horse. "I have put it [to graze] in the dewy pastures." The ass was merely for carrying loads; his riding her was only by chance. Further, there is a comparison made between Balaam and Abraham in the matter of riding an ass early in the morning:

> *And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass* [Num. 22:21] R. Tanna taught on the authority of R. Simeon b. Eleazar: Love disregards the rule of dignified conduct. [This is deduced] from Abraham, for it is written, *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass* [Gen. 22:3] . [Though the saddling of an ass is not work becoming a great man, yet in his love to God and eagerness to carry out his commands, Abraham did it.] Hate likewise disregards the rule of dignified conduct: [this is deduced] from Balaam, for it is written, *And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass.* [Italics in original.]

Further, in the same tract, *Sanhedrin*, 105b, there is an application of the blessings (and attempted cursings) of Balaam to the synagogues and schools of Judaism:

> R. Johanan said: From the blessings of that wicked man you may learn his intentions. Thus he wished to curse them that they [the Israelites] should possess no synagogues or school-houses--[this is deduced from] How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob [Num. 24:5, where "Tents" is interpreted "synagogues," etc.]; that the *Shechinah* should not rest upon them---*and thy tabernacles, O Israel*; that thy kingdom should not endure. [Italics in original.]

As to the very difficult identification of "Kittim" in Numbers the following interpretation is given in *Sanhedrin*, 106a: "*And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim.* Rab. said: This refers to the White

Legion."[1]

A full and interesting, if fanciful, explanation is detailed in the same tract (*Sanhedrin*, 106a) concerning the events of Numbers 25, when Balaam counseled Balak as to the means for the downfall of Israel.

> He [Balaam] said thus to him [Balak]. "The God of these hates lewdness, and they are very partial to linen. Come, and I will advise thee. Erect for them tents enclosed by hangings, in which place harlots, old women without, young women within, to sell them linen garments." So he erected curtained tents from the snowy mountain [Hermon] as far as Beth ha-Yeshimoth [i. e. , right from north to south] , and placed harlots in them--old women without, young women within. And when an Israelite ate, drank, and was merry, and issued forth for a stroll in the market place, the old woman would, say to him, "Dost thou not desire linen garments?" The old woman offered it at its current value, but the young one for less. This happened two or three times. After that she would say to him, "Thou art now like one of the family; sit down and choose for thyself, " Gourds of Ammonite wine lay near him, and at that time Ammonite and heathen wine had not yet been forbidden. Said she to him, "Wouldst thou like to drink a glass of wine?" Having drunk, [his passion] was inflamed, and he exclaimed to her, "Yield to me." Thereupon she brought forth an idol from her bosom and said to him, "Worship this!", "But I am a Jew," he pro-tested. "What does that concern thee?" she rejoined, "nothing is required but that thou should uncover yourself--whilst he did not know that such was its worship. "Nay," [said she] "I will not leave thee ere thou hast denied the Torah of Moses thy teacher," as it is written, *They went in to Baal-peor and separated themselves unto that shame, and their abominations were according as they loved* [Hos. 9:10] . [Italics in original.]

Although the details are the work of creative imagination, it is of interest that In this tract there is the clear association of cultic prostitution to the women

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[1] Epstein, in a note on this passage, adds: "The verse is accord-ingly interpreted: 'Legions will conic from the Coast of Chittim, etc., "the Chittim being taken to denote Rome, (cf. Targ. Yerushalmi a. 1.)." He also refers to other Jewish literature on the subject.

of Numbers 25.

This tract also comments on the problem of the character of the man Balaam. Was he a prophet or a soothsayer? The order of development presumed in the tract is the reverse of that which is often posited. In 106a we read, "*Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, [did the children of Israel slay with the sword]* [Josh. 13:22]. A soothsayer? But he was a prophet.--R. Johanan said: At first he was a prophet, but subsequently a soothsayer. " As for the manner of his death, the tract exclaims: "They sub-jected him to four deaths, Stoning, burning, decapitation, and strangulation. " [One might add, "and so he died."]

As to his age, Sanhedrin 106a states:

A certain *min* [heretic] said to R. Hanina: Hast thou heard how old Balaam was?--He replied: It is not actually stated, but since it is written, Bloody and deceitful men shall not live over half their days [Psalm 55:24] [it follows that] he was thirty-three or thirty-four years old. He rejoined: Thou hast said correctly; I personally have seen Balaam's Chronicle, in which it is stated, "Balaam the lame was thirty years old when Phinehas the Robber killed him."[1]

The tract *^cAbodah Zarah* 4a-4b develops with some repetition the viewpoint given in *Berakoth*, 7a, cited above. In *Aboth., Mishnah* 1.9, there

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[1] At this point in a note, Epstein remarks: "According to the view all the Balaam passages are anti-Christian in tendency, Balaam being used an alias for Jesus, Phinehas the Robber is thus taken to represent Pontius Pilatus, and the Chronicle of Balaam probably to denote a Gospel. . . . This view is however disputed by Bacher and others. " Yehoshua M. Grintz comments in a similar fashion: "There is no basis for the theory put forward by some scholars that Balaam in the *Aggadah* represents Jesus. " Cecil Roth, *et al*. "Balaam," *Encyclopaedic Judaica*, IV, B, col. 124.

in a comparison made between Abraham and Balaam:

> Whoever possesses these three things, he is of the disciples of Abraham, our father; and [whoever possesses] three other things, he is of the disciples of Balaam, the wicked. The disciples of Abraham, our father, [possess] a good eye, an humble spirit, and a lowly soul. The disciples of Balaam, the wicked, [possess] an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and an over-amibitious soul. What is [the difference] between the disciples of Abraham, our father, and the disciples of Balaam, the wicked"? The disciples of Abraham, our father, enjoy [their share] in this world, and inherit the world to come, as it is said: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance and that I may fill their treasuries, but the disciples of Balaam, the wicked, inherit Gehinnom, and descend into the nethermost pit, as it is said, But thou, O God, wilt bring them down to the nethermost pit; Men of blood and deceit will not live out half their days; But as for me, I will trust in thee.

A last mention of Balaam in the Talmud to be given here comes from the tract *Niddah*, 31a, and concerns the interpretation given to Numbers 23:10:

> R. Abbahu also gave this exposition: What is the implication of the Scriptural text, *Who hath counted the dust of Jacob, or numbered the stock of Israel?* [Num. 23:10]. It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and counts the stock of Israel.

Summary.   Snaith's comment, cited at the beginning of this survey of the references to Balaam in the Talmud has been borne out by references to the actual texts themselves. Balaam is treated in a very critical manner in Jewish tradition. Though encumbered by fanciful, fantastic, and at times even disgusting exegesis, the general tone of Talmudic literature on Balaam may be summarized in the oft-repeated expression, "Balaam, the wicked. " Further, those scholars who are wont to equate the Talmudic references to

Balaam as covert attacks on the person of Christ, are advocating a position which would be contemptible.[1]

Balaam in the Qur'an

There is no mention of Balaam by name in the Qur'an, but there have been attempts to see him within those pages. Albright, writing in 1915, summarized an early position, since discarded, that Salaam enters the Qur'an under the name Logman, a pre-Islamic prophet:

> In 1850 Joseph Derenbourg, in his *Fables de Loqman le Sage,* following the suggestion of Ewald and Rodiger, identified the pre-Islamic prophet, Logma n, mentioned in the thirty-first sura of the Quran, with Balaam. Loqman seems to be a translation of Balaam, as both Heb. *bala^c* and Arab. *laqama* mean *to swallow*.[2]

Other scholars have adduced an inference to Balaam in Sura 7, line-1- 175-177:

> Relate to them the story
>
> Of the men to whom
>
> We sent Our Signs,
>
> But he passed them by:
>
> So Satan followed him up,
>
> And he went astray.

[1] See note 1 on page 50, above, for modern Jewish objections to such an equation. For a succinct summary of the manner of compilation of the Talmud (ca. A. D. 100-500), see Gleason L Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), pp. 55-56.

[2] William Foxwell Albright, "The Home of Balaam, " *JAOS*, XXV (1915) 386. Albright discards this concept in the article cited; few moderns to follow the view.

If it had been Our Will,
We should have elevated him
With Our Signs; but he
Inclined to the earth,
And followed his own vain desires.

His similitude is that
Of a dog: if you attack
Him, he lolls out his tongue,
Or if you leave him alone,
He (still) lolls out his tongue.
That is the similitude
Of those who reject Our Signs;
So relate the story;
Perchance they may reflect.

Evil as an example are
People who reject Our Signs
And wrong their own souls.[1]

Abdullah Yusuf Ali comments on this passage as it may or may

not relate to Balaam in. the following way:

[1] *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, trans. and
ad, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Washington, D. C.: Khalil Al-Rawaf, 1946), pp. 394-
95. It may be noted respecting this line that we have an exceptionally fine
example of the use of the Arabic word XXXX meaning "similitude, likeness, com-
parison." The line begins   XXXXX XXXXX XXXX, "his comparison is like
the comparison of a dog. " this may be related to the discussion of the Hebrew
word for "parable, proverb, comparison, " משל, which is used for the
Oracles of Balaam [See chapter V of the present paper.] Ali writes, respecting
the Comparison of the dog: "The dog, especially in the hot weather, lolls out
its tongue, whether he is attacked and pursued and is tired, or he is left alone.
It is a part of his nature to slobber. So with the man who rejects God. Whether
he is warned or left alone, he continues to throw out his dirty saliva. The
injury he will do will be to his own soul. But there may be infection in his
evil example. So we must protect others. And we must never give up hope of
our amendment. So we must continue to warn him and make him think. "
Ibid., p. 395, n. on line 176. See below, p. 244.

Commentators differ whether this story or parable refers to a particular individual, and if so, to whom. The story of Balaam the seer, who was called out by Israel's enemies to curse Israel, but who blessed Israel instead, (Num. xxii., xxiii., xxiv.) is quite different. It is better to take the parable in a general sense. There are men of talents and position, to whom great opportunities of spiritual insight come, but they perversely pass them by. Satan sees his opportunity and catches them up. Instead of rising higher in the spiritual world, their selfish and worldly desires and ambitions pull them down, and they are lost.[1]

Haim Z'ew Hirschberg adds, however, that it is the general Opinion of Qur'anic scholars that the inference in the passage at hand is to Balaam. He mentions, however, that some commentators take the reference to be to Umayya ibn ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz, a contemporary of Muhammad, and a competitor as a prophet. Other examples of interpretation are given by him as well.[2] We may conclude that if this sura is indeed a reference to Balaam, it depicts him in a negative light, as an example and warning to others.

Summary

It has been the purpose of this chapter to set the stage for further work in the Balaam narrative by examining the use made of the material in the pre-critical era. We began with a survey of the background of the narrative as it stands in the Book of Numbers. This was followed by a summary of the narrative itself, for orientation into the subject. Then we moved into the use

[1] Ibid., p. 394.
[2] "Balaam" *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, IV, B, col. 124.

of the Balaam oracles in early Jewish tradition. It was seen that the oracles, the fourth *masal*, were very popular at Qumran. The commentators at Qumran used Numbers 24:17 at least three times in an eschatological and Messianic sense in their writings. The eschatological and Messianic use of this verse was also seen in the events surrounding the Second Roman War of 132 A. D., respecting the person of Bar Kochba.

Then we turned briefly to the early Church Fathers and noted that Justin the Martyr and Athanasius the Great both employed the "Star" passage of Numbers 24 in a Messianic sense as well, but they applied it to the true Messiah rather than to a lie.

A survey was made of references to Balaam in the Talmud and it was demonstrated that Jewish opinion of Balaam is negative without exception. "Balaam, the wicked" is the refrain throughout the Talmud respecting this soothsayer.

Finally, we looked at one passage that may refer to Balaam in the Qur'an (Sura 7). If this passage does refer to Balaam, it casts him in a very negative light. There is dispute regarding the interpretation of the sage as representing Balaam, however.

With this brief survey of the employment of the Balaam materials in the pre-critical era, we may now turn to the subject, Balaam in modern scholarship.

CHAPTER III

A CRITICAL STUDY

BALAAM IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

In the introductory chapter it was stated that one of the reasons for the study of the Balaam oracles is the fact that this section of the Old Testament impinges on major critical issues in Old Testament scholarship. As a matter of fact, the Balaam section has become something of a cause celebre, a veritible test case, for many of the critical theories in Old Testament studies. This point is aptly made by von Pakozdy in the following remark:

> The Balaam pericope of Numbers 22-24 . . . is viewed by the historical-critical Old Testament scholarship mostly as a compilation of different fragments of different times with many editorial layers and additions. They are used by many research scholars as a demonstrative example for the accuracy of the Documentary Hypothesis and for the separation of different sources.[1]

[1] Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redaktionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope (Num 22-24)," *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1958), p. 161. His words are: "Die Bileam-Perikope Num 22-24 . . . wird von der historisch-kritischen alttestarrentlichcn Wissenschaft meist als eine Kompilation von verschiedenen Stucken aus verschiedenen Zeiten mit vielen redaktionellen Schichten und Zutater angesehen. Sie wind von vielen Forschern als demonstratives Beispiel fur die Richtigheit der Urkundenhypothese und fur das Trennen der verschiedenen Quellen gebraucht."

Since our section is regarded by modern scholarship in this manner, it is now necessary to survey the study of the Balaam materials in modern critical studies. The present writer has found few treatments of the Balaam narrative in which a critical stance was not taken. It has indeed been used "als demonstratives Beispiel fur die Richtigkeit der Urkundenhypothese." It is felt by the present writer that a thorough presentation of several representative treatments of the Balaam section is important for our study. In this manner we will appreciate more readily the problems involved in the presentation of critical issues from a positive viewpoint, the substance of chapter IV of the present paper. But in addition to that factor, we may also see that the critical position *vis-a-vis* the Balaam oracles is flawed throughout with improper methodology. If our section is the test case for literary analysis, a survey in some depth of critical writing on the passage is certainly in order.

A large number of articles might have been chosen for this survey, as may be indicated by a perusal of the bibliography of the present study. Rather than attempt to summarize every approach available, and have to deal with each only briefly, it was decided to choose major studies that might represent the totality. Those studies so selected include the work of Wellhausen, Lohr, Mowinckel, Burrows, Albright, von Pakozdy, and Eissfeldt. Some interaction and evaluative comments will be made within the body of this chapter, but the systematized positive presentation of critical

issues will be reserved for chapter IV.

The Reconstruction of Wellhausen

Critical orthodoxy respecting Numbers 22-24 was formulated by Julius Wellhausen in his major work, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, the third edition of which appeared in 1899.[1] Hence, it seems proper to begin the study of Balaam in critical scholarship with a survey of the reconstruction of the narrative developed by Wellhausen, the popularizer of the Documentary Hypothesis.

A convenient summary of Wellhausen's reconstruction of the narrative is presented by Bewer in an article written in 1905.[2] In this account there is the apportioning of elements of the narrative to two principal sources, "J" (the Yahwist), and "E" (the Elohist).

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[1] Albright states, "Most critics follow Wellhausen in the main, and assign the pericope, including the poems, to JE, though few are perhaps as prudent as he was. Even so, at the end of his treatment he was forced to say: 'Man kommt uber Fragen and Zweifeil nicht hinaus.'" William Foxwell Albright citing Wellhausen's *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, p. 352, "The Oracles of Balaam, " *JBL*, LXIII (1944), 207. Comparison may be made to S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, "International Theological Library," (9th ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. 66-67. An early attack on the critical position in its formative period was published by the Bishop of Ostrojsk in Russia, the Very Rev. Seraphim. This book dealt with critical issues, cultural issues, and exegetical commentary. *The Soothsayer Balaam* (London: Rivingtons, 1900). This work has been unavailable to the present writer. A review by A. B. Davidson appeared in *ET*, all (1900-1901), pp. 329-30.

[2] Julius A. Bewer, "The Literary Problems of the Balaam Story in Numbers Chapters 22-24, " *AJT*, IX (1905), 238-40.

According to J the ambassadors from Balak come to Balaam with their message as is given in Numbers 22:11. Balaam refuses to go with them, insisting that he must be dependent on the will of Yahweh in every-thing (Num. 22:17-18). He lets the ambassadors go back, and then tells them that he would come if Yahweh should command him to do so--and then he starts without consulting Yahweh. In this he is enticed by the promised hono-rarium.

Balaam follows the messengers soon, but in doing this he pro-vokes the anger of Yahweh. The Angel of Yahweh confronts him on the way and commands him to return home. Balak, who is very disappointed that Balaam has not arrived, decides to go to meet Balaam at the latter's home personally to entreat him to reconsider his decision. This latter interpre-tation is based on Wellhausen's understanding of the words in verse 37, "Why did you not come to me?" as implying that Balak has gone to meet Balaam, He reasons that if the two are together, and Balaam did not go to meet Balak-- "what in the world can we infer but that Balak has gone to Balaam? It is a case of Mohammed's going to the mountain."[1]

The answer of Numbers 22:38 is not the proper response to the question of verse 37, as postulated by Wellhausen; hence the original con-nection is lost, But Balaam does finally go with Balak and J has recorded his oracles as we find them in chapter 24.

[1] *Ibid*. p. 239, n. 3.

Now for E as it is presented by the Wellhausen scheme. When the ambassadors arrive at Balaam's home, he asks them to stay with him for the night that he might be able to inquire of Yahweh. Yahweh appears to him and commands him regarding two issues: (1) he was not to go with the men, and (2) he was not to curse Israel. Balak then sends another group of messenders with more honor and promises than the former group. Again, Balaam consults with Yahweh and this time is given permission to go, but is still told not to curse Israel. E does not have the story of the speaking ass, and is thus quite consistent. E has recorded the oracles of Balaam as they are preserved in Numbers 23.

Bewer summarizes the results as they relate to chapter 22:

> With this we have the present status of the question before us, and we may at once say that several things appear to be clearly made out: (1) that the story of Balaam and his ass (vss. 22ff.) is not the original continuation of the preceding story as we have it in vss. 2-21; (2) that of vss. 2-21 we have a composite narrative resulting from a combination of J and E; (3) that vss. 22-34 belong to the document J, for we have in them several of J's characteristic marks, as has been pointed out again and again; [such as the theophany in broad daylight, the speaking ass (parallel to the speaking serpent, J)] ; (4) that there is a strong presumption for the supposition that the beginning of the ass story is still preserved somewhere in the introductory verses (2ff.).[1]

Bewer discusses Wellhausen's approach to the problematic introductory section, Numbers 22:2-7, as demonstrating apparent marks of composition. There is first of all the doublet in verse 3 in which nothing new

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[1] *Ibid.* , p. 240.

is added. This is followed by the irrelevance of verse 4b after verse 2, and then the "inconsistency of the two definitions of Balaam's home in vs. 5, one clause placing it on the Euphrates, the other in 'the land of the children of Ammon' (so read with G)."[1]

From these several points, Bewer summarizes:

Since vs. 2 refers back to 21:21ff. (E), it must come from E; one-half of vs. 3 must also come from E, since the other comes from J. As in 4b Balak is introduced anew, it must come from J, for E has him already in vs. 2. One of the two references to Balaam's home in vs. 5 belongs to E, most probably the one that makes him come from Pethor on the Euphrates, for according to vss. 22ff. we have the impression that he does not come from so far in J.[2]

In the remainder of the article Bewer attempted to modify what he felt to be some of the more hypothetical elements of Wellhausen's position. But in doing so, the then professor of Union Theological Seminary in New York showed himself to be well-established in the Wellhausen school of approach.

It was the established critical position from the time of Wellhausen to regard the Balaam narrative in the manner described. Although the bulk of the Book of Numbers was allotted to the Priestly writer, the Balaam narrative was said to have come from J and E. Both J and E had elements of the story as recorded in chapter 22. Further, both sources had two main oracles. The oracles of chapter 23 belong to E, those of chapter 24 belong

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 242.   [2] *Ibid.*

to].

Furthermore, this position was developed within just a few years in the leading critical commentaries. Three such commentaries on the Book of Numbers were published in 1903 (by Baentsch, Gray and Holzinger), each demonstrating full allegiance to Welihausen.[1] One scholar who did attack the critical orthodoxy respecting Numbers 22 was E. F. Sutcliffe. In articles written in 1926 and 1937,[2] he attempted to demonstrate the internal unity of Numbers 22 as well as the inconsistency of the critical approach. His articles seem to have had little impact, however, if one may judge from the relative lack of reference to them in subsequent critical literature on the Balaam oracles. Wellhausen's approach was established for at least a generation.

The Reconstruction of Lohr

In the 1927 issue of the journal *Archiv fur Orient-Forschung,* there appeared an article by Max Lohr of Konigsberg, Prussia, on Balaam.[3]

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[1] Compare Bruno Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri,* "Hand- it kommentar zum Alten Testament," ed. W. Nowack (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903); George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers,* ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903); H. Holzinger, *Numeri*, "Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, " ed. Karl Marti (Tubingen and Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903).

[2] E. F. Sutcliffe, "De Unitate Litteraria Num. XXII, " *Biblica*, VII (1926), 3-39; *idem*, "A Note on Numbers XXII," *Biblica*, XVIII (1937), 439-42.

[3] Max Lohr, "Bileam, Num 22, 2--24, 25, "*AOF*, IV (1927), 85-89.

This article was an appeal for a reexamination of the standard literary-critical approach to the Balaam narrative as developed by Wellhausen, Holzinger, Baentsch and Gray. The approach was at times a bit sarcastic and cutting. Lohr begins, "First a word concerning the literary-critical handling--better mishandling--of our text."[1] At another point he refers to a view of Wellhausen with disapproval, terming it "incorrect exegesis, such as appears often with Wellhausen."[2]

Lohr states that he is suspicious of the minute analysis of the literary critic. Further, he is not impressed by the labor of the form critics of his day. He says that he does not agree with the commentators of the critical position, that it is "indisputable" that 22:4b is an indicator of sources when compared with 22:2. The one case of doublets that he does find in chapter 22 is in verse 3, respecting the two words for "fear." But he feels this one example to be slim basis for the assumption of two sources.[3]

Lohr does not agree with that type of criticism that would look for sources based on the alternation of words for "messengers." He rather maintains that the narrator takes pleasure in the changes of expression. He cites other examples of parasynonymous expressions, and says that one may not build so assuredly upon this type of argument.[4]

Next, Lohr turns to the employment of the divine names in the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 85.   [2] Ibid., p. 87.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 86.   [4] *Ibid.*

MT and the LXX versions of the Balaam materials. In view of the many
divergences between the two, he asks how one is able to ascertain a Yahwistic
or an Elohistic source.[1] Further, as to the remarks of Holzinger and Baentsch
to the effect that the editing of the section is "very skillful," or "excellent,"
he asks why the section may not be read with good will as a unity apart from
editing.[2]

Then, having argued against the standard presentations of his
day, Lahr begins his own presentation of the material. He states that in
actuality Numbers 22:2-21+36-41; 23:1-24; 24:10-14a; 25--is essentially
a uniform presentation which he prefers to term the oracle history [*die Spruch-Geschichte*], to differentiate it from the donkey narrative in 22:22-35. He
does admit that when the latter section was added to the former, there may
have been some alteration in the beginning verses of chapter 22.[3]

Two items are characteristic in 22:4-21 in Lohr's view: (1) the
curse of Balaam is supposed to weaken the Israelites in order that Balak can
attack them successfully (22:6, 11), and (2) Balaam can say only that which
the deity inspires (22:20, 38; 23:12, 26; 24:12f.).[4] Further, Lohr agrees
with other commentators who see 22:21 connecting directly to 22:36. Balak
goes to the city of Moab to meet Balaam, which lies on the border of the
region. The first relative clause in verse 36 is a gloss, serving to connect

[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*   [4] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

the added section of the donkey episode. Lohr is quite strong in his opposition
to the "incorrect exegesis" of Welihausen respecting the latter's view that
Balak himself sought out Balaam in the home town of the prophet.[1]

In terms of the oracles proper, Lohr regards only 22:41; 23:1-24;
24:10-14a; 25, as part of the original execration material. While this is less
than the total corpus as we now have it in the Book of Numbers, it is more
than that allowed by many critics. He does not regard 23:7-10 and 18-24
as blessings in the strict sense, but rather statements concerning Israel's
present manner, number, and strength. Further, he does not regard the oracles
of Balaam as spoken as against a concrete goal, so that the object is there-
fore affected as from an arrow.[2]

As to the origin of the Balaam material, Lohr presumes that the
basis for our text was a *higa'* document which experienced strong modifications
to the glory of the God of Israel. A *higa'* document would refer to a prophetic
announcement of an ancient Arabic pattern. For Balaam, the worshipper of
Yahweh, Yahweh is the active divine being, not just any demon available to
Balaam. The gap between the old Arabic literature (the *higa'*) and the Balaam
narrative as we now find it, thus becomes clear. It is a *higa'* document that
has undergone considerable modification.[3]

Hence, the oracles, namely 23:7-10 and 18-24, contain expressions

[1] *Ibid.*　　[2] *Ibid.*　　[3] *Ibid.*

of the glory of Israel in the past, with close association of political and elements. The two sayings in chapter 23 as well as those of chapter 24 are probably derived, according to the context, from the Golden Age of Israel's history, about the time of the first three kings. When the supposed original *higa'* document was modified, however, nothing more can be said.[1]

Then Lohr turns to the issue of the donkey episode. This is taken to be an independent narrative. The sudden change of mind on the part of the Deity in 22:22-ff. is striking, when compared with verse 20. Also, the repeated introduction of the donkey in verse 22 (after the initial intro-duction in verse 21) is unnecessary. The beginning of the donkey tale is broken off. Presumably that beginning told how Balaam allowed himself to be tempted by Balak's gift, thus arousing the anger of the Deity who stood in his way. Verse 35 seems to be editorial, linking the situation from verse 20.[2]

He concludes that the Balaam of the oracle history and the Balaam of the donkey story are different individuals. The first makes his actions dependent from the beginning on the will of Yahweh, and is in fact immune to bribes and gifts. The second goes in search of reward.

Two questions are suggested by the donkey narrative to our writer. (1) May one conclude from this story that there was a complete

[1] *Ibid*., p. 88.   [2] *Ibid*.

parallel to the oracle history? To this question, Lohr's response is negative. (2) What is the purpose of the donkey history? Lohr states that the narrator of the donkey history does not regard Balaam highly, and he uses the donkey story to pit the insight of a beast against the limitation of the seer. This is particularly apt since the seer is an adversary of Yahweh and Israel. Yet he also sees in him one who finally bows to the Lord of Israel.[1]

As to the *Gattung* of the story, Lohr remarks:

Finally, it matters little, whether the donkey tale is declared to be a fairy tale or a legend [ob die Eselin-Geschichte als Marchen oder als Sage deklariert wird] , as the border between the two types is often despairingly uncertain. For me it is incomprehensible, when one posits from our story as Gressmann does, that the deity is out-witted, indeed not by Balaam, but by the donkey.[2]

Lohr then traces the several references to the Balaam story in the Old and New Testaments, tracing the two conceptions of Balaam as given above. As to the problem of the Home of Balaam, Lohr points to a study by Th. Noldeke, *Untersuchung zur Kritik des AT* [Keil, 1869] , in which the prophet is identified "without doubt in the least" with the first king of the Edomites, Bela[c] ben Beor, of Genesis 36:32. Lohr feels this view is countered by sound arguments. Hardly will one see the equating of the old Moabite Dannaba with Dinhaba, the city of the Edomite king Bela[c] (as is done by Noldeke). Such an identity is "assumed repeatedly as a steadfast fact, "

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.; cf. Hugo Gressmann, *Mose and Seine Zeit: Ein Kommen-tar zu den Mose-Sagen* (Gottingen: Vanenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913), pp. 318-34.

even by Gressmann. Lohr states that such cannot be proved in any way. Further, he states that the obvious references in the Old Testament to both figures speak to the contrary.[1]

Numbers 22:5 speaks of Pethor of the Euphrates as the home of Baalaam, he observes. Pethor, according to Deuteronomy 23:5, lies in Aram Naharaim, which accords well with Genesis 29:1. Hence, the accusations by scholars against the "artificial geography" as construed by Gressmann are totally valid. Gressmann, indeed, destroys the obvious situation through his textual changes and combinations.[2]

Summary: In reviewing this article, two elements strike the present writer. In the first place, Lohr stands out as a relatively cautious critic. This is somewhat remarkable considering the time in which he was writing (1927). He is pointedly sarcastic about the haughty opinions of the critics in their self-assured atomistic methodologies. He was, to be sure, not above suspicion in his own analysis of the "two pictures of Balaam," his divorcing the donkey narrative from the rest of the saga, and in his eliminating the prophetic element by positing a date in the kingdom period. But when he is placed within his cultural context, in the school of scholar-ship flourishing in his day in Europe, his analysis is found to be a refreshing variation on the common critical theme.

[1] *Ibid*., p. 89.   [2] *Ibid*

A second observation to be made about this article is the relative neglect of it by later writers on the Balaam oracles. One finds no mention of it, for instance, in the very lengthy article by Sigmund Mowinckel written three years later.[1] One is tempted to say that there seems to be a tendency among critical writers generally to ignore those writers less critical than they.

The Reconstruction of Mowinckel

A critical study of major importance appeared in the 1930 issue of the *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. The article is titled, "Der Ursprung der Bil'amsage," by Sigmund Mowinckel of Oslo, Norway.[2] Because of the importance of the author of this article in the field of Old Testament studies in general, and because of the importance of this article written by him, a rather extensive summary will now be given.

Mowinckel states at the outset that he is writing in response to the revisionary articles by von Gall and Gressmann as over against the then-standard literary-critical presentations of Wellhausen and Baentsch.[3] The

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[1] "Der Ursprung der Bil'amsage, *ZAW*, XLVIII (1930), 233-71.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] The materials to which he refers are the following: A. von Gall, "Zussamensetzung and Herkunft der Bileam-spruche," *Festschrift B. Stade* (Giessen, 1900) [thus far unavailable to the present writer]; Hugo Gressmann, *Mose und Seiune Zeit*, pp. 318-34; Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticu-Numeri,* pp. 443-702; Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 3d ed. , pp. 110ff., 345ff. A brief review of von Gall's treatise by J. A. Selbie appeared in

analysis by Wellhausen of the sources in our pericope is regarded by Mowinckel as a move in the right direction. In fact, he regards his conclusions as true beyond doubt. Von Gall's attempt to revise Wellhausen's work is regarded as "overly-ingenious [*uberscharfsinniger*], and Gressmann's modification of the standard presentation is regarded as in the essentials "a groundless delivering of a produced opinion."[1] As was noted above, Mowinckel does not refer to Lohr' s article at all.

Mowinckel begins with a survey of the literary-critical issue.[2] The settled convictions of the literary-analytical position regarding the Balaam story include the thoroughgoing doublets in 22:2-6, the problem in reconciling the donkey episode with the foregoing material, and the unjustified anger of Yahweh (when the earlier section stated that Yahweh had given Balaam permission to go). Verses 35 and following "also could not have been used in agreement with verses 22-34; hence they must be understood as a suture [*Naht*] of the redactor, written with the intention to absorb again the threads of verses 20 and following according to the interpolation of verses 22-34."[3]

1901. He writes: "We may say, at once, that while the Balaam episodes in Nu 22-24 have their difficulties, and while the analysis of these chapters has perhaps never been satisfactorily achieved, we find it impossible to follow Freiheer. Gall in his extreme conclusions. " J. A. Selbie, "Recent Foreign Theology. Miscellaneous," *ET*, XIII (1901-1902), 125.

[1] Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung, " p. 233.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 233-34.   [3] *Ibid*., p. 233.

Chapter 22:7b-21 is taken as a unity derived from E, as indicated by the predilection for night visions, as well as the predominant employment of "Elohim. " Chapter 22:22-34, having an archaic impression, must belong to J. The source analysis of the beginning and concluding verses of the chapter is quite complex in Mowinckel's estimation. E uses "princes" for the Moabite ambassadors, but J terms them "elders. The atomistic schema of Mowinckel thus results in the following, respecting chapter 22:

To J: 22:2, 3a, 5a^B b^B, 6a^B, 7a, 22-34, 37, 39.

To E: 22:3b, 4, 5a^a b^a, 6a^a b, 7b-21, 36, 38, 40, 41.

To R^{JE}:   22:35.[1]

Respecting the oracles, Mowinckel concludes that the songs in chapter 24 are much older than the songs in chapter 23. Those in chapter 23 form one of the last integrated parts of the narrative. Further, 24:20-24 forms two very late additions to R^{JE}.

The second division of the article by Mowinckel[2] begins with the problem of the homeland of Balaam. Mowinckel avers that Balaam comes from a land southeast of Moab, as may be seen from geographical indications within the story. More precisely, he comes from Edom. Hence, Mowinckel reads "Edom" in 23:7 rather than "Aram." The notice in verse 5, "Pethor, which lies by the (Euphrates) River," is therefore false. Pethor is perhaps the name of a village in Edom, or is a misreading altogether. E seems to

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 234.   [2] *Ibid*., pp. 235-38.

have written Pethor," which was later explained by a gloss when it was falsely identified with Pitru of the Akkadian texts. Mowinckel does not agree with the concept that J has Balaam coming from Ammon, for the land of Ammon lies to the northeast of Moab. The Massoretic reading of Numbers 22:5 אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹ is a conscious redactionary correction, and has origin-ated from לְעַמִּי in 24:14, in order to conceal a contradiction in 22:5. J must have meant originally a location southeasterly of Moab approximating a sense similar to that of E.[1]

"Balaam ben B[ec]or" is consequently an Edomite. In essence he is identical with the first king of Edom, Bala[c] ben B[ec]or (Gen. 36:32). Hence, the Balaam of our stories is not to be regarded as an historical person in the strict sense of the word. The well-known seer originally was an anonymous legendary figure, a fairy-tale representative of the ancient Hebrew and North-Arabic seer- (*kahin-* and *hakim-*) type after all.[2]

Mowinckel is not sure of the reason for the association of Balaam with Bela of Edom. Perhaps the latter figure became a prototype of "Wisdom" and for that reason was tied closely by tradition to a wise man and magician. Be that as it may, that which is historical concerning him is the name; otherwise he belongs to the fabulous [*Marchen*]. In summary: "This fairy-tale and legendary figure is of an origin outside of Israel and came to

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 236-37.　　　[2] *Ibid.*, p. 237.

Israel from the Edomites and the North-Arabians."[1] That we know Balaam to
have been a legendary figure is seen, he adds, by the introduction of him
with no explanation. Hence, we are dealing with a saga. Further, the
donkey-story confirms the fairy-tale motif.

      The third section of the article[2] begins with the thought that
one needs no longer to prove that the Balaam-Balak narrative is a saga, as
it has the characteristics of the fairy-tale. An indicator of this is to be
seen in the name of the king of Moab, *Balak*, which is nothing more than the
name of the region in which the narration is located. Even today, he affirms,
the district is called by the Arabs, *Balka*. It is impossible that this name
be a transference from the biblical story.[3]

      Mowinckel then adds that there is a "novelistic" form through-
out the entire episode. It is noteworthy that the entire encounter between
Israel and Balaam has almost no sequence. The assault of Balak fails, and
Israel and Moab go as under amicably, never to see each other again. That
chapter 25 might be regarded as the sequence of the account is not even
mentioned by Mowinckel as a possibility.

      He then turns to Gressmann's view. Gressmann said that the
unbloody manner of the story and its seeming lack of result are only apparent.
The chief supposition of the Balaam saga is not articulated, but is regarded it
as obvious: the historic conquest of Moab by Israel. Mowinckel regards
this suggestion by Gressmann as an entirely ungrounded assertion. If this

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   [1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 238-41.   [3] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

were the intent of the story, he avers, it would have been stated without question; indeed, it would have been the climax of the narrative.[1]

Now the present story is joined to the narrative of the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan. It also speaks of an underlying hostility between Israel and Moab. However, it is very noteworthy, Mowinckel says, that the other immigration sagas never notify one concerning anything about an encounter with Moab. The Israelites did battle with the Amorites, but they had no need to go through the land of Moab. The Yahwist and the Elohist agree that the Amorites had conquered the land north of the Arnon before the approach of the Israelites.

The Israelites came through this previously conquered country and then forced entrance into Canaan. They defeated Sihon and Og and camped in what might be called the "Steppes of Moab," but which were no longer under the control of Moab. They needed to have nothing to do with Moab; the peoples of the Arnon had nothing to fear. The introduction to the Story in 22:2 is thus clearly to be regarded as placed externally; it is not harmonious with the whole.[2]

Mowinckel then moves to the problematic issue of the origin of the song of Numbers 21:27-30. His personal view is that it speaks of a later

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[2] Some of Mowinckel's observations are apt; for an approach to the problem from a harmonistic viewpoint, see above, pp. 19-24.

conquest of Moab by the Israelites, which regarded itself as the heritage of Sihon. Hence, it must date from the time of David or Omri. The view that the song mentions a former conquest of Moab through Sihon is felt to be questionable by Mowinckel. He has an extended discussion on this issue.[1]

Hence, he argues for a late date for the origin of the Balaam-Balak narrative and for its legendary character. The historical relationship has been forgotten entirely. The combination with the Amorite war is secondory and redactional. It cannot fit into the time of the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan.

The fourth section[2] deals with Mowinckel's reconstruction of the origin of the Balaam-Balak saga. He reminds the reader that the first two songs (chapter 23) stand in the casement of E, and the last two songs (chapter 24, excluding verses 20-24) belong to J. Mowinckel notes that von Gall viewed the songs as not having stood in the narratives from the early period, but that they were the creations of the Hellenistic or even the Roman period and were then interpolated into the text after the combination of J and E into JE. Wellhausen, on the contrary, regarded the two song-pairs as belonging to the two prose narratives.

Gressmann began a new type of study, however, when he combined form criticism to literary-analysis, as applied to the Balaam materials.

[1] Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung, " p. 241, n. 1.
[2] *Ibid*., pp. 241-45.

He came to the conclusion that the first two songs are older and are approximately simultaneous with the saga in their oldest form, originating about the time of Saul. He feels, however, that the substance of the saga is older. The last two songs, because of the reference to Agag, are placed in the time of David or his successors. They are a secondary addition to the E variant of the narrative.[1]

Mowinckel then goes on to note other options in Gressmann's view, concluding that he speaks very unclearly here. The vagueness in Gressmann's thought is attributed by Mowinckel to the former's lack of appreciation of the niceties of literary criticism. He feels that Gressmann's view of literary criticism relating to the Balaam section is that it is false, and that he had wished to ascribe the whole of chapter 24 to E, but had found himself "discontent" because of the unlikelihood of the result [2]

The real point of the story, however, is that blessing was produced instead of the intended curse. The presupposition of both the songs and the saga is the belief in the effective, real power of blessing-words and curse-words. He compares the Hebrew belief in such to that of the ancient Arabic terms *hakim* "the knowing," and *kahin* "the seer." These words were used of those who were inspired of the higher powers so that they could speak "the speech of the gods."[3] In these ancient Arabic mantics there is the same

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 242.　　　　[2] *Ibid*.　　　[3] *Ibid*., p. 243.

poetic-rhythmic form we find in the Balaam saga. Psychologically speaking, this seems to be because the rhythmic word is the natural form of speech of the ecstatic state, and it is to be seen exerting the greatest working on the soul, primitively speaking. Hence, Mowinckel regards Gressmann to be correct in stressing this factor as a realistic feature of the saga. Such an effcctive way of breaking down the power of one's enemy before the battle is to be stressed.[1] He then makes further comparisons with the *higa'*, the Arabic mantic who hurls imprecations against the enemy.[2]

Section five of Mowinckel's study[3] is concerned with an analysis of the Yahwist songs of Numbers 24. Mowinckel classifies these oracles as of the same literary *Gattung* as that which includes the blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49) and the blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33). In both of these "so-called" blessings there are blessing and curse words placed in the mouths of the figures from antiquity by later writers. By this means the Incidents of the present are explained by the poets as the result of the "so-called" effective words.   These words thus have the character of *vaticinia ex eventu*, or fictitious prophecies after the events.[4]

The first Balaam song by the Yahwist (Numbers 24:3-9) is an expression of the glory of Israel over its beautiful, fruitful land, its warlike power, its mighty king. Mowinckel insists that the king in view cannot be

[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 243-44.
[3] *Ibid.* , pp. 245-51.   [4] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

or the Messiah, for to call Yahweh mightier than Agag would be of no particular glory, and there was no interest in the "Messiah" in such a song. "His king" is obviously the king of Israel in general, especially in such a manner that is contemporary with the poet. All of this splendor the celebrated Seer Balaam had prophesied, and it is done even through the effective power, through the prophecy of fortune.[1]

Secondly, the next song in the Yahwist section (Numbers 24: 15-19) evidences the form of a prophecy of concrete events. The "star" and the "comet" ("scepter" in common versions), which rise out of Jacob and radiate out and shatter the temple of Moab--these images refer neither to Messiah nor to any other actual celebrity in the future. This is taken for granted from the knowledge we may obtain from the *Gattung* of such songs. In general, these employ only what has in reality already been done. Hence, the reference must be to David who conquered Moab and Edom and put them under Israel.[2]

To Mowinckel, it is remarkable that Gunkel, the pioneer in form, critical studies of the Old Testament, did not recognize this feature of such *Gattunuen*. Mowinckel finds it difficult to believe that Gunkel interpreted the "Shilo" passage in Genesis 49 messianically. To Mowinckel, the reference in Genesis 49:10 is also but to David.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 248.   [3] *Ibid.*, p. 248, n. 1.

In this disputed passage in Numbers 24 the supposed seer uses mysterious style of the old *kahin*, and speaks of the mightiest of the kings of Israel, as had the poet of the Jacob blessing in similar words. The presupposition of the narrative is that there was first the word of blessing, and that this word of blessing was given in the form of a prophecy. The prophecy was then followed by an out-working in history. But, to Mowinckel, such is only the presupposition of a naive reader. The expression in Numbers 24:14, moreover, cannot be used to argue for the futurity of the oracles in their import. For the words "in the days to come" are simply a later gloss, based on a misunderstanding of the section, That Israel "at the end of days" should oppress Moab, would certainly be a matter of extraordinary indifference to Balak--the old Hebrews and the narrators of their history lived in their world.[1]

Consequently, it seems very clear to Mowinckel that the songs presuppose for their understanding at no point any acquaintance with the saga of Balaam and Balak--neither in the present form, nor in any form. They can be understood well enough without acquaintance with the story. Hence, there is no point of contact to the story of the entrance into Canaan; such was only part of the poetic style. The illustrations are descriptive of Israel as a settled agricultural people. The songs are artistic units.[2]

[1] *Ibid*., p. 248.   [2] *Ibid*.

Mowinckel then lists what he terms the unique elements whereby one may have acquaintance with an understanding of the narrative. (1) First would be to have the national self-consciousness and signal aspirations of the Israel of the period, coupled to its political relationships to the neighboring peoples. (2) A second factor would be found in the old tradition of a real Balaam ben B^{ec}or. Concerning this Balaam, there could have been a cycle of sayings and anecdotes which were becoming known in written form as well. The figure of Balaam is older than the songs, at any rate.

This Balaam would have been drawn into the songs as a genuine "Seer" of the old Hebrew and North-Arabic type, a man who receives his revelation from a higher power. Hence, Gressmann is quite false in claiming that Balaam is described as a "prophet" of the later Israelite type (a *nabi'*). The expression, "the Spirit of God comes over him," is a form of mantic (and magic), related to a thundering orgiastic cultus and piety, manifesting itself in so-called "exalted ecstasy."[1]

As to the fact that the speaker of these oracles, the Edomite Balaam ben B^{ec}or, was not a father of one of the tribes; such lends some objectivity to the blessings. This was thus a means of flattering the national glory. How great must not the fortune-soul and the inherent blessing of Israel be, when it forces even a person who is a representative of a strange and defeated people to such inspired admiration![2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 249.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

For these several reasons, Mowinckel regards Gressmann to have been wrong in suggesting that the songs were added to an existing narrative. On the other hand, Mowinckel would agree with Gressmann that the songs must be dated after David's reign over the nation Israel and his conquest of Moab and Edom. Yet the songs seem to set forth Israel's dominion as undivided and unweakened as Gressmann argued, and are, therefore, older than the division of the realm after the death of Solomon (931 B. C.).[1]

The sixth section[2] concerns the J narrative which is the casement for the J songs. Mowinckel insists that the Balaam-Balak saga must be younger than the two songs. The songs did not belong to the old traditions of the entrance of the land of Canaan. The immigration was not really just one solitary act, however, but a long and fluctuating history. In East Jordan different Hebrew tribes were detached from one another and the borders seem to have oscillated here and there for a long time. So, perhaps the passing of time could allow for the formation of the "historical kernel" of the saga, in which the Moabites (again?) penetrated northward, or else from the east or southeast, and immigrated in the tracks of the Israelites. They would then have been repressed by the Reubenites and the Gadites, and others. Gressmann suggested the conquest of the Moabite land through Reuban and Gad as the historical kernel of the saga.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.* , pp. 250-51. [2] *Ibid.*, pp, 251-59.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

Mowinckel is very cautious in demonstrating the development of the "historical kernel." He notes that in the saga Balak is the enemy who is not afraid to summon the sinister and demonic power of the curse against Israel. The saga cannot have originated before there was a united Israel Moreover, there had to have been a united immigration legend in Israel. So the actual background is to be sought in a warlike confrontation between Moab and a united Israel.

Now he admits that we do not know strictly when there was the beginning of a united Israel in the full political sense, but avers that it cannot have been before the time of Saul and David. We do not know anything about Moses and his time that is positively reliable, he remarks. We are probably conducted to the time after Saul, for these reasons.[1] On the other hand, there may have been legends about a king Balak before the legends developed about Balaam. The possibility remains that the figure Balak is older than the Balaam-Balak saga.

For an historical occasion, however, it is necessary to turn to a time when an enemy existed who was to be feared. The presumption of the saga demands this. Moab had become autonomous perhaps already under Solomon but at any rate after the division of the kingdom. Omri had conquered it again, probably only after severe battles, and at any case he

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

annexed to his realm a part of the land between the Arnon and the Zarad.
Under its king Mesha, Moab made itself free again, after bloody battles.
in these battles the Moabites gave no pardon, according to the description
in the inscription from Mesha. Certainly in the eyes of the Israelites, this
was a curse deed against it and its land.

Israel made the attempt under the kings Joram and Jehoshaphat
to chastise the mutinous vassals, but were repulsed. They received a
frightful impression of the effective curse of the Moabites. It was at this
time that the criticism of Moab would have reached such a point among
Israel that the interpretation of the formation of the Moabite race as incestuous
would have developed (see Genesis 19:30-38). Further, the Israelite folk-
etymology has read in a meaning "arrogant, enemy-of-God-noise" into the
archaic poetic name of Moab, "sons of Seth" (*b^e ne set*).   They formed
instead a synonym *bene sa'on*, "sons of the noisy arrogant." In this con-
nection it is of no consequence what the name *set* might have as etymology.
Jeremiah 48:45 rather gives the new interpretation: "And it has devoured the
forehead of Moab / and the scalps of the riotous revelers." Here בְּנֵי שָׁאוֹן
stands, and *sa'on* combines in it the meanings, "(mutinous, arrogant) noise,"
"decline," "noise," etc. Hence, we have here a folk-etymology of the name
שֵׁת.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 253-54.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 254, n. 3.

Mowinckel then says that the historical situation is now before us and that we may now return to the songs. When we read the songs in the light of this historical situation, we find one line in which they are given in a nuce. The expression to which he refers is, "Blessed is he who blesses you, but cursed who curses you." Here we have the fact that an opponent of Israel, even the curse-worthy Moab, once made an attempt to curse the people, but itself became subjected to the curse.[1]

The legend-moulder had before him the two older songs and he understood these to have brought about the unwanted result of an unsuccessful curse-attempt of an evil enemy. Now he had to take this interpretation and form out of it an expressed aetiological history. The lesson which his fantasy would state was to give Balaam occasion to utter two blessing oracles. In other words, he built up the narrative, using two chief scenes. But this is not to say that the intended curse for Israel dropped out and happened as a curse to Moab of itself, but rather that this was obviously the work of Yahweh. Hence, the narrator has the Spirit of Yahweh fall on the seer.[2]

The addition of the animal motif was to develop dramatic tension and to retard the movement of the story. In the original story it was Yahweh, not an angel of Yahweh, who withstood Balaam. The animal comes forth as

[1] *Ibid*., p. 255.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 256.

a helper of man and sees the danger, which the legendary hero does not see, and helps him to escape it. This is surely a well-known motif that has parallels in legends and fables of all times and peoples. Thus in the conception of primitive man there was the view that in many respects an animal is superior to man and more wise than he.[1]

Yet even beyond this story, as Gressrnann points out, in the pure form there was not a deity but a rather hostile demon whom the clever animal discovered and revealed to its lord. The transference to Yahweh of such is extraordinary [!] Three times he stations himself in the way of Balaam, and three times the donkey turns aside when it saw him. On the third time he made Balaam recognize him and turn back.

The question remains, Mowinckel asks, Was the incident of the speaking of the ass necessary? That the speaking of the animal belongs to the forelying legendary motif of the narrator has been suggested. But the point is that Yahweh cannot be revealed by an animal. He must reveal Himself. The narrator has thus even rationalized the legendary motif: It was Yahweh who opened the mouth of the animal in this exceptional instance.[2]

We are concerned, therefore, with one of the anecdotes which was a part of the Balaam folk-saga. This was one of the elements which had made him one of the folk heroes, a famous celebrity. The narrator took the old account of the demon and the speaking animal and transferred the story to Yahweh. Further, the narrator could have let Yahweh tell Balaam immediately

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 257.   [2] *Ibid*., pp. 257-58.

that he should bless the people, but he does not do that. He rather uses the action-slowing motif. This was to bring a bit more tension into the narrative. Then he could let Balak call Balaam a second time, and in that instance not hinder him from his trip.

Hence, Mowinckel postulates that the Balaam-Balak saga has become composed of older sagas and anecdotes. The time of the composition was perhaps under the Omrides, in the time of acute opposition between Moab and Israel. The older materials were transformed. The songs and the saga were fused into the same narrative, though they had entirely independent origins. In contents, there is the stamp of legend. But when it begins to be related to the historical peoples and a definite historical situation, it becomes saga.[1]

Section seven[2] of Mowinckel's treatment of the Balaam saga has to do with the E variant which is used to reshape the J materials. The variants of the saga which are narrated by the Elohist build entirely and fully on the Yahwistic materials. But in the E reshaping there is the influence of a later period in terms of the conception of God and also in other ways of thinking.

The E variant retains the two trips of Balak after Balaam and the two blessings that were given instead of cursings. But E varies from J in that E does not let Balaam speak the two blessings of his own initiative.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 259.　　　[2] *Ibid*., pp. 259-62.

E has also abbreviated significantly the introductory part in which the episode of the donkey figures. Such would stand too roughly in opposition to the more spiritual and lofty conception of God in the later period.[1]

Balaam is transformed by E as well. He now becomes a man of God. E has Balaam immediately relating each time that the concept of reward meant nothing at all to him. But with the loss of the action-slowing motif of the donkey, E had to use other means to slow down the story. The elements he uses are the ornamental details. In E there are festival offerings at the arrival of Balaam. E has solemn cultic ritual preparations for the acts of cursing: seven altars, secret meetings of Balaam with the deity, choice of the appropriate places, etc. The use of sevens speaks of the Babylonian influence during the Assyrian epoch of Judah. Further, in E there is a touch concerning refined kingly etiquette: Balak shows the manner in which even a king should honor a prophet.[2]

The most characteristic element in the E variant, according to Mowinckel, however, is the religious. The folk-saga has become legend. Balaam has now become the pious man of God, whereas he had been no more than a professional seer. Now, in all matters, he waits for the command of Elohim.

Another tell-tale sign of E is to be seen in the preference for

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 260.   [2] *Ibid.*

dream or semi-awake periods of revelation in the night. No longer is there the daylight vision of the angel; in E it is replaced by night visions and dreams. The disgraceful expedient of the donkey is dismissed.

So, Mowinckel summarizes, in the E variant there are no new elements. Rather we are to see in E a "deforming" [read "demythologizing"] of the J section under the influence of the religious way of thinking of the later period.[1]

Section eight[2] is concerned with Mowinckel's treatment of the E poems. He comments on the inherent differences between these songs as against the songs of J. In the E songs it is entirely manifest, he says, that they point directly to the saga in which they are encased. They are therefore taken to have been composed from the beginning with the intention to build the narrative.

He argues further that these two songs are dependent on the two of J, and that they have appropriated isolated thoughts and expressions from them. For example, the words in 23:9a, "I see him from the top of the rocks, I behold him from the mountains," must be related to the words of 24: 17a, "I see him, but not quite now, I behold him, but not yet near." Other similar comparisons are made between 23:24a and 24:9a; 23:24b and 24:8b.[3]

On the other hand, Mowinckel says that the poet of these newer songs has left off the archaic expression "whisper of Balaam" that is found in

[1] *Ibid*., pp. 261-62.   [2] *Ibid*., pp. 262-69.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 265.

songs. In the time of E such an expression with the name of the
in the genitive was no longer used.[1]

Other transformations in the E songs concern the "prophetic"
elements of the J songs. The hints of Agag and the prophecy concerning David
are lost. This is fitting, he argues, for such references would no longer be
appropriate. David was at that time a hero of the "days of yore." Edom and
Moab had long been independent, and Judah had in no way any grounded hope
to subjugate it again. So, too, the warlike and triumphal mood of the older
songs is softened in the younger. The image of the lion has become stereo-
typed.[2] Hence, he says that one finds here no concrete prophecies, no
consciousness of recently achieved large towns and acquired victories, no
concretely expressed hope to become lord of other peoples.

What is stressed in the E songs, then? Mowinckel says there
are two items. The first is the stress on the religious and cultural isolation
of Israel. It now has Yahweh in its midst and may hail him always with the
"cry-owed-the-king," In the telling phrase just cited, Mowinckel has the
occasion to turn to a favorite topic of his, the enthronement festival. He says
that in this cry the poet points to a religious festival that was in the later
period of the kings the chief cultic festival. This was the festival in which
the king, representing Yahweh, moved toward his holy shrine in solemn pro-
cession. As he mounted the throne he would be honored by the "rejoicing-

[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

owed-the king" of his people. He then refers the reader to his *Psalmstudien*.[1]

Further, Mowinckel concurs with Baentsch on the point concerning the king in the E and J songs: "One notices that Balaam in E celebrates the kingdom of God, in J on the contrary the human kingdom."[2] A second characteristic of these songs, according to our writer, is in the emphasis they place on the distinction between the prophets of Israel and the mantic of the heathen peoples. The latter were practitioners of sorcery and demonic arts.[3]

The presentation of God in the Elohistic songs is plainly later than that of the Yahwist songs in Mowinckel's estimation. In the Yahwist songs, God is presented in a bull-image, or, with the horns of the wild ox, a representation which the Israelites had received from the Canaanites. In the songs by the Elohist, on the contrary, God is all such as is opposite to man. He is said not to lie, which shows a wiser reflection of God than that which obtained at the earlier period. Moreover, the distinction Mowinckel makes between the two groups of songs *vis-a-vis* the horn image, is possible only because our author has excised 23:22 from its setting, insisting that it was an intrusion from 24:8.[4]

All of the above, he avers, shows now unequivocally that the songs of the Elohist originated from a much later time than those of the Yah-

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 267, n. 3. The reader may now consult his work in English, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. by D. R. Ap-Thomas (2 vols., bound as one; New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

[2] "Der Ursprung," p. 267.   [3] *Ibid*. p. 268.   [4] *Ibid*., p. 269.

wist. The tendency to religious isolation and to the unique religious charac-
terization of Israel in distinction to the "heathen," is characteristic of the
Book of Deuteronomy. Since, Mowinckel suggests, the Book of Deuteronomy
comes at the earliest in the second half of the seventh century, the viewpoint
of the E songs also must be from that period. A comparison might be made, he
says, between the view of prophecy in the E songs and that in the (late) chapter
18 of Deuteronomy.[1]

The allusion to the enthronement festival with the homage it
gives to Yahweh as king points the same direction. Another indicator of date
is to be seen in the use of the word "upright" in 23:10. This occurs in the
so-called Song of Moses of Deuteronomy (cf. 32:15), which can be dated
from the last years of the monarchy at the earliest. Since the song of Moses
is late, so is the song of Balaam. An even later use of the term is to be found
in Deutero-Isaiah (44:2). We cannot date the songs too late, he cautions.
For in them there is no trace of the great catastrophies of 598 B. C. and 587
B. C. Also, there is no concept of the oppressive consciousness of the sin
find the condemnation of the fathers that is so characteristic of later Judaism.[2]

His summary then follows.[3] Mowinckel reconstructs the saga
and songs in the following manner. The two songs in chapter 24 are old, even
older than the saga itself. The two songs in chapter 23 are much younger than

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 268.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 269.   [3] *Ibid*., pp. 269-70.

the others, as they are composed out of the saga, and are dependent on the former songs. They are totally in conformity with the mode of viewing of the Elohist.

Consequently, one may agree with Wellhausen's use of source and analysis and criteria. Secondly, one may see that the songs transmitted by the Elohist come from the time of the end of the Assyrian period (approximately contemporary with the Song of Moses, the Blessing of Moses, and perhaps Deuteronomy). Lest the reader receive the impression that by "E" Mowinckel has in mind one specific individual, he states in some detail that he views "E" as a complex process. "The entire process is what we denote by the ideogram 'E.'"[1] As for the use of "Yahweh" in 23:21 (an E text), our author says that this proves nothing, for E uses the name "Yahweh" not infrequently.[2]

His conclusion is given, at long last.[3] One will scarcely go astray, he says, from all that has gone before, if one fixes the beginning of the E songs and the E variant in the time of the awakening of the national-religious self-assurance under King Josiah (whom he dates at B. C. 640-609).

Our evaluation. --Our evaluation of the foregoing material must begin with an apology to the reader for having taken so much of his time with

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 271.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 271, n. 2.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 271.

this antiquated article by Mowinckel. The writer may only suggest that considerably more time would be spent by the reader if he were to "plow though" the original. Nevertheless, it was deemed necessary to survey Mowinckel's work to this extent. This study from more than forty years ago relates not only to the Balaam narrative, but to an entire methodological approach to Old Testament studies, in which the Balaam narrative is a test case, serving "*als demonstratives Beispiel.*"

The so-called "Documentary Hypothesis," which received its formal exposition in the writings of Wellhausen, Driver, *et al.*,[2] is felt to be demonstrated as "beyond all doubt" by Mowinckel in the treatise surveyed above. His second sentence states confidently this operating premise: "Es besteht fur mich daruber gar kein Zweifel, dass die von Wellhausen and Bantsch vorgenommene Scheldung in der Hauptsache das Richtige getroffen hat."[3]

This article may be stated to be "Exhibit A" in the defense of literary-critical analysis. In opposition to revisionists such as von Gall and Gressmann, and in ignorance or disregard of critical "heretics" such as Lohr--Mowinckel methodically sloshes through the quagmire of the reasoning

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[1] Compare the words of von Pakozdy, cited above, p. 55.
[2] Compare, above, p. 57, n. 1.
[3] Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung, " p. 233.

of source-analysis. After almost forty pages of closely printed text, he concludes where he began. Wellhausen is indeed correct: "Daraus ergibt sich erstens, dass die von anderen Kriterien heraus vorgenommene Quellen-schceidung Wellhausens und anderer . . . die richtige ist."[1]

This is not the place to attempt to present a thoroughgoing refutation of literary-criticism;[2] such has been done well by others.[3] It is enough simply to display the manner of argumentation by Mowinckel in detail (as done above), in order to exhibit the logical and scientific flaws

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[1] Ibid., p. 269.

[2] Arguments will be advanced, however in the discussion that follows in the present chapter as well as in the following chapter, in which a positive approach will be made to the several critical issues. The use of the designations for Deity in the Balaam narrative will be discussed in the chapter on theological insights from the Balaam materials, below.

[3] Compare G. Ch. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1949); Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964); *idem*, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics* (Philadelphia: The Presby-terian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972); Gleason L, Archer, Jr. , *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964); U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*, trans. by Israel Abraham (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967); Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969); Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966); *idem, Pentateuchal Criticism and Interpretation*, Notes of Lectures, Dec., 1965 (London: Theological Students Fellowship, 1966); Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951); and Edward J, Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960).

The reader may also consult the periodical articles listed in the bibliography of the present paper for a number of titles that pertain to the discussion.

of the literary-critical hypothesis.

Presuppositions of a negative cast are stated, conclusions are drawn, conflicting data are excised as being "intrusions," premises are proved--and the author marvels at the result. One example may suffice. Rather than see a progression and development in the several oracles of Numbers 23 and 24, Mowinckel *inverts* their order, excises "intrusions" that conflict with his presuppositions, and then "proves" that the songs of chapter 24 are earlier than those of chapter 23 on the basis of presuppositions of historical context and evolution of religion. As for the employment of the word "Yahweh" in Numbers 23:2:1--our author says that this proves "nichts gogen 'E' als Verfasser."[1] Yet it was precisely on the basis of the employment of the divine names that the sources were first identified.

With these circular reasoning and question-begging techniques, our author may seek any historical situation he wishes for a given passage. The word "history" is employed in a very cavalier fashion. It may well be that the mere presentation of the arguments of Mowinckel serves as a most potent argument against the system.

However, the presentation of this material also serves to confirm an observation made in Chapter I of the present paper. Much of the loss of *simhat torah* in Old Testament studies must be attributed to the atomizing process of critics such as Mowinckel. What delight after all is there in his

[1] Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung," p. 271, n. 2.

manner of approach?[1] Further, what his approach does to the authority of the Word of God in the mind of the reader is a question of prime importance.

The Reconstruction of Burrows

A rather fanciful approach to the problem of the oracles of Balaam was taken in 1938 by an English Jesuit scholar, Eric Burrows.[2] Father Burrows' approach was to connect both the Blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49 and the Oracles of Balaam in Numbers 22-24 to the concept of astral phenomena in general, and to the zodiac in particular. He notes in his introduction that attempts to do the same had been made before him by a number of Orientalists, principally by German scholars. He argues, however, that the study of the early history of the zodiac had developed considerably since the last attempts had been made, sufficiently so as to warrant this new book.

It is the contention of Burrows in this book that the earlier treatments of the same theme had failed in that they had insisted on an application of the data of the biblical passages to the elements of astral phenomena and the zodiac of a later period (classical history), rather than to apply these data to the knowledge of the zodiac that obtained at an earlier (ancient) period.

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[1] Compare Cyrus H. Gordon, "Higher Critics and Forbidden . Fruit," *CT*, IV (November 23, 1959), 6; see also above in the present paper, " p. 6.

[2] Eric Burrows, *The Oracles of Jacob and Balaam,* "The Bellarmine Series, " III, ed. Edmund F. Sutcliffe (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1938).

In this vein Burrows writes:

> Cuneiform documents show, however, that about the beginning of the first millennium and to some extent earlier there were already approximations to the zodiac. It seems not to have been sufficiently recognized either by the astralists or by their critics that the allied astral scheme of Gen. 49 should be compared rather with these approximate zodiacs than with the stabilized zodiac of the Greek age.[1] [Emphasis in original.]

As to the relationship of astral phenomena and the blessing of

Jacob in Genesis 49, he summarizes:

> There are allusions to eleven of the twelve zodiacal constellations; also allusions to other asterisms within the zodiac and to constellations more or less closely adjacent to it on the north and south. Almost all of these additional constellations are also included in the above cuneiform documents.[2]

Turning to the oracles of Balaam, Burrows gives a summary of

his position in these words:

> Of the four oracles of Balaam on Israel in Num. 23-4, the first is a blessing without noteworthy figures; the other three contain figures as follows:
>
> > Second oracle (Num. 23, 18-24): King, Bull, Lioness, and Lion.
> > Third oracle (24:3-9): Water-pourer, Bull, Arrows, Lioness, and Lion.
> > Fourth oracle (24:15-17): Star and Sceptre.
>
> It will be seen that these oracles are reminiscent of certain oracles of Jacob: those of Joseph-Taurus, Judah-Leo, Reuben-Aquarius. The choice is conformed to the zodiacal pattern, as Taurus, Leo, and Aquarius correspond to three of the cardinal points. These representative oracles are here applied to Israel as a whole.[3]

The author then turns to each of the oracles seriatim and seeks

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 3.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 7.   [3] *Ibid*., p. 71.

to develop the zodiac features he claims to have found. To the present writer his conclusions are less than convincing. That Balaam might have used astral themes and zodiac imagery is not beyond question. It may be remembered that Balaam is pictured as a diviner from Mesopotamia, and as such, would have employed all the mantic art of the East.

The case for astral themes is strengthened, moreover, by the appeal to the "Star" in Numbers 24:17. Hence, one may not state that the concept of asterisms in the oracles has to be dismissed without a hearing. But Burrows does not begin with the oracles of Balaam to present his thesis. He begins with the oracles of Jacob and spends the bulk of his book on them. On the basis of several admitted ties between Genesis 49 and Numbers 23-24, he brings his study of the astral motif to the latter passage. His very presentation seems to imply that the case is stronger in the oracles of Jacob than It is in the oracles of Balaam. It may be observed that one cannot read imagery of the zodiac into every biblical text that uses the symbol of a lion or a bull, particularly since the latter is a dominant fertility motif in the ancient Near East.[1]

One interesting sidelight to Burrows' book lies in the fact that

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[1] It may be noted in passing that the role of astrology in Post-exilic Judaism and in the artistic motifs of the modern state of Israel is not to the point in the present discussion. It was under Greek influence that such developed--a different cultural milieu. For an article of interest respecting these post-exilic and modern phenomena see Hannah Gilman. "Prognostication end Postage Stamps, " *Minkus Stamp Journal*, VII (1972), 20.

he uses his zodiac theme to argue for the unity of the text at a number of points. As to the origin of the Balaam oracles, Burrows regards them as dependent upon the oracles of Jacob. This argument is based on word associations common to the two. One example he uses is the concept of blessing. Since Numbers 22:12 states that the people are blessed before Balaam had uttered his blessing, the blessing in view is that of Jacob.

An application of his astral motif to the unity of the narrative may be seen respecting the donkey narrative. Whereas most critical scholars wish to excise this story from its context, Burrows states:

> In the puzzling episode 22, 22-35a, commonly considered to be an incomplete narrative from J, the miracle of the ass in the vineyard may have been a sign connected with the coming king (motif of the asses and the vine in the Oracles of Jacob) and so more closely related to the principal theme than is generally supposed.[1]

His reconstruction of the oracles is based on the assumed relationship they had to the oracles of Jacob. Since Genesis 49 is a Judean document in his view, he posits that "it is not an unreasonable hypothesis that the other recension [of the Jacob Oracles] originated in northern Israel."[2] He then argues against the common opinion of the division of the oracles of Balaam into J and E sources, with two songs for each stratum. For his theory of the zodiac imagery to be correct, he has to have the third oracle in both sources so as to retain the set of given figures in both J and E traditions[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 75.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 76.   [3] *Ibid*., p. 77.

Burrows compares the oracles of Jacob and Balaam to the Blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy 33. He notes some similarities and some differences, and suggests that all may be explained on the basis of a supposed northern and southern recension of each. In terms of the date of the oracles of Balaam, Burrows says that there is no relationship to be imagined between the date of the addition of the astral motifs (which are thus secondary) and the original oracles themselves. "It may be assumed that there were oracles of Balaam in the original tradition . . . going back to the time of Balaam and Moses."[1]

It would have been in the Judaean recension of the oracles that the astral imagery of Leo the lion would have been added, pointing to the time of David. The northern recension, on the other hand, would have added the complementary astral motifs referring to the principal tribes of the nation Israel. "These were naturally taken from the northern Israelite recension of the Oracles of Jacob."[2] Hence, even he does not suggest that the astral elements were from the time of Balaam the Mesopotamian seer, who might have been interested in such. Rather, he has some of the most telling figures of the Balaam oracles (the lion, aurochs, king, water-pourer [?], star, and scepter) as later additions to the text implanted because of a nascent interest in astrology.

[1] *Ibid*., p. 78.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 75.

It would seem that Burrows is playing his own games. He claims to have observed astral motifs in the oracles of Balaam and identifies these motifs with the principal images of the poems. He desires to maintain three elements which are spread through the putative J and E sources, so he explains common *Vorlage* for each source, and then substitutes northern and southern recensions for the usual strata. Then he says that the astral imagery is all the result of later additions to the original poetic corpus,

In a word: This has not been the most influential study of the Balaam oracles:

The Reconstruction of Albright

If the study on Balaam by Burrows was less than of first import, the same cannot be said of the study by the late William Foxwell Albright in the 1944 issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.[1] David Noel Freedman, a former student of Albright, comments on this article in a memorial tribute to him, written after Albright's death in September, 1971. Freedman terms the article by Albright on the oracles of Balaam an example of the landmark contributions which produced turning points for Old Testament studies.[2]

Similar praise comes from Harry M. Orlinsky:

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[1] William Foxwell Albright, "The Oracles of Balaam," *JBL*, LXIII (1944), 207-233.

[2] David Noel Freedman, "William Foxwell Albright: In Memoriam, " *BASOR* CCV (February, 1972), 8.

Albright's study was so - -ell done that his dating of the Oracles ("we must date the first writing down of the Oracles in or about the tenth century B. C. . . . " p. 210) and his insistence "that there is no reason why they may not be authentic" (p. 233), together with the textual analysis proper, have gained wide acceptance in the scholarly world.[1]

Another type of testimonial comes from Elmer Smick. In his commentary on the Book of Numbers in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary,* he makes constant use of, and gives repeated reference to, this article by W. F. Albright.[2]

Albright's article is in three sections. There is an introduction (pp. 207-11), followed by an extensive philological commentary (pp. 211-26), and a concluding exposition (pp. 226-33). In this survey we shall look at the introductory and concluding sections, employing relevant exegetical material in Chapter V of the present paper.

Albright begins his article by surveying quickly the problems of literary analysis of the Balaam chapters of Numbers. He notes that most critics follow Wellhausen, as was noted above.[3]

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[1] Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright,* ed. G. Ernest Wright (Anchor Books; Garden City, N. Y. : Doubleday & Company, Inc. , 1965), p. 158. In another article the same writer states that he regards thce study by Albright "to be a really important contribution to both the lower and higher criticism of the Hebrew Bible, quite apart from the historical implications. " Harry M. Orlinsky, "*Rabas* for *sakab* in Num. 24.9," *JQR*, XXXV (1944-45), 173.

[2] Elmer Smick, "Numbers," *WBC*, pp. 142-45.

[3] See above, pp. 57-61.

Albright states that his concern is the poetry. He begins with a brief overview of the major treatments of the poetry of the narrative. He notes that von Gall made some good suggestions, but that he was far astray in dating the last oracle at the time of Pompey or even Christ![1] Next, he turns to the work of Mowinckel which was summarized in the present study. He says that Mowinckel "has dealt honestly with the text of our poems," and then he refers to the dates given by Mowinckel as they were noted above.[2]

As for his own procedure, Albright says that he plans to present a new text based on a cautious use of the versions, "and especially on full use of the mass of material now available for early Northwest-Semitic grammar, lexicography and epigraphy."[3] As for his own dating method, Albright states that it "depends wholly on the inductive agreement of textual criticism with the spelling of epigraphic documents."[4]

Hence, Albright desires to reconstruct the consonantal text as it might have appeared when first written. *Matres lectionis* will be dismissed. Consonantal indications of contracting dipthongs are also to be omitted, on the basis of clear parallels. An early indicator in orthography that he cites is the use of *he* instead of *waw* for pronominal suffixes of the third person

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[1] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 208.   [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 209. For a recent investigation of the inductive approach to dating Hebrew poetry, consult David Alan Robertson, "Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry" (unpublished doctor's dissertation, Yale University, 1966).

[4] Albright, "Oracles," p. 209.

with verbs (as in Numbers 23:8).[1]

It is on the basis of these indicators of epigraphically known spellings that Albright says, "we must date the first writing down of the Oracles in or about the tenth century B. C."[2] The oracles are earlier than the Mesha Stone (*ca*. 840 B. C.) and the ostraca of Samaria (*ca*. 774-766 B. C.), as they employ final vowel letters as aginst the lack of such in the oracles of Ba1aam.

After his reconstruction of the text and his new translation of the poems, Albright then turns to a summary and conclusion. He emphasizes; that the changes that he has made are all orthographic and that they belong to well-attested types. Two facts may be deduced, he says:

> the orthographic evidence of MT, Sam, and occasionally of the versions or of the most obviously correct changes of reading points to a date not later than the tenth or early ninth century B. C. and probably not earlier than the same century for the original writing down of the Oracles; the content and style of the poems are homo-geneous and point to the period between the middle of the thirteenth century and the end of the twelfth as the time of composition.[3]

Albright does not feel that the oracles have been passed down as they were delivered. The remaining elements of the oracles were preserved and collected and were later reduced to writing. He attacks Mowinckel's reading the poems in exact strophes as being "highly improbable."[4] He does not believe that there is anything in the poems that

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 226

[4] *Ibid.*

points to a date in the tenth century of later for original composition. The references to royalty in 23:21 and 24:7, he says, might belong to any age. Respecting the fourth poem, he states:

> no tenth century explanation of 24:21-24 is practicable without violent assumptions. The Kenites of later times were scattered among the Israelites; it is only when we go back to the time of the Mosaic age that we find them taking tangible shape as an autonomous people. Nor was there any great Mediterranean irruption in the tenth century.[1]

Albright then mentions the work of the late Nelson Glueck as to the dating of sedentary occupation of Moab and Edom going back to the twelfth century, but that there was not such before the thirteenth century.[2] He deals at length with other historical matters concerning the occupation of Transjordan, particularly from Egyptian sources.

The author relates the passage in Numbers 24:23-24 to the Egyptian accounts of the invasion of the Sea Peoples.[3] As to the origin of Balaam, Albright is quite emphatic: "Balaam has nothing to do with Bela of Edom or with Luqman of Arab saga; he was certainly believed to be a diviner from Northern Syria,"[4] He also speaks with approval of the work of Daiches who related Balaam to the *baru* diviners of Babylon. Further, he notes a

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[2] *Ibid.* It may be noted that recently the surface explorations of Gleuck have come into question. Compare, e. g., Leon T. Wood, "Date of the Exodus," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1970), p. 79.

[3] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 230.   [4] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

cylinder seal inscribed with the name of the Babylonian diviner *Manum* at Beth-shan in a thirteenth-century level stratum The seal itself, he says, cannot be later than the sixteenth century B. C.[1]

Albright's conclusion may be quoted in full:

> We may, accordingly, conclude that Balaam was really a North-Syrian diviner from the Euphrates Valley, that he spent some time at the Moabite court, that he became a convert to Yahwism, and that he later abandoned Israel and joined the Midianites in fighting against the Yahwists (Num. 31 8, 16). We may also infer that the Oracles preserved in Num 23-24 were attributed to him from an early date as early as the twelfth century, and that there is no reason why they may not be authentic, or may not at least reflect the atmosphere of the age.[2]

Observation and Evaluation

When judged against the articles surveyed at length in the preceding pages of the present study, it is apparent at once how pivotal this article by Albright really was. Writing in 1944 he argued for the historical credibility of the person of Balaam and for the historical authenticity of the corpus of poems (including those dismissed by almost all critical scholars, the last three in Numbers 24).

Moreover, this article is to be seen in the context of Albright's

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 231, n. 141.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 233. It may be observed that his article represents a decided shift in opinion from that the same scholar held in 1915. At that time his conclusion read: "Balaam was an Edomite sage, and the Israelites whom he was called upon to curse were idolaters, " William F. Albright, "The home of Balaam," *JAOS*, XXXV (1915), 389.

work on early Israelite poetry in general. For instance, he wrote in 1966 of

his life-long opposition to the Hegelian principles of Wellhausen and his

followers which led to late dating of the poetry of the Bible.

> It was no less a scholar than Julius Wellhausen, to whose Hegelian presuppositions we owe the still dominant theory of Israelite religious evolution--which I have opposed throughout my life--who was largely responsible for dating the poetry of the Bible so late. He was the first to insist on the Hellenistic date of the Psalms, and to oppose the early dating of much Hebrew poetry by men like Heinrich Ewald and Franz Delitzsch. As a result the followers of Wellhausen vied with one another in lowering the date of biblical verse, until finally most Hebrew poetry was actually dated after most Hebrew prose:
>
> Now contrast with this critical view, the fact (which may easily be verified all over the Old World) that in almost every culture it can be shown that the oldest literary prose is *later* than the oldest verse.[1]

In another setting Albright speaks of his increasing confidence

in the early dating of the Bible. He also sets his views in perspective as he

relates Hebrew poetry to the poetry of the ancient Near East.

> During the past twenty years I have become increasingly confident that the minimal dating of Israelite poetry by the Wellhausen school is generally quite erroneous. This is particularly true of the earliest Hebrew verse. . . . Thanks to the discovery and decipherment since 1929 of early Northwest-Semitic epics at Ugarit in northern Canaan, it is now possible to place the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15) at the beginning of Israelite verse, since it is consistently closer to Ugaritic style than any other poem of any length in the Bible. The Song of Miriam is followed in stylistic dating by the Song of Deborah and the Oracles of Balaam, both from the twelfth century. The latter two replace the types of repetitive parallelism characteristic of Ugarit and the Song of Miriam by repeating single words in parallel verse

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[1] William Foxwell Albright. "The Impact of Archaeology on Biblical Research--1966," *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology,* ed. David Noel Freedman and Jones C. Greenfield (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1969), p. 12.

units. They are followed by the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33), Ha'azinu [Deut. 32] and the Blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49) in an order which is supported both by stylistic sequence dating and by indications from the content. For instance, Levi is still highly praised in the Blessing of Moses, before the fall of Shiloh, but is bitterly condemned in the Blessing of Jacob, after the fall of Shiloh. With the Blessing of Jacob we enter the period of elaborite play on words (paronomasia), which continued for several centuries. Stylistic sequence alone would place the Song of Moses in the eleventh century. There are numerous other indications of genuine archaism, and the author's rugged and often intemperate monotheism best suits the time of Samuel, as we shall presently see.[1]

After this survey of his method of stylistic dating, Albright assures his readers that his insistence on an early dating of the poetry of Israel is not a return to the pre-critical days of biblical research. It is clothing of the kind, he states.

My uncompromising insistence of the high antiquity of these poems--and of others in the Psalter and elsewhere--may sound like a return to pre-critical methods of biblical research. Actually it is nothing of the kind. Here again we have complete agreement between internal evidence--both of content and style--and the evidence of historical analogy. It would be passing strange if the Hebrew Bible were the only extant national literature of the Old World which began with prose and did not compose poetry until later.[2]

As has been seen in these quotations, one of Albright's arguments for the early poetry of Israel is the comparative argument. There was early poetry throughout the ancient Near East. In fact, he points to Sumerian

[1] William F. Albright, "Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement," The Goldenson Lecture of 1961, *Interpreting the Prophetic Tradition: The Goldenson Lectures (1956-1966)* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc, pp. 169-70.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 170.

compositions dating before 2500 B. C.[1] In this he is in full agreement with the noted Sumerian scholar, Samuel Noah Kramer:

> Sumerian poetry--and the vast majority of the Sumerian literary works were composed in poetic form--has its roots in the pre-literate and illiterate court minstrel and in the temple singer-musician; it is no wonder, therefore, that repetition, the aesthetic device common to the ballad-monger and folk-singer, was one of its predominant stylistic features. The earliest Sumerian poetic compositions can be dated back to the twenty-fifth century B. C.; one of the outstanding examples is a myth inscribed on a solid clay cylinder with twenty columns of text.[2]

Albright sought to establish Ugaritic poetry as the control for his evaluation of the relative dating of Hebrew poetry. He speaks of his dating of the three major Ugaritic epics,[3] and then of the basis of the proportion of repetitive parallelism in the early poems of the Bible. He puts these data of a comparative nature on a grid, as it were, to show relative dating. He explains the procedure as follows:

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[1] William Foxwell Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc.. 1968), pp. 2-3.

[2] Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University 1969), A. 23.

[3] "The three Canaanite (Ugaritic) epics which we possess in large part, Baal, Aqhat and Keret, were put into approximately their extant form between the seventeenth and the fifteenth centuries in the order given, and are in substantially the same poetic style. In particular, each has roughly the same proportion of repetitive parallelism." Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp. 4-5.

The earliest verse from late pre-Mosaic and Mosaic times was closely related in style to the verse of Ugarit. We find in both similar grammatical phenomena, similar vocabulary, similar stylistic peculiarities. If one sets up a stylistic sequence-dating and takes account of the changes between ca. 1300 and ca. 900 B, C.E. one can easily arrange them along a curve that agrees beautifully with the succession of historical allusions. The analogies involved are so close that it is hard to escape the force of their impact. The forms of repetitive parallelism characteristic of the song of Miriam from the early thirteenth century can be duplicated in the Canaanite epics copied at Ugarit in the preceding century. By the late tenth century we have a completely transformed style, without repetition and with maximal variation in vocabulary. In other words, the chronological shift in poetic style is pegged at beginning and end and directly conforms to the evidence of content. This means that our analogies do indeed enable us to construct a model.[1]

We have quoted the late Albright at length because of his monumental importance to the history of the study of early Hebrew poetry among American scholars in particular, and Old Testament scholars world-wide. The "Albright School" includes Frank Moore Cross, Jr., David Noel Freedman, Mitchell Dahood, and a host of others.[2]

But not all scholars have followed Albright's enthusiastic views concerning the dating of Hebrew poetry. This seems especially true of European scholars. Coppens may be cited as an example. He summarizes the

[1] Albright, "The Impact of Archaeology, " pp. 11-12.
[2] There is a whimsical note in the article by von Pakozdy on the Balaam oracles and the study by Albright. He refers to the fact that he was able to read Albright's study one day after the War in a small Hungarian library in 1948. Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redactionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope (Num 22-24)," p. 162, n. 11. Cf. p. 55, n. 1, above.

article calling it "important and original," but then he rejects Albright's condlusions:

> W. F. Albright's essay has not found many adherents. Certainly no one dreams any longer of underscoring the views of A. von Gall who proposed relocating the composition of our poems in the age of the Maccabees, rather, as a general rule--at least in that which concerns the last two oracles--one generally continues to see here songs dating from the age of Saul and David.[1]

Even one as closely associated with Albright as Cross has recently expressed the opinion that Albright dated the original composition of the oracles too early. Cross would date them in the tenth century B. C. Further, it is Cross's opinion that there were probably many "oracles of Balaam" from which the present collection was made.[2]

This leads us to an important observation concerning the methodology of Albright. Despite his disclaimers to the contrary, there were many subjective elements that entered his grid for the dating of early Hebrew poetry. While references to Ugaritic literature do play a large part, the dates of the Exodus and Conquest are also very important to his schema. A date in the twelfth century for the original composition of the oracles of Balaam does

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[1] Joseph Coppens, "Les oracles de Bileam: leur origine litter-aire et leur porte prophetique, *Melanges Eugene Tisserant, Vol. I, Ecriture Sainte-Ancien Orient*, "Studi e Testi, " 231 (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticanna 1964) pp. 76-77.

[2] Personal conversation with the writer, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California, September 4, 1972. (This followed the presentation of an unpublished paper by George F. Mendenhall ["The Abrahamic Narratives"] for which Frank Moore Cross, Jr., was a respondent.)

grant them an aura of authenticity, but only if one's dating for the Exodus and Conquest is amenable to such a date for the seer.

That the dating of the Exodus and the Conquest did play a role in Albright's dating of the poetry of Israel may be seen in his last book, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. He speaks of a shift in the dating for certain Egyptian rulers which caused a shift in his date for the Exodus, and consequently for the poetry. Compare the following:

> All my dates have had to be raised by the recent demonstration (included in the revised edition of CAH) that Ramesses II became king in 1304 B. C., and that the date of Ramesses III's accession must thus be raised again to between c. 1200 and 1195 B. C. This means that my original arguments for a date c. 1150 [for the Song of Deborah stand and my subsequent dating about 1125 must be given up.[1]

It is further to be observed that while Albright did oppose the Hegelian evolutionary schema of Wellhausen, as he insisted(!),[2] he never broke completely with the literary-analytical methodology. Abundant evidence exists for this assertion, despite some hopeful claims to the contrary.[3] One example of Albright's clinging to the critical school has been quoted above In the section from his article, "Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic

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[1] Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, p. 13, n. 3 5.

[2] See above, p. 106.

[3] Such seems to be the case with F. I. Andersen who wrote: "The most radical reversal in Old Testament studies was Albright's abandonment of the old Wellhausen synthesis--a thing which many Old Testament scholars have still not liberated themselves from." "W. F. Albright," *BHis.*, VIII, (March, 1972), p. 9. Andersen may he referring to the evolutionary aspect only, but if so, he is not sufficiently clear.

Movement." In that article he stated that one might mistake his changing

views as a "return to pre-critical methods of biblical research." He objects,

"Actually it is nothing of the kind."[1]

In an important article written in 1938, Albright seemed to feel

that his audience would misunderstand his position at that time as a return

to conservatism. He wrote:

> it may seem that he has returned to the conservative position of a
> century ago. Not at all. . . . His attitude toward the use of historico-
> critical method is the same as that of the great German school; he
> recognizes the same fallibility of oral tradition, or the official
> historian, and of the ancient copyist. But the picture of Israel's
> history that he draws, from the Patriarchal Age to the Restoration, is
> curiously like the traditional one in essentials. Details may be
> altered, our new knowledge of the ancient world may shade the
> picture differently--but the broad outlines remain substantially the
> same.[2]

So that while the conservative may use many of the results of

the fertile mind and outstanding scholarship of the late "Dean" of biblical

archaeology--the one who could truly call himself an "Orientalist" --the

conservalive scholar must always remember that Albright operated from different

methodological and philosophical premises than one who has prior commitments

to the reliability of the text.[3]

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[1] Albright, "Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement,
p. 170.

[2] William Foxwell Albright, "Archaeology Confronts Biblical
Criticism, " *The American Scholar*, VII (1938), p. 188. As late as 1968, he
reaffirmed the principle of the use of divine names to distinguish sources.
See Y*ahweh and the Gods of Canaan,* p. 30.

[3] For a thoughtful critique of Albright along similar lines, see
Oswald T. Allis, "Albright's Thrust for the Bible View, " *CT*, III (May 25, 1959),
7-9; (June 8, 1959), 12-14.

The Reconstruction of von Pakozdv

Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy is a professor of Old Testament at the Reformierte Theologische Akademie in the city of Debrecen, Hungary. Debrecen is about 120 miles east of Budapest and is in the center of Hungarian Protestantism. He wrote an article on the problem of the Balaam materials in 1958 titled, "Theologische-Redaktionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope,"[1] which will now be surveyed.

Von Pakozdy begins by stating that the Balaam story has been used by critical scholars as a demonstrative example of the accuracy of the Documentary Hypothesis. He notes that this is true in spite of the fact that the reconstructions of the Balaam materials by the several critical scholars have all had some differences. Despite the attempts of Gressmann and Rudolph to alter the earlier views, von Pakozdy avers that the earlier view-point of Wellhausen has been sustained. He cites as examples of this fact the 1930 article by Mowinckel and the commentary by Marsh on Numbers that appears in the well-known set, *The Interpreter's Bible*.[2] He also cites the

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[1] References have been made to this study in the present chapter beginning on p. 55.

[2] Most of the names mentioned in the paragraph have been con-rated in the foregoing survey of Balaam studies. John Marsh collaborated with Albert George Buttrick in the section on Numbers in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (12 vols.; New York and Nashville: Abingdon 1958), II, 137-308. Harvey H, Guthrie, Jr., has "Numbers" in the new revision of IB. Compare. *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible,* ed. Charles M. Laymon (Nashville and New York, 1971), pp. 85-99.

1939 article on Balaam by Eissfeldt.[1]

Von Pakozdy says that there has been a change, however, from the critical analysis of the days of von Gall, in that the overly subtle type of literary analysis of that former day (1900) would be considered too risky today. Pakozdy says that it is not his intent in the present article to go through all of the old arguments for source division again. Rather he intends to look at the existing narrative as it has come from the hand of the final redactor, and to ask the question: What did the final redactor wish to make through his redaction work of the materials? Or, stated somewhat differently, What did he wish to preach? Hence, the approach of von Pakozdy is to be that of the theologian.[2]

The first major section[3] of the article is used to set the stage in terms of the use of the divine names in the oracles as understood by our author. He says that the proclamation-design [*Verkundigungsabsicht*] of the redactor in the Balaam materials which he transformed was to preach anew the superiority of his God In doing this the redactor used the several early for God, but now identified them with Yahweh, and thus demonstrated Yahweh's superiority over all forms of heathen mantic arts.[4]

Von Pakozdy says that it is his settled conviction that the names of God employed in the oracles may *not* be used to distinguish the putative

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[1] See below, pp. 125-32.
[2] Von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redaktionsarbeit, " p. 163.
[3] *Ibid*., pp. 164-68.   [4] *Ibid*., p. 164.

sources. In fact, he asserts that this was the substance of his first scholarly publication (written in Hungarian in 1938).[1] He holds to a rigid unity of the Balaam materials [*eine viel straffere Einheitlichkeit der B-P*].[2] This unity is a unity of design and art and is the product of the redactor. The several components of the Balaam pericope have in fact been bound into what he terms a kerygmatic unity [*zu einer kerygmatischen Einheit*].[3] He observes that he is not the first to make the observation that the alternation of the divine names may not be used for source analysis in this section of Scripture. He cites Baentsch who spoke of an unbroken unity in Numbers 22:7-21.[4] Baentsch said that the passage had the impression of such, though most critical scholars regard it as mixed (as, for example, Eissfeldt, as noted below). For our present author these names of God are used according to a predetermined plan.

Von Pakozdy refers to the work of Rudolph in a somewhat more favorable light than most critical scholars. Rudolph had argued that there was no E source at all in the Balaam story,[5] He then turns to the work of Eissfeldt (of 1939) who criticized Rudolph,[6] but seems to equivocate respecting

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 163, n. 12.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 164. "B-P" stands for "Balaam pericope,

[3] *Ibid*.   [4] *Ibid*., cf. Baentsch, *Numeri*, p. 595.

[5] "Der 'Elohist, '" p, 229. Compare Rudolph's article, "Zum Text des Buches Numeri," *ZAW*, LII (1934), 113-20.

[6] 0. Fissfeldt, "Die Komposition der Bileam-Erzahlung, " *ZAW*, LVII (1939), 212-42. Eissfeldt's approach is discussed below, pp. 125-32.

his own view.

Then he turns to the meaning of the word *Elohim*. He notes that
it has a wider range of use than just that of "God." He further observes that
ancient world there was not as clear a division drawn between God and
man. For, he says, Elohim can be used of the mighty, the powerful, the judge,
etc. For these data he refers to the standard lexica and cites a few passages
quoted therein.[1]

More important for his own argument, however, is the meaning
of *Elohim* in I Samuel 28:13, where it is used, he says, of a dead spirit.
Again, the word may be used of demons as well as foreign gods. It is on
the possibility of using *Elohim* for demons that he desires to build his case,
Further, he suggests that the word *Elohim* originally was not a plural, but was
a singular with an old mimation. Only later, he says, did it become viewed
as a plural. When it became a plural, it was termed plural of majesty, and
was then used of a single god as well as of the true God.[2]

Balaam is to be compared, he states, with the old Arabic
imprecation poets. Just as in Arabic where curses could come from men
possessed by a demon/divine being, so Balaam functions as an agent of
cursing through possession by a demon/divine being. Von Pakozdy refers to
the work of his teacher, Goldziher, who compared Balaam to the Old Arabic

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[1] Von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redaktionsarbeit, " p. 166.
[2] *Ibid*.

curse prophets of the *higa'* documents. In this type of document the mantic
was termed XXXXX, which would correspond to the Hebrew אישׁ אלהים.[1]

Von Pakozdy then develops the concept אישׁ אלהים. For him
it means more than *Gottesmann*. He compares the term grammatically to the
term בעל החלמות of Genesis 37:19. Joseph is someone who is more than
just one who knew the technique of interpreting dreams. He is rather the
"owner of dreams," the "possessor of dreams." So the Hebrew term אישׁ
אלהים originally meant not simply the "man of God," that is, one who by
devout and submissive life was able to demonstrate that he belonged to the
true God; but rather one who was spirit endowed [*Geitesbegabten*]. That is,
he was one who trafficked with spirit beings. A parallel is adduced by our
author in I Samuel 9 where he judges that Samuel, in giving information for
money, was serving an "Elohim" other than the true God of Israel.[2]

The proper author of an incantation or a blessing or curse saying
was not the *kahin* in Arabic society or the אישׁ אלהים in Hebrew society, but
the *'ilahun* or the אלוהים itself. The "man of God" is a host, a bearer; the
'ilahun or the אלוהים is a companion or an attendant of the *man of God*.[3]

In both the Arabic *higa'* poem and the Hebrew *masal* there were
similar features. Both have power-laden sayings. Mockery and insult say-
ings were particularly for war times, prior to the employment of battles (cf.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 167.   [2] *Ibid*.   [3] *Ibid*., pp. 167-68.

1 Sam. 17:10, 26, 36, 43, 45).[1]

Before proceeding further, von Pakozdy says that there is one textual critical issue that he must discuss. He wishes to change the word "Elohim" to "Yahweh" in Numbers 22:22 on the basis of LXX (Cod. Ambr.) and SP. He says that there are other shifts in the employment of the divine names that he might like to make to advance his argument, but that these will not be necessary for this thesis.[2]

The second division of his article presents his thesis as to the meaning of the divine names in the Balaam story. His hypothesis is that the use of the word "Elohim" is not of the Elohim of Israel, i. e., Yahweh--but rather the enchantment demon of Balaam. The redactor may have had diverse sources before him when he began his work, but of those sources he has fashioned a unity with a powerful religious and prophetic spirit He turns at this point to the demonstration.[3]

(1) Numbers 22:5-7. Balak calls Balaam in order to curse the people of Israel through him. He was to use an irrevocable incantation, a *masal*. No point is to be made against the supposed great distance of the home of Balaam.[4]

(2) Numbers 22:8-13. Balaam lets the ambassadors wait the

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[1] *Ibid.* , p. 168.   [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 169.   [4] *Ibid.*

night by themselves. The expression in Numbers 22:8 לינו פה הלילה

may well be a technical term for *incubation*. The use of "Yahweh" in the mouth

of the soothsayer is deemed significant. The redactor may have used it in

order to make Balaam a true prophet. But another explanation, favored by our

author, is that Balaam used "Yahweh" on purpose, just as he might have used

the name of any other national deity. For it was on the basis of the call to the

deity of the people that his curse would be more potent. Balaam would not

have known that the god Yahweh was to be regarded any differently than any

other "god."[1] It may have been a spirit, it may have been Yahweh, who

warned Balaam not to go. We are not told. Perhaps Balaam thought it was

Yahweh, or perhaps he lied. At any rate, Balaam uses the term "Yahweh.

 (3) Numbers 22:14-20. There is then another urgent request by

Balak for Balaam to intercede. It seems that the text should be changed in

verse 18, according to our author, where the narrator lets Balaam call Yahweh

"my God." If this text is correct, then it must be taken as an example of

Balaam telling a lie, saying that he could traffic with Yahweh as with any

other spirit being. Finally the *^{e}lohim* of Balaam lets him take off against

Israel, and by that he steps out against the word of Yahweh. The conflict is

resolved with this explanation: There are two deities in view. Yahweh is

never changing. The other spirit being is in opposition to Yahweh.[2]

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 [1] *Ibid*., pp. 169-70.   [2] *Ibid*., pp. 170-71.

(4) Numbers 22:21-35. Now the tension begins to mount. Who will gain the victory? Will it be the spirit being, or will it be Yahweh? Balaam begins to leave for Moab and follows after the ambassadors of Balak along with his two attendants. Now it is in verse 22 that the change should be made from *Elohim* to *Yahweh*, according to von Pakozdy. The one who is angry in this passage is none other than the God of Israel. The episode of the speaking ass is full of humor and irony. Von Pakozdy makes a comparison with an example in the biography of Muhammad concerning a vision of a man on a horse and a camel that spoke to the prophet. The intention of the narrator of our story seems to imply that the animal of Balaam is a better "seer" than his master.[1]

The seer, the heathen professional revelation-agent, the sooth-slayer, the "man of God," Balaam is unable to see the revelation of the true God as long as his eyes are not opened. This *Elohim* is beyond his power. Then the Angel of Yahweh orders that Balaam be subject to Him, in the same words that the *other* spirit had ordered above. The one difference is that the *ᵉlohim* of Balaam wanted obedience in behavior (22:20 emphasizes "you are to do"). The true *Elohim*, on the contrary, wanted obedience in speaking (22:35 emphasizes "you are to say"). Here is an essential distinction between the heathen mantic and sorcery on the one hand, and Yahweh-prophecy on the other hand. Balaam is terrified and wants to turn around. But he must go on

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 171-72.

under command. The reader may well ask, What will come of the journey?
of the narrative grows.[1]

(5) *Numbers 22:36-38*. The experience has made Balaam
cautious and insecure. He proceeds according to normal sorcery measures
in an attempt to see what will be done. The tension continues to mount.[2]

(6) *Numbers 23:1-10.* The sacrificial practice of Balaam is that
of magic and mantic. His acts are contrary to normative Hebrew prophecy.
The element of repetition is characteristic of magic. The narrator shows that
Balaam is trying to force God. But one cannot force God. The magical
repetition of the practice of sacrifice conforms to the practice of repetition
of prophetic oracles. These oracles are *not* a meaningless compilation from
diverse sources, they are fitted together into a climactic finish under the
hand of the redactor.[3]

Then von Pakozdy notes that Balaam hoped for an encounter with
his *ᵉlohim* but Yahweh stepped in between them. Balaam calls upon his
spirit and says that he has done all according to cultus. At that moment,
Yahweh steps between them and "fixes" his word in Balaam's mind. Yahweh's
word is an irresistible word [*ein "verbum irresistibile"*]. This is a word
that even Balaam cannot oppose. Balaam must mediate this word to Balak,
What he delivers is a "mockery-sorcery-oracle" ["*Spottzauberspruch*"].[4]

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 172-73.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 173.
[3] *Ibid.*   [4] *Ibid*., pp. 173-74.

(7) Numbers 23:11-26. Balaam has to excuse himself that he could speak no other word than that which he has been forced. Balak does not want to abandon the attempt to curse Israel. So in a heathen manner he tries for better results by changing the cultic place. One clearly sees in this the essence of the heathen religion. Balaam wants to go out after the same ceremonies for an encounter with his spirit. But now the narrator lets Yahweh fall between immediately. Balaam must return again to Balak with Yahweh's word.[1]

The name *Yahweh* in the mouth of Balak in this instance is significant The redactor wants to show by this expression that Balak has begun to suspect that Balaam is under a new and unfamiliar power. The oracle that comes confirms this interpretation, for it emphasizes that Yahweh does not alter any of his purposes. God tolerates no sorcery in or against Israel. One can submit to him; one cannot hinder him. Balak then wishes that Balaam would not bless at all, when he is unable to curse Israel. But nothing helps. Balaam is subject to the word of Yahweh. Balak entices Balaam to repeat his action. Balaam moves on.[2]

(8) *Numbers 23:27-24:11*. Balak now asks Balaam to call up his own *ᵉlohim*. Perhaps there is some way to resist Yahweh. In this the narrator shows in a masterful manner the precariousness and the oscillating rambling of heathen men. After the repetition of the sacrifice and of the

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 174.   [2] *Ibid*.

required sorcery practice, Balaam is finally conscious of the irrevocable pleasure of Yahweh to bless Israel. Hence, this time he says he will not go after the curse oracles as before, but lifts his eyes for the reception of a vision. At this point the spirit of prophecy comes over the mantic. This Spirit is the Spirit of Yahweh. Balak, finally furious, expels Balaam. He wishes to avoid further calamity.[1]

(9) *Numbers 24:12ff.* But Balaam does not let himself be sent away. He delivers another *masal*. We do not discover how he has received this *masal*. This oracle seems to be an interpretation or a continuation of that given in 24:3-9. It is not to be thought of as a doublet. The names of God from the patriarchal period are supplemented further. It lacks the use of *Elohim* entirely. The oracles are interpreted progressively from the situation of the narration.[2] Our author then suggests that Balaam is avoiding the use of *Elohim* in the oracles, as this would only lead to confusion as to the *Elohim* intended. Each of the terms used of Yahweh is used in a purposeful manner.

His conclusion[3] reviews again the masterful skill and technique of the narrator. He says that he has made a unity out of diverse materials, and that this unity is in the spirit of the prophetic religion. Moreover, the employment of the designations for deity has been consistent, and may not be used for source division.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 175.　　[2] *Ibid.*　　[3] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Observation and Evaluation

Our reaction in brief is a mixture of astonishment and amazement This would appear to be the most original treatment of the Balaam oracles. The ingenuity of the author is manifest as are his powers of observation and discernment. His explanation of the word *Elohim* is forced, it would appear, but he has presented a consistent and cohesive picture.

One of the constant refrains throughout the article is the insistence of von Pakozdy upon the observable unity of the entire narrative. He terms it a theological unity, a preaching unity, an undivided unity, and the like. As a scholar within the critical camp, he has to say that the observed unity is "manufactured" by a redactor out of the putative sources. But he still insists that the passage is a unity and that the normal literary-analytical procedures will *not* reveal the sources. It is this insistence that is important for our purposes. He shows that the "assured results" of Wellhausen, Mowinckel, *et al*., are less than assured.

As for his central thesis concerning a demon being referred to by the term *ᵉlohim*, we would demur without stronger evidence from comparative passages. Nevertheless, von Pakozdy does seem to have pointed in the right direction. Balaam seems to be a pagan who tries to use Yahweh as he was accustomed to use other deities. His surprise that he is unable to manipulate God is striking. His remarks concerning the fact that Israel is unlike other nations are also important in this regard.

Balaam seems to be involved in something that is beyond his experience or understanding. He may have believed that Yahweh, as the other (supposed) deities of the ancient Near East, was but a tribal or local god. But in this instance Balaam finds that nothing goes according to plan. The events outrace him, the significance of what is happening escapes him. Finally, he is as helpless as the stunned and furious Balak. Yahweh is like no other; He is incomparable! Von Pakozdy seems to have pointed the direction out for a theological understanding of our passage.

The thesis concerning *^elohim* by von Pakozdy will not be adopted in the present paper, but the general approach of the study does seem to have apologetic value. Herein a member of the critical school has shown the story ("as it is") to be a unity with dramatic progression and a building tension, culminating in a stunning climax. Hence, this article may be used for its positive contribution, just as one may use the more well-known study by Albright for its positive contribution. The present writer will develop the employment of the designations for deity within the Balaam corpus under the proper heading in the chapter on theology, below.[2]

The Reconstruction by Eissfeldt

Otto Eissfeldt has contributed two major articles on the subject of the Balaam oracles. The first was writtin in 1939 and was titled, "Die Komposition der Bileam-Erzahlung."[1] The second was written in 1961 and

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[1] *ZAW.* LXVII (1939), 212-42.   [2] See below, pp. 358-402.

was titled, "Sinai-Erzahlung and Bileam-Spruche."[1] Since more than twenty
years separate the two articles, the second has been chosen as the proper
one to summnarize, as it reflects Eissfeldt's later thinking on the subject.

In this article Eissfeldt relates two sections along literary-
analytical lines, giving special attention to the attitudes displayed in the
sections relative to the themes of political power and efficient prosperity.
These sections are Exodus 19-34 and Numbers 22-24. He maintains that in
both of these pericopes there may be seen two distinct attitudes to the above
named elements or themes.

On the one hand, he argues, there are those sections in which
power and prosperity are given unlimited affirmation. On the other hand,
there are sections in which these elements are approached with a certain
amount of caution. He notes that he is building upon the normal critically
established lines of analysis of these sections of the Pentateuch, but that
his manner of approach is new. Further, he suggests that this approach will
add to the certainty of the results of critical study. In the Numbers section
he limits his attention to the two pairs of poems, as he feels that the anti-
thesis in attitude is to be seen more clearly in them than in the narrative
encasing the poems.

[1] Otto Eissfeldt, "Sinai-Erzahlung and Bileam-Spruche, " *HUCA*,
XXXII (1961), 179-90.

Eissfeldt turns first to what he reasons to be the J sections of 19-34. These sections include Exodus 19:3, 9, 11-22; 20:18, 20; 34:1-11, 14-27; 33:1-3, 23:22-31. He reorders the elements in a way more conducive to good sense, points to a J decalogue, and shows that the J sec-firms have a distinct view of power and prosperity.[1]

The author then turns to the E sections of Exodus 19-34. He adduces that this block contains Exodus 19:2-3 (in part), 3-19; 20:2-17; 24:3-8. In this section there is the E decalogue, a list with additions, but these do not obscure the number ten so much as do the additions to the deca-logue of J in chapter 34. The additions in each list, however, may have changed or even distorted the original wording of the Ten Words. He then gives his reconstruction of the E decalogue in 20:1-17.

Eissfeldt speaks of Moses receiving the command from Yahweh to ascend to the mountain in order to receive the stone tablets on which were written the ten commandments. He spends forty days and nights on the mountain and then receives the tables inscribed by the very hand of God. This is recorded in the E section, 24:12-18 and 31:18. During the time Moses was on the mountain. Aaron had manufactured an image of a young steer, due to the pressure of the people. Moses came down and shattered the tablets, destroyed the image, presented to God an atonement for the people, but received the answer that the punishment must strike

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.

the sinners. Eissfeldt then concludes his survey of the E materials with
Exodus 32:1-34 (in part); 33:5-11; and 23:20-33 (in part).[1]

Then our author moves to a survey of Numbers 22-24, stating
that the poems without the narrative will be surveyed. He translates the
J poems in chapter 24 and then the E poems in chapter 23, giving some trans-
lations which reveal some reworking of the structure of the poems.[2]

Having presented in outline the two bodies of material, the
author begins to make his comparisons. "One needs only to compare," he
"the Sinai-Narration of J given in section I with the Balaam oracles
imparted in section III in order to recognize immediately that the same spirit
prevails here."[3] In both he finds a joyful acceptance of the goals of Israel's
political power and its landed property. The designation of Canaan as the
land of promise and the land that flows with milk and honey (Exod. 33:1-3),
and the determination of the expansion of the Israelite possession from the
Reed Sea to the Sea of the Philistines from the River on (Exod. 23:31), in
the J portion of the Sinai-Narration--are said to correspond to the Balaam
oracles of J in the lofty and inspired description of the fixed land of Israel
(Nun.. 24:4-9).[4] He points as well to the references to the borders of the
first two kings of Israel, the conqueror of the Amalekite king Agag, and
David, the vanquisher of Moab, Amnon, and Edom (Num. 24:15-19).

To the appreciation of the offering cultus which stands in the

[1] *Ibid*., pp. 182-85.   [2] *Ibid*., 186-88.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 188.   [4] *Ibid*.

central point of the J decalogue, there was no corresponding motive in the Balaam oracles of J. On the other hand, the Balaam oracles of E exhibit with the Horeb-narrative of E an entirely noteworthy relationship. Both are said to stance in an explicit or tacit contrast to the inspired ideals of the Sinai-narrative and the J oracles of Balaam.

The Horeb-narrative of E regards the land of Canaan as the gift of God for Israel (Ex. 23:20), but his joy is surely dampened. Burdened with severe offense, whose punishment is yet outstanding, Israel removes to Canaan. Without Israel's sin, she might have remained on Horeb with her God (Ex. 19:4). So that the departure from there means more than just taking possession of the land designated by God. It also means that there was a renunciation of abiding in the immediate presence of God on Horeb. So it is no accident that the text of the E oracles of Balaam have almost no word regarding the essential land property of Israel.

In the E Horeb narration and in the E Balaam oracles there is knowledge of the help of God in driving away the former inhabitants of Canaan (Ex. 23:28; Num. 23:10). But such power is no end in itself. Israel was to make it possible that of all other peoples, they might become a realm of priests and a holy people (Ex. 19:5). They were to become a people that lives separated from the nations, not reckoned among them (Num. 23:9). Israel is to be God's own possession among the peoples (Ex. 19:5), which therefore no divination and no sorcery can hold or withstand. Hence, E

mentions, in contrast to J, nothing in general of the kings of Israel. Rather, the royal predicate is given alone to God. Israel expressed that Yahweh is her God, that God is with the nation, and that the rejoicing over the king, Yahweh, is with the nation (Num. 23:21). Finally, in E the covenant conclusion between God and man is united on the mount with all manner of cultic actions.

In terms of the two decalogues, the following distinctions are made by Eissfeldt. The J decalogue had for the larger part of its contents, commands and prohibitions which refer to the sacrificial cult (Ex. 34). The E decalogue speaks of the prohibition of the service to other gods, and of the manufacture of an image of God. Further, the sabbath has become a bit questionable in this viewpoint, having become merely a day of rest (Ex. 20).

At any rate, the classic opinion of Wellhausen respecting the relationships of the decalogues of E and J is maintained by Eissfeldt. The decalogue of Exodus 20 is said to relate to that of Exodus 34 "as Amos to his contemporaries."[1] Just as in Exodus 19-34 there are two strands or cords, so there are two strands in Numbers 22-24. One of these joyfully accepts power, land, and cult; the other criticizes these with a certain reserve. This, he insists, can be no accident.

Eissfeldt then concludes by saying that the narratives of these two blocks of material, that in Exodus and that in Numbers, are products

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

of definite modes of viewing and are also the results of the following of definite goals. Thus as we have it, the records may in no way be regarded as having value as a rendering of actual events. Nevertheless, they are based on historical processes, and these processes belong in the time in which our narratives play. They have in common the central point, and in that central point both Moses and Balaam have a role. The identification of the events may be difficult or even impossible. The echo which has been sound in our narratives lies at a distance, but is still an irrefutable evidence that it was vast and meaningful.[1]

Observation and Evaluation

Rather than quote at length from the earlier article by this author (written in 1939), it was felt better to extract from this fairly recent (1961) exposition of Eissfeldt's viewpoint respecting the Balaam materials. In this article we find an almost fossilized expression of the classical Wellhausen system. There is a high degree of skepticism concerning the issue of historical reliability of our texts: "So, wie wir sie haben, konnen sie also keinesfalls as Wiedergaben wirklichen Geschehens gelten."[2] Yet there still the attempt, in the absence of historical reality, to find some reflection of something that is "vast and meaningful."[3]

One thus has in these pages, in addition to the expression of an outmoded literary-analytical methodology, a striking expression of the

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[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*   [3] *Ibid.*

"flight to the upper story'--a divided field of knowledge.[1] *Historie* is distinguished from *Geschichte*, and the "meaning" comes despite a vacuum of a reality.

The article is thus a throw-back to the point at which we began the present chapter. We have now come full circle. The reconstruction which was proposed by Wellhausen so long ago is defended with enthusiasm by Eissfeldt. We have been here once before.

Summary

The Balaam narrative is the "test case" of the literary-critical method of analysis. The Documentary Hypothesis is felt to be established on the basis of the study of our text. It was for this very important reason that we have spent so much time in surveying the treatment of the Balaam materials in modern scholarship. A study of the Balaam narrative without a major treatment of Balaam in modern scholarship would be deficient.

We began with the reconstruction of Wellhausen as summarized by Julius A. Bewer. In this survey we were introduced to the classical method of bifurcating the narrative into J and E. Then we went to the reconstruction by Max Lour, written in 1927. Lohr's conclusions were found to be less than satisfactory, but his work stands as a criticism of the literary-

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[1] For a presentation of the concept of the divided field of knowledge, see Clark Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case: Studies in Christian Apologetics;* (Nutley, N. J.: The Craig Press, 1968).

analytical method from within the camp.

We then moved to the reconstruction of our narrative by Sigmund Mowinckel written in 1930. In this presentation there was an attack on attempts to modify the Wellhausen system by some scholars. Mowinckel's conclusion is that the system developed by Wellhausen is correct, beyond all doubt. This survey was followed by a brief look at a rather fanciful treatment of the Balaum materials in terms of astral imagery. This was done by Eric Burrows in a book written in 1938. Burrows attempted a new approach to the oracles on the basis of the images of the zodiac he claimed to have found in the text. From the relative absence of reference to this work in later studies, it would appear that it is receiving the neglect it deserves.

A study of major significance was then surveyed--the study of the Balaam oracles by the late William Foxwell Albright, written in 1944. In this fundamental article the author argued for the unity of the text and for a relatively early date for its composition. He argued as well for the historical credibility of the person of the narrative, Balaam, the Mesopotamian seer. Yet, in the presentation of this article, it was seen that Albright should be regarded as a mediating scholar. He is critical of many of the postulates of the critical school but he still sought to work within the system. He never abandoned totally the presuppositions of the Wellhausen method, including the use of the criterion of the employment of divine names as an indicator of sources. Nevertheless, this study is to be regarded as the most significant

of all those surveyed in the present chapter.

Another example of a very original approach was found in the study von Pakozdy, written in 1958. While flawed by a novel thesis respecting the use of $^{e}lohim$, this article does argue for the unity of the Scriptural passage as well as for its theological importance. Some of the conclusions of the article are of merit, but are brought into question because of the questionable procedures in development of the argument.

Finally, we came to one of the most recent treatments of the oracles of Balaam, that written by Otto Eissfeldt in 1961. In this article we found ourselves to have come full-circle. The advances made by Albright and, to a lesser extent, by Lohr and von Pakozdy, are ignored. The classical approach of Wellhausen, now over seventy-years old, was stated to have been proven. The historical content of the story is dismissed, but there is some vague reference to that which is "vast and meaningful."

It is now time for a positive presentation of the critical issues of the Balaam pericope, and this will be done in the following chapter. Some items relating to critical issues will also be presented in subsequent chapters as well as for instance, the employment of the designations for deity.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL STUDY:

A POSITIVE PRESENTATION OF CRITICAL ISSUES

Introduction

Having surveyed the critical issues of the Balaam narrative as these have been presented in contemporary scholarship, we may now turn to a positive presentation of the several matters. Concepts to be included in this chapter include: (1) the name of Balaam, (2) the homeland of Balaam, (3) the character and role of Balaam, (4) the Old Testament references to Balaam, (5) the New Testament citations of Balaam, and (6) the source of the narrative.

The Meaning of the Name of Balaam

An important contribution to our understanding of the Balaam stories may be gained by an investigation of the meaning of his name. Further, the meaning of his name should be placed in the context of names and naming in the ancient Near East (an issue of considerable importance relative to the divine names as well).

Names in Israel and the Ancient Near East

In his book *Hebrew Man*, Kohler writes that "it is the prevailing

view among the Hebrews that names have meaning; they 'speak.'"[1] Names in the old Testament period were far more than personal labels, a means of distinguishing one individual from another. They were more than a means of honoring departed relatives or beloved friends. Names in the ancient period were descriptive of the person bearing the given name. Davidson avers,

> Among the Hebrews the name was never a mere sign whereby one person could be distinguished from another. It always remained descriptive; it expressed the meaning of the person or thing designated. The name bore the same relation to the significance of the thing or person as a word does to a thought. It was always the expression of it.[2]

In a similar manner, van Imschoot writes:

> In the eyes of the ancients the name is not a simple label distinguishing one individual from his kinsmen. It is an integrating part of the person; what has no name is, so to speak, non-existent. . . Moreover, the name is supposed to correspond to the essence of the object, and consequently reveals it.[3]

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[1] Ludwig Kohler, *Hebrew Man*, trans. by Peter R. Ackroyd (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 55. He groups the meanings of names in the following categories: (1) theophoric names, (2) talisman names, (3) protective names, and (4) occasional names, pp. 55-58.

[2] A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Stewart D. F. Salmond, "The International Theological Library, " ed. Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), pp. 36-37.

[3] P. van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament. I. God,* trans. by Kathryn Sullivan and Fidelis Buck (Tournai: Desclee Company, 1965), p. 35. Compare also the treatment by Motyer. He summarizes the relationship between the name and the person who bore it in three propositions: "the name is the person; the name is the person revealed; and the name is the person actively present." He then develops each of these dicta. J. A. Motyer, "Name;" *NBD*, pp. 861-64. Reference may also be made to Johs. Pedersen's presentation, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, trans. by Aslaug Moller, Annie I.

Even a casual reader of the Bible must be aware of the significance of the name *vis-a-vis* the person. From the name of the first man, Adam, to "the name which is above every name," Jesus--name, person and meaning are all interrelated. This is not to imply that modern scholars are always agreed on the precise significance of a specific name; it is rather to affirm that the meaning of a known name is significant.[1] In this context we may now turn to the question of the meaning of the name *Balaam*.

Balaam and Bela

Due to the fact that Balaam the diviner and Bela the king of Edom are each said to be "the son of Beor, " it is sometimes assumed that the Balaam of Numbers 22-24 and the Bela of Genesis 36:32 may be equated.[2]

Fausboll, and Johs. Pedersen (Vol. I-II, III-IV; London: Geoffrey Cumberlege; Copenhagen: Branner og Kordh, 1926, 1940), I-II, 245-59; George A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; London: SCM Press, Ltd. 1964), pp. 40-41; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (2 vols.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), I, 43-46.

[1] Although dated, an important treatise on the meaning of some names is the book by George Buchanan Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1896). See also M. Noth, *Die israelit-ischen Personnenamen im Rehmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengehung* (Stuttgart: Hidesheim G. Olms, 1928).

[2] Numbers 22:5 reads בִּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעוֹר; Genesis 36:32 [I Chronicles 1:43] reads בֶּלַע בֶּן־בְּעוֹר. Snaith regards the difference in names as being "only an afformative mem." Norman H. Snaith (ed.), *The Century Bible: Leviticus and Numbers* (New ed. ; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1967), p. 287. It should be added that those who make this equation of Balaam and Bela also read אדם for ארם in Numbers 23:7, thus making both figures Edomites.

Mowinckel, for example, is quite confident as to the correctness of the equation of Balaam and Bela. He writes, "So ist es denn auch langst erkannt worden, dass er im Grande identisch ist mit dem ersten Konige von Edom Bala' ban Beor."[1] It is on the basis of this equation that he was able to conclude that Balaam was not an historical person in the strict sense of the word ["eine historische Person im strengen Sinne des Wortes nicht ist"].[2]

More recently, however, the critical position maintained with such confidence by Mowinckel, et al., has fallen into disrepute, even among mediating and liberal scholars. H. H. Rowley, who until his death was

[1] Sigmond Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung der Bilamsage, " *ZAW*, XLVIII (1930), 237. See also A. H. Sayce, "Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology: Who Was Balaam?" *ET*, XV (1903-1904), 405. "

[2] *Ibid*. A similar conclusion was reached by Gressmann. He states, "Bileam, der Sohn Beors, der grosse Zauberer, ist identisch mit Bela, dem Sohne Beors, dem ersten edomitischen Konige." Hugo Gressmann, *Mose und Seine Zeit: Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), p. 318.

Among critical commentators, one may cite Edelkoort, the Dutch scholar, as giving cautious acceptance of the equation of Balaam and Bela. "Meer zin heeft de meening van Noldeke (1869), die Bileam denzelfde acht to zijn als den eersten Konig van Edom (Gen. 36:32), Bela de zoon van Beor." A H. Edelkoort, *Numeri*, "Tekst en Uiteg: Praktische Bijbelverklaring," ed. F. M. Th. Bohl and A. Van Veldlruizen (Groningen: J. B. Wolter's Uitgevers-Mdatschappij, 1930), p. 171.

Compare also, August Dillrnann, *Die Bucher Numeri, Deuteronium, und Josua*, "Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alters Testament" (2d ed.; Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzcl, 1886), p. 142; George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, "The International Critical Commentary," (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 324; Bruno Baaentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri*, "Handkornmentar zun, Alten Testament," ed. W. Nowack (Gottingen: Vundenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1903), p. 594; H. Holzinger. Numeri. "Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, " ed. Karl Marti (Tubingen and Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903), p. 112.

considered by many to be the leading Old Testament scholar in Great Britain, wrote concerning this matter, but in another context: "This identification is not without difficulties, however, and cannot be pressed."[1] Moreover, as is noted by Rowley,[2] one of the strongest denunciations of the critical concept at hand was made by Albright in his pivotal study, "The Oracles of Balaam." In this article, Albright declares categorically that "Balaam has nothing to do with Bela of Edom. . . . he was certainly believed to be a diviner from Northern Syria."[3] It goes without saying that the biblical record

[1] H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua: Biblical Traditions in the Light of Archaeology,* "The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1948" (London: Published for the British Academy by Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 78. He was speaking in terms of the controversy surrounding the date of the Exodus.

[2] Ibid., p. 78, n. 7.

[3] William Foxwell Albright, "The Oracles of Balaam, " JBL, LXIII (1944), 231. Compare also John Mauchline, "The Balaam-Balak Songs and Saga," *Presentation Volume to William Barron Stevenson*, "Studia Semitica et Orientalia, " II (Glasgow: Glasgow University Oriental Society, 1945), pp. 74-75.

Among scholars who deny the association of Balaam with Bela there is disagreement as to the time-period of Bela, the first king of Edom. O'Callaghan writes that "this Bela of Edom must be dated in the mid-twelfth century B. C., long after Balaam." R. T. O'Callaghan, *Aram Naharaim*, "Analecta Orientalia," Vol. XXVI (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1948), p. 120. This viewpoint raises quite another question: What relationship does Genesis 36 have to the Mosaic unity of the Book of Genesis as a whole? Young states that there is no necessity to make the assumption that the Edomite kings of Genesis 36 are later than Moses' time. He regards it as "Perfectly possible that Moses could have written this verse." Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 63. With this estimation, com-- pare Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Press, 1994), p. 164. n. 11. The colophon in Genesis 36:43 suggests

hardly suggests an equation of the two figures.

The Name Balaam

The equation of Balaam, son of Beor, and Bela, son of Beor,
may be discarded with confidence by the conservative scholar. More prob-
lematic, however, is the precise significance of the name Balaam.[1]

An explanation of the name given by Hengstenberg derives the
word from בֶּלַע "destruction, " and עָם "people." He renders a possible
explanation of the name in this manner:

> we suppose that Balaam bore this name as a dreaded charmer and
> conjuror, whether it were that he descending from a family in which
> this business was handed down, received it immediately on his birth,
> and that he afterwards was really, in public opinion, what the name-
> giving hoped from him and wished him to be, or whether the name,
> according to oriental custom, was given to him for the first time at a
> later period, when the fact indicated by it came into existence. This
> derivation is perfectly conformable to the laws of speech. The
> expulsion of the one y forms no difficulty.[2]

to Kitchen that the chapter was a unit and was a written document in the time
of Moses. The only element he would allow to be a post-Mosaic addition
is verse 31b: "before any king ruled over the sons of Israel." Kenneth A.
Kitchen, "The Old Testament in Its Context: 1. From the Origins to the Eve
of the Exodus," *TSFB*. LIX (Spring, 1971), 10; "The Old Testament in Its Con-
text: 2. From Egypt to the Jordan, " *TSFB*, LX (Summer, 1971), 7.

[1] The English spelling derives from the LXX **balaam** The Heb-
rew בַּלְעָם would be normalized *bilᶜam*.

[2] E. W. Hengstenberg, *A Dissertation on the History and Prophe-
cies of Balaam*, trans. by J. E. Ryland, bound with Dissertations on the Gen-
uineness of Daniel and the Integrity of Zechariah, trans. by B. P. Pratten
(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1848), pp. 352-53. The original title of this work
is *Die Geschichte Bileams und seine Weissagungen* (Berlin: Ludwig Dehmigte,

In presenting this position Hengstenberg offers the following
reasons: (1) there is no other admissible derivation at hand; (2) the name
thus explained is in the highest degree suitable (compare Numbers 22:6 which
may be taken as a commentary on the name); (3) it accords with the city name
Ibleam= Bileam (compare II Kings 9:27 and I Chronicles 6:55 [Eng. 6:70]
(4) it agrees with the meaning of the name of his father (Beor), which is taken
to mean "destruction"; and (5) it allows philological comparison (but not
identity) with Bela ben Beor.[1]

Most important for Hengstenberg in this regard is the explanation
given of the name in Revelation 2:6, 14, 15. He writes:

> The explanation here given of the name, John also followed in
> the Apocalypse, who translates Balaam by **Nikołaoj**, and by the
> name of the Nicolaitaes indicates false teachers, who, after the
> pattern of Balaam (whose name shows itself also in the misery which
> befell Israel, in consequence of the seduction advised by him), seduced
> the Church to heathen festivals, and to participate in the excesses
> connected with 'them. . . This latter passage [Rev. 2:14, 15] is
> especially important, since it shows what was to the author the
> point of comparison between the false teachers of the present period
> and Balaam, on account of which he called them Nicolaitanes, that
> is, Balaamites, conquerors or destroyers of the people . . . .As
> Balaam, so also the false teachers of the present time, proved them-
> selves destroyers of the people, and not that alone, they also brought
> upon the Church, by the same means, the anger of God [emphasis in
> original].[2]

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 353-54.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 354-55. For a similar statement, see R. D. C.
Robbins, "The Character and Prophecies of Balaam--Numbers XXII-IV,"
BS, (1846), 351. Keil follows Hengstenberg's analysis as well. C. F.
Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch [C. F. Keil
Delitsch series J trans. by James Martin (3 vols.; reprint; Grand

Other suggestions have not been wanting, however. Among these are the following: (1) "without a people" [בַּל + עָם]; (2) "Bel is my kinsman"; (3) "the clan brings forth"; and (4) "glutton."[1] Albright suggested the meaning, "the (divine) uncle brings forth," comparing the Hebrew word בִּלְעָם with an Amorite proper name from the thirteenth-century B. C., *Yabil-ᶜammu*.[2] Mauchline follows Albright's analysis. He regards the name as of a common type, "an imperfect + divine name. " He then cites Noth's study of names on this point:

> Personal names incorporating the theophorous element עם are found in the proto-Aramaic level, in East proto-Aramaic, South proto-Aramaic and Israelite nomenclature, and in addition to name formations of the Nominal Sentence and Noun + Perfect type, characteristic of the proto-Aramaic level is the Imperfect + Noun structure.[3]

Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company [n. d.]), III, 159.

Geikie relates his name to his profession: "His very name, 'The conqueror of the people,' seemed to point him out as a seer, whose blessing or curse was of mightiest power." Cunningham Geikie, *Old Testament Characters* (New York: James Pott & Co. , 1897), p. 113.

[1] Compare Gilmore H. Guyot, "The Prophecy of Balaam, " *CBQ*, II (1940), 332; David Adams Martin, "The Balaam Oracles and Exegesis and Exposition of Numbers 22-24" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminairy, 1950), p. 15; Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 620.

[2] Albright, "Oracles," p. 232.

[3] Noth, *Die israelitischen Personnenamen*, p. 76, cited by Mauchline, "The Balaam-Balak Songs and Saga, " p. 75. A somewhat different view is given by Rene Largement: "Ni le nom de Bileᶜam, ni celui do son pere ne figurent exactement dans l'onomastique mesopotamienne. Toutefois, l'element ᶜam apparait tres frequemment dans los noms propres de la Iʳᵉ dynastie de

In view of the divergences of opinion on this technical issue among scholars of high repute, one would best move with some caution. Nevertheless, a tentative suggestion may be made. Since it seems best to regard Balaam as of Mesopotamian origin, and more specifically, Northern-Syrian,[1] it should come as no surprise that his name may be explained along "proto-Aramaic" lines as an imperfect + divine name.

Yet, as the word is transcribed in the Hebrew text, it receives the Hebrew connotation[2] of "devourer of the people." There are other examples of intentional or non-intentional changes of names (denotation to connotation) in the Hebrew Bible. Some of these changes reflect a negative estimation of the character in the eyes of the writer.

A striking example of this phenomenon is to be found in the name *Jezebel* as that name is explained by Leah Bronner. Miss Bronner takes the name איזבל to be an abbreviation of אביזבל, meaning "my divine father is a prince." She writes, "the name would then be a most fitting

Babylone sous la forme Hammu ou Ammu; ces variantes de la premiere radicale revelent l'existence d'un [c] en ouest-semitique. Le premier element: *Bil*, pourrait etre rapproche de Ba'al avec une vocalisation qui revelerait son oriyine mesopotamienne." "Les oracles de Bile[c]am et la mantique sumero-accadienne," *Ecole des Lancues Orientales Anciennes de l'Institute Catholique de Paris: Memorial du Cinquantenaire, 1914-1964* (Paris: Bloud & Grey, Travaux de l'Institute Catholique de Paris, 19G4), p. 38. Hence, Largemcnt connects the elements Ba[c]al and [c]Ammu.

[1] This is a point to be developed in the next section of the Present chapter; it is, noted here in anticipation of later demonstration.

[2] *Connotation* refers to "the associated or secondary meaning of a word or expression in a addition to the explicit or primary meaning;" cf. *denotation, RHDEL*, pp. 311, 386.

appellation for a daughter of a king. The Biblical writer, however, intention-
ally shortened אביזבל to איזבל in order to mock the fanatical queen, who

highly unpopular in Israel." The writer transformed the name to the
taunting nickname, "un-exalted."[1]

The present writer suggests, therefore, that something similar
may have happened with the name of the diviner in the Book of Numbers. The
name *Balaam*, may have denoted honor in the homeland of the diviner, but it
was deliberately transformed by the writer of our text to indicate a perjurious
view of him. The present writer is impressed with the philological data of
Albright, *et al*., but he is also impressed with the exegetical data of Heng-
stenberg, *et al.* Due importance, it would seem, must be given to the play
on words in Revelation 2. Bush amplifies this argument:

> This import of the name ["destroyer of the people"] is confirmed
> by Rev. 2:6, 14, 15;, where mention is made of the Nicolaitans as
> holding the same doctrines with the Balaamites, and Nicolaitans is
> a name signifying etymologically conquerors or destroyers of the
> people. There is no evidence from Church history of the existence
> of any such heretical sect as the Nicolaitans, and therefore there
> need be no hesitation in taking the denomination mystically or sym-
> bolically as denoting false teachers of a certain type, just as the
> name of Jezebel occurs, Rev. 2:20, not as a historical but as a
> symbolical designation. It is used simply to denote a class of persons
> who inculcated the most abominable doctrines, and therefore were
> fitly denominated by the name of a woman who had proved the vilest

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[1] Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics
Against Baal Worship*, "Pretoria Oriental Series, " Vol. VI, ed. A. Van Selms
(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 9-10. The author takes the element אי as
a negation which occurs in Phoenician inscriptions. Compare *DISO*, p. 11.

and most detestable of her sex.[1]

      In summary: Whereas the name *Balaam* in its original form may have, meant "the (divine) uncle brings forth" (*a la* Albright); the name appears in the Hebrew text with the suggestion "the destroyer of the people." This appears to be an example of deliberate polemics against this disreputable figure, and it was so understood in the Talmud.[2]

The Name Beor

      The name of Balaam's father may mean "torch" or "burning" from the root בער.[3] Albright suggests that the name in our text is another

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[1] George Bush, Notes, *Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers: Designed as a General Help to Biblical Reading and Instruction* (New York: Ivison & Phinney, 1858), pp. 339-40. Kuhn strongly asserts the contrary. Respecting the Nicolaitans he insists that the sect is "certainly based on a **Nikolaoj** as the founder of the sect, since the name cannot be understood in terms of popular etymology as a transl. of בלעם בלע עם ('devourer of the people, ' bSanh., 105a)." Karl Georg Kuhn, "**Balaam**," *TDNT*, I **A-G**, 525, n. 10.

      Bush is perhaps too strong in his insistence on a symbolic sense of the term Nicolaitans, but it remains true that if "Nicolaus" was the founder of the sect, as some fathers believed, he is otherwise unknown. Compare John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 58; *AGL*, p. 541. A connection between the supposed "Nicolaus" of Revelation 2:14 and the Nicolaus of Acts 6:5 seems rather tenuous at best See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (8 vols.; 5th ed.; reprint; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), II, 464.

[2] See above, p. 46.

[3] So *BDB*, p. 129; Guyot, "The Prophecy of Balaam, " p. 332; Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 159.

abbreviated form of an Aramaic name. He states the original form was *Ba^{c}al-ram*.[1] If this view prevails, it will still be true that in the present spelling the Hebrew word suggests "torch" or "burning. " Largement says that he is tempted to try to relate the name *Beor* with the term *baru*, a word signifying "diviner" [on which, consult the discussion below]. He admits, however, that the philology does not favor this view.[2]

One difficulty concerning the word *Beor* is to be found in the New Testament citation of the name. Whereas the LXX reads **balaamuiọn Bewr** In Numbers 22:5, II Peter reads **Balaamtou?Bosor**.[3] There does not seem to be an explanation fully satisfactory. Bigg gives two suggestions mentioned by Vitringa.[4] One view is that the word *Bosor* might be a Galilean form of Beor.[5] A second explanation is that the form *Bosor* is a paronomasia

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[1] Albright "Oracles," p. 232.

[2] Largement, "Les oracles de Bilecam," p. 38. See below, pp. 178-84.

[3] The reading **Bosor** is supported by all the manuscripts except B [Vaticanus] and ℵ [Sinaiticus]. The latter reads **beworsor**. Bigg conjectures that Sinaiticus may have read **tou?Bewr oṣ**, but that the words were illegible to the scribe; hence he "did the best he could with them." He adds, "the name Bosor does not exist. It will be observed that no single MS has the right reading **tou?Bewr oṣ**." Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commnetary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude, ICC*, (2d ed, ; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 212-13.

[4] *Ibid* , pp. 283-84.

[5] The some view is given, with some doubt, by J. B. Mayor, "Notes on the Text of the Second Epistle of Peter, " *Expos*. , 6th series, X (1904), 290, A similar viewpoint is espoused by Fronmuler as well. He

from בָּשָׂר, "flesh. " Hence, "son of Bosor" might mean "son of flesh."

Bigg comments:

> Such plays upon the names of people, who for one reason or another were hated by them, are known to have been not uncommon among the Rabbis. But there appears to be no trace of this particular scorn-name, Bosor. Otherwise we might possibly have found here another reference to Jewish tradition in 2 Peter.[1]

Hence, the New Testament citation of the name *Beor* remains something of a difficulty. Neither of the two proffered explanations seems satisfying on the basis of present evidence.

The Name Balak

The king of Moab is named Balak [בָּלָק] a word evidently meaning "devastator."[2] It does not appear to be demonstrable on the basis of present evidence that this name is an, abbreviation from a more "positive" concept. As the name stands in our text, however, it appears to be some-what ironic. He who is termed "the devastator" is sickened with fear at the presence of Israel (Num. 22:2-4). His attempts to defeat Israel through supernatural powers come to naught. Throughout the Balaam narrative, Balak

status that "some grammarians maintain that in the Babylonian pronunciation the ע was a kind of sibilant." G. F. C. Fronmuller, "The Epistles General of Peter, " trans. by J. Isidor Mombert, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical,* ed. John Peter Lange (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 34.

[1] Bigg, *The Epistles of St. Peter*, pp. 283-84.

[2] So BDB, p. 118; Snaith, *Century Bible*, p. 286; Edelkoort, *Numeri*, p. 170. His fattier is named צפור "bird," "sparrow, " cf. *BDB*, p. 862.

seems to be a rather second--rate figure

At each successive "curse," Balak becomes more enraged and more helpless. At one point he was so angry he struck his hands together in rage (Num. 24:10). Even when he attempted to dismiss Balaam, he was powerless to stop the final blessings of Israel and the cursings of the nations. Thus it is at the end of our story that Balak, the would-be "devastator," leaves in stunned silence. "Devastator" indeed! It may well be that the use of name in our account is another example of subtle polemics.

One may cite with Martin[1] examples of the utter contempt with which Balak was held by later Israel. One example is to be found in an address by Jephthah to the king of Ammon:

> And now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them?   [Judges 11:25, N. A. S. B.]

Here we see a deliberate statement of studied contempt for the one whose name means "devastator. " He was unable to devastate Israel!

Summary

In view, then, of the significance of names in the ancient Near East, it is important for our study to ascertain, if possible, the meaning of the several names in our story. As for the name *Balaam*, we may disregard with confidence the alleged equation of Balaam and Bela. There is still some

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[1] Martin. "Balaam," p. 11.

question, however, as to the precise significance of his name. However, whatever his name may have been in his homeland, his name has a connotation in Hebrew that may be the result of a polemical thrust. The name Balaam as well as the name Balak may be expressions of contempt and judgment on the part of the writer of our story. These two figures represent a studied attack on the people of Yahweh, and--because of the relationship of this nation to her God--such constituted an attack on the person of Yahweh Himself. The "destroyer of the people" and the "devastator" are both powerless when they confront the God of Israel.

The Homeland of Balaam

Introduction

Having discussed the meaning of the name *Balaam*, we may now direct our attention to the vexing problem of the identification of his homeland. There are two verses in our pericope which are crucial to an understanding of this issue. The first is Numbers 22:5a:

$$\text{וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־בִּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעוֹר}$$

$$\text{פְּתוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַנָּהָר אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹ}$$

So he sent messenger to Balaam the son of Beer at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people.

[N.A.S.B.]

The second is the initial couplet of the first verse in the Balaam oracles, Numbers 23:7b:

וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר

מִן־אֲרָם יַנְחֵנִי בָלָק

מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב מֵהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶם

And he took up his discourse and said,
From Aram Balak has brought me,
Moan's king from the mountains of the East,
[N.AS.B.]

In these two verses there are several geographical terms which must be explained. The traditional critical approach, crystallized by Wellhausen, was to regard these several geographical data as irreconcilable.[1] In Chapter III of the present study there was a presentation of a number of diverse schemata, varied attempts at reconstruction of what was thought to be a "confused narrative." For Noth, for instance, the data are so discordant that he is able to state, "the Balaam story is obviously not a unified whole."[2]

If, however, one is to take a harmonistic approach, Noth's conclusion is not "obvious" at all. When one approaches the data of our text apart from negative prejudice, the places may be seen to fit together quite nicely. The atomizing approach of the critics led to unsatisfying and unscientific results. The results may be said to be "unsatisfying" in that the arguments of one critic fail to impress another critic, and certainly leave no positive impression among the conservative reader of the text. The results

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[1] See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel,* preface by W. Robertson Smith (First pub. in 1678; Meridian Books; Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957), pp. 356-57.

[2] Marlin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary,* trans. by James Martin, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, *et al.* (Philadelphia: The Press, 1968), p. 171.

may be said to be "unscientific" in that the various critical approaches do not begin with an explanation of the text as it stands, but rather begin with a rewriting of the text on the basis of subjective presuppositions. These observations seem particularly fitting when we turn to the issue of the homeland of Balaam.

So diverse have the suggestions been for his homeland, that one is left with the impression that the only point of agreement among the several critical scholars is that Balaam was not a native of Israel! He has been called the following: (1) an Edomite,[1] (2) a Moabite,[2] (3) an Ammonite,[3]

[1] This is a common designation among many critical scholars who change "Aram" in 22:7 to "Edom" [ארם to אדם]. A sampling of the proponents of this view includes Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. by J. A. Baker, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (2 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), 1, 297; James Montgomery, *Arabia and the Bible* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), pp. 41, 170-71; Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, Vol. I. *The Pentateuch*, trans. by A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), p. 233; and (the early) William Foxwell Albright, "The Home of Balaam, " *JAOS*, XXXV (1915), 389.

[2] That Balaam was from Moab is a view held less often, but it was presented by Theodore H. Robinson. He wrote: "Balaam is a genuine ecstatic, but he is not an Israelite, and probably comes from the settled agricultural country of Moab." *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel* (London: Duckworth, 1923), p. 34.

[3] The phrase icy ארץ בני עַמּוֹ [in Numbers 22:5] was read as ארץ בני עַמּוֹן in some Hebrew manuscripts [14 are cited by *BHK*; the *BHS* fascicle on Numbers has not been issued at the time of this writing], SP, Syr, Vulg. Hence, e. g., Lamsa's English translation of the Peshitta reads "Ammon."

(4) a Musrite,[1] (5) a Hittite,[2] and a North-Syrian.[3]

In order to make an evaluation of these several viewpoints, it is necessary to turn to the two passages cited above, Numbers 22:5a and Number 23:7b, and to examine the several geographical data in these texts.

The Identity of "The River"

Numbers 22:5 reads, in part, פְּתוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַנָּהָר, "to Pethor which is by the River." Before seeking to identify Pethor, one may seek to determine the meaning of the term *the River.* Against Cheyne, who suggested that this term refers to "the River of Musri,"[4] most scholars identify the river designated in our verse to be the *River Euphrates.*

There are biblical passages in which the word *Euphrates* is used to refer to that river. One example may be cited:

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[1] Cheyne suggested changing the word פְּתוֹרָה in Numbers 22:5 to רְחוֹבֹת; he thus read the "E" section of the verse as follows: "And he sent messengers to Balaam, son of Beor (more probably Achbor), to Rehoboth, which is by the River [of Musri]." Further, he argued that it was through "historical ignorance" that "Musri" dropped from the text. T. K. Cheyne, "Some Critical Difficulties in the Chapters on Balaam, " *ET*, X (1898-99), 401-402.

[2] This unique viewpoint was stated by A. H. Sayce, who suggested that Balaam, was from a Hittite city named Pethor, and that he might have then migrated to Edom as a Hittite chieftain and subsequently founded a kingdom there. "Recant Biblical and Oriental Archaeology: Who Was Balaam?" *ET*, XV (1903-1904), 405.

[3] This view has been championed by (the later) William Foxwell Albright [see n. 1 on the preceding page], "Oracles," p. 233. Contrast J. Halevy who argued many years ago that Balaam was from the area of Damascus. "Reserches Bibliques: Patrie de Balaam, " *RS*, II (1894), 201-209.

[4] Cf. n. 1, above.

In that day Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram, saying:
To your seed I give this land, from the River of Egypt, to
the Great River, the River Euphrates [עַד הַנָּהָר
הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פְּרָת: Genesis 15:18].[1]

There are other passages where the noun נהר is used apart

from other qualifying adjective or proper noun, yet where the meaning

"Euphrates" is evident from the context. In some of these cases, the word

נהר is definite. Two examples may be given.

And Jacob "stole the heart" of Laban, the Aramean, by not
telling him that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he
had; he rose and crossed the [Euphrates] River [הנהר]
and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead [Genesis 31:20-21].

And I will establish your boundary, from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea
of the Philistines, and from the Wilderness to the River [Euphrates]
[הנהר]; for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your
hand [Exodus 23:31].

There are also passages in which the noun נהר is indefinite,

but wherein the meaning "Euphrates" is evident from context.[3] The most

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[1] Compare also Gen. 2:14; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4, etc.

[2] Cf. Josh. 24:2, 3, 14, 15; II Chron. 9:26. On the trans-
lation of יָם סוּף by "Sea of Reeds, " see most recently William F. Stine-
spring, "Some Remarks on the New English Bible," *Understanding the Sacred
Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian
Beginnings,* ed. John Reumann (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), pp. 92-94.

[3] Cf. Isa. 7:20; Ter. 2:18; Mic. 7:12; Zech. 9:10; Ps. 72:8.
Further, נהר may mean "the Nile River" in Isa. 19:5. Cf. BDB,. p. 625.
The literary-critical issue of "The River" as against "The River Euphrates"
will not he discussed at this point, though George Adam Smith regarded
this as one of the "small symptoms, which geography supplies, of the
truth of the critical conclusions as to the Gate of the Hexateuchal docu-
ments." George Adam Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the
Old Testament,* "Eight Lectures on the Lyman Beecher Foundation, Yale
University" (2d ed.; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1901), p. 69.

natural interpretation of the words in question in Numbers 22:5 would then be "to Pethor which is by the River [Euphrates]." Further, this meaning agrees with the parallel text, Deuteronomy 23:5 [Eng. , v. 4] where Pethor is located in Mesopotamia [ארם נהרים]. Pethor, then, is to be located in Mesopotamia near the Euphrates River.

The Location of "Pethor"

Turning now to the meaning of the Hebrew term פתור, it may be observed that this word was misunderstood in the ancient versions. The LXX rendered **f aqoura**, rendering the Hebrew פתורה of Numbers 22:5 as a single word, rather than as the name of a city with a directive he ending.[1] In the Vulgate the term was taken as a personal appellative, *ariolum*, "sooth-sayer."[2]

It may be added that some of the older scholars tended to relate the Hebrew city name to the root פתר [Aramaic פשׁר], "to interpret (a dream)," and they suggested this city as a center for mantic arts.[3]

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[1] For this terminology, see now *WHS*, pp. 15-16; *UT*, pp. 62-63. On the interpretation of the LXX, cf, the view of Yaure, discussed below,

[2] Compare also the Syriac rendering, "an interpreter of dreams," Larnsa, *Peshitta*, p. 182. The Palestinian Targum reads, "Pethor, a name signifying an interpreter of dreams, " Etheridge, *Targum of Palestine*, II, 418.

[3] So Hengstenberg, *History of Balaam*, p. 364; Robbins, "Balaam," p. 351. Keil, however, regarded the equation as "more than doubtful." Cf., *The Pentateuch*, III, 165.

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One may now say with some confidence, however, that the Hebrew word

פְּתוֹר refers to *Pitru* [*Pi-it-ru*] of the Assyrian texts, a city located on

the river Sagur, near its junction with the Euphrates.[1] This identification

seems to have been made first by Eberhard Schrader in the 1870's.[2] Pitru

is mentioned by Shalmaneser III (ca. 859-824 B. C.)[3] in the annalistic report

of 853 B. C.[4] This is the report which concerns the highly significant battle

at Qarqar between Assyria and the Syro-Palestinian coalition (which included

Ahab of Israel).[5]

In this text Shalmaneser III states:

I crossed the Euphrates another time at its flood on rafts (made
buoyant by means) of (inflated) goatskins. In *Ina-Ashur-utir-asbat*,

[1] Harrison, *Introduction*, p. 620. Noth says that Pethor "can
scarcely be anything other than Pitru," *Numbers*, p. 173.

[2] So William Dellar Jaggers, "The Nature of the Balaam Oracles"
(unpublished master's thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1955),
p. 30. Reference is made to Eberhard Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften and das
Alto Testament.* Cf. Michael Heilprin, *The Historical Poetry of the Ancient
Hebrews* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879). Consult also, E.
H. Plumptre, "Assyrian and Babylonian Inscriptions in Their Bearing on Old
Testament History. IX. Balaam the Son of Beor, " *Expos.*, 2d series, 1
1881), 445-46.

[3] These dates are given by D. J. Wiseman in his article,
"Assyria," *NBD*, pp. 100--106.

[4] The text is dated in the year of the eponym Daian-Ashur. A
full list of the Assyrian eponyms may he found in Edwin R Thiele, *The
Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: William
B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 209-14.

[5] See John Bright, *A History of Israel* (2d ed.; Philadelphia:
The Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 239--40; Bruce K. Waltke, "History of
Israel" (unpublished class notes, Old Testament 254, Dallas Theological
Seminary, 1967), p. 65.

which he people of Hattina call *Pitru*, on the other side of the Euphrates, on the river Sagur, I received tribute from the kings of the other side of the Euphrates , . . [1] [Emphasis added]

The Meaning of the Phrase: "The Land of the Sons of His People"

A second phrase in Numbers 22:5 relative to the home of Balaam seems to add little to the verse as it is usually translated, "the land of the sons of his people." This is an old rendering, however, as may be seen by comparing the Hebrew words בני־עמו as they were translated in the LXX **ghj uiῷ laou?auʈou?**Robbins attempted to explain these words as "probably added merely to designate Balaam as a native Aramaean, which renders his blessing of the Israelites more unexpected and wonderful, than if he had dwelt. farther west, or had been in any way connected with the Israelites."[2] It seems somewhat difficult, however, to sustain the force

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[1]*ANET*, p. 278. Baly and Tushingham locate Pitru as "perhaps Tell Ahmar," a site near the Euphrates, about twelve miles south of Carchernish. Denis Baly and A. D. Tushingham, *Atlas of the Biblical World* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1971), p. 205; cf. p. 103, map 16. See also the photograph of the area in *WB*, I, 226, where the Assyrian riame Pith: was given in the text quoted above is translated: "to the god Ashur I gave back I have taken (the city)." Pethor/Pitru is not located by Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible* Atlas (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Collier-Macmillan, Ltd., 1968), p. 81, map 127.

[2] Robbins, "Balaam, " p. 352; compare Henstenberg: "The addition, 'the land of the children of his people, 'should remind us that Balaam dwelt in Aram not perhaps after the manner of Jacob, but rather was an Aremeen by birth and descent." "Balaam," p. 365. Sutcliffe also gives a similar argument: these words "are not otiose, but give additional information." See E. P. Sutcliffe, "A Note on Numbers XXII," *Biblica*, XVIII

of this argument.[1]

It would appear that some of the ancient versions had difficulty with this phrase, so interpreted. Both the Vulgate and the Peshitta read עמון instead of עמו, reading "the land of the children of Ammon." Such an interpretation only compounds our problem, however, for it leads to a conflict of ancestry: Ammonite versus Aramaean.

Writing in 1922 E. E. Kellett expressed hope concerning a new approach in which the word עמו was taken as a proper name:

> In Sayce's Hittites, p. 22, the עמו of Nu 22 5 is treated as a proper name, equivalent to the ᶜAmma of the mountains: a city in the neighborhood of Pethor. I should be glad to know if this identification commends itself to scholars; to translate עמו, as 'his people,' seems unsatisfactory.[2]

One may now cite information given by Albright in 1950 which he regarded as of "the greatest interest to students of the Mosaic tradition."[3]

(1937), 441; cf. also his earlier study, "De unitate litteraria Num. XXII," *Biblica*, VII (1926), 15-18. Burrows (wrongly!) relates the phrase to Balak and not to Balaam. Eric Burrows, *The Oracles of Jacob and Balaam*, "The Bellarmine Series," III, ed. Edmund F. Sutcliffe (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1938), p. 78, n. 1.

[1] Yahuda speaks off the translation in rather negative terms: "It is obvious that this translation is a makeshift which does not make sense, besides being grammatically impossible, for הנהר (with the article;) cannot he in the construct case. " A. S. Yahuda, "The Name of Balaam's Homeland, " *JBL*, LXIV (1945), 547.

[2] E. E. Kellett, "Some Old Testament Notes and Queries, " ET, XXXIII (1921-22), 426.

[3] William Foxwell Albricriht, "Some Important Recent Discoveries: Alphabetic Origins and the Idrimi Statue, " *BASOR*, CVIII (April, 1950), 15, n. 13.

This concerns his translation of the Idrimi Inscription, an inscription on a statue of king Idrimi of Alalakh, whose reign Albright dates ca. 1480-1450 B. C.[1] The statue was discovered by Sir Leonard Woolley in 1939 at Tell Atshanah, near the bend of the Orontes River, east of Antioch.[2] Albright observes that Idrimi was king of Alalakh and also reigned over the lands of Mukishkhe, Ni', and ᶜAmau. Concerning this last location, Albright states:

> At the last moment I find the obviously correct identification of ᶜAmau with the biblical land of ᶜMW in Num. 22:5, where the diviner Balaam . . . is said to come from "PTR on the River in the land of the children . . . of ᶜMW." Since the LXX, going back to a Hebrew prototype of the fourth century or even earlier, had the same consonantal text before them, it is quite unnecessary to emend ᶜMW to ᶜ*Ammon* or (with me in 1915) ᶜ*Eden* (where Pitru was situated in the ninth century B. C.). Since Balaam's contacts with Israel may safely be dated about 1250 B. C., only about 200 years after Idrimi, the name of the land in question would be expected to persist. ᶜAmau would then be the region of the Sajur Valley between Aleppo and Carchemish. This location rounds out the territory of Idrimi in the happiest way. Needless to say, this discovery is of the greatest interest to students of the Mosaic tradition.[3]

[1] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[2] See now the recently published translation by A. Leo Oppenheim, ANES, pp. 557-58.

[3] Albright, "Idrimi Statue," p. 15, n, 13. The reference to his view of 1915 is to be found in his article, "The Home of Balaam," *JAOS*, XXXV (1915), 389. It should be noted that Oppenheim normalizes ᶜAmau as *Ama'e*, but with no explanation, *ANES*, p. 557. Curiously, Albright does not mention in his 1950 article that Yahuda in 1945 had identified עמו of Numbers 22:5 as the proper noun ᶜAmu, an Egyptian designation for Aramaeans. Yahuda gave a number of references to Egyptian literature. Yahuda, "The Name of Balaam's Homeland," pp. 547-51.

For later notes by Albright on the identification of עמו with ᶜAmau, cf. "The Old Testament and the Archaeology of the Ancient East, "

To the present writer, the translation of Hebrew עמו as a

Proper place name in Northern Syria, ᶜAmau, seems to be quite satisfactory. it would appear that this word is an example of a rare instance in which the ancient word was not known to the later Jewish scholars, both in Alexandria and among the later Massoretes. In both the LXX and the MT the word of our text was preserved and interpreted, even though the original meaning was lost. Albright's suggestion has been followed by Moriarty,[1] Wiseman,[2] and Beegle.[3] It has been accepted by several new Bible translations,[4] but

The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 33--34; *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 15, n. 38. In this last work Albright relates Hebrew עמו to Akkadian ᶜ*Amau* and Egyptian ᶜ*Amaw*; again, with no reference to Yahuda.

[1] Frederick L. Moriarty, "Numbers," *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (2 vols., bound as one; Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc. , 1968), I, 95.

[2] D. J. Wiseman, "Alalakh," *Archaeology and Old Testament Study: Jubilee Volume of the Society for Old Testament Study, 1917-1967*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 121-22.

[3] Having noted the Shalmaneser and the Idrimi evidence, Beegle states that "an inscription from the time of Amenophis II (about 1435-1420 B. C,) tells of Pharaoh capturing a Syrian land named 'Amaw. ' The two fifteenth-century inscriptions confirm that there was a province of Amaw along the Euphrates, and the ninth-century text locates Pitru within that area, " Dewey M. Beegle, Moses, *The Servant of Yahweh* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 320-21.

[4] R S. V., "in the land of Amaw; " N. E. B., "in the land of the Amavites;" S. B. J. "au pays des fits d'Ammav;" J. B., "in the land of the sons of Amaw.

rejected by others.[1]

The present writer would also observe that if the events of our narrative are placed within the framework of the "early" dates for the Exodus (*ca*., 145 B. C.) and Conquest (*ca.* 1405 B. C.), the expectation of the name persisting for 200 years (until *ca.* 1250 B. C.), is made unnecessary. In fact, one may say that the citations in Egyptian, Akkadian, and Hebrew literature all date from the same century.

Hence, we suggest that the translation of Numbers 22:5, which relates to the origin of Balaam, read as follows:

> So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor,
> at Pethor, which is near the River [Euphrates],
> in the land of the sons of Amau.

Balaam is a North-Syrian from the northern Euphrates valley, near the Haran of the patriarchal stories.[3]

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[1] Torah, "in the land of his kinfolk;" N. A. S. B. , "in the land of the sons of his people." Noth and his translator seem to be unaware of Albright's discussion. Noth translates, "the land of his fellow country-men. " James D. Martin, his translator, adds: "The RSV with no apparent justification, has 'the land of Amaw'. " Noth, *Numbers*, p. 173, and note.

[2] This is suggested by Albright; cf. his quotation on p. 158, above.

[3] The mention of "Haran" is not to be taken as justification for the view expressed in the Talmud [Sanhedrin 105a] that Balaam is to be equated with Laban (!); nor does it lend credence to the view that Balaam might be a descendant of Laban, as was suggested by Andrew Fuller, *Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections, The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller. With a Memoir of His Life by Andrew Gunton Fuller*, ed. Joseph Blecher (3 vols; Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), III, 128-29.

Moreover, Balaam's introductory bicola in his first oracle agrees with this view, though there the statement is more general:

From Aram, Balak has brought me,
Moab's king front the mountains of the east.

[Num. 23:7a]

The term Aram in this verse is expanded in Deuteronomy 23:5 [Eng. v. 4] to Aram of the Two Rivers [אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם], i. e., Mesopotamia. The phrase, "The mountains of the east" in Numbers 23:7a [מֵהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶם] has been pressed by Yahuda to mean an explicit reference to a location in Northeast Syria, as in the Story of Si-Nuhe.[1] However, in both the text of Numbers and the story of the Egyptian, Si-Nuhe, the term seems best taken as a general reference to Northeast Syria.[2]

It may be added that an entirely different approach has been taken by L. Yaure in an article written in 1960.[3] He states that the term פתורה should not be read as a place name with a directive ending, but as

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[1] He compares the construction of Genesis 29:1, and finds the two in perfect accord, "where Qedem is on the way to Haran." Yahuda, "The Name of Balaam's Homeland," pp. 549-50. A translation of the Egyptian text which describes the travels of an Egyptian official of the mid-twentieth century B.C. [Middle Kingdom], may be found in *ANET*, pp. 1 8-22,

[2] The translator of the Story of Si-Nuhe in *ANET*, John A. Wilson, states that *Qedem* is "Semitic for 'the East' generally. A vague term, either in the writer's ignorance of Asiatic geography or intentionally vague for a area." *ANET*, p. 19, n. 10.

[3] L. Yayre, "Elymas--Nehelamite--Pethor," *JBL* LXXIX (December, 1960), 297-314.

an Aramaic *nomen agentis* meaning the interpreter." His reasons include the following considerations: (1) the geographical distance demanded by a location of Pethor on the upper Euphrates of some 400 miles is too far for the repeated trips demanded by the story; (2) the ancient versions understood the term as a title rather than a city name;[1] (3) the Jerusalem Targum agrees with the ancient versions;[2] and (4) the title, "the interpreter" fits the character of Balaam.

There are elements in this thesis that are attractive, but there seem to be problems that outweigh them. Yaure seems to be alone among moderns to argue that "Pethor" is not a location. Indeed, Noth regards this word as "the only factual information" concerning the origin of Balaam that we have.[3] More important, however, than the charge of being "alone," is the observation that in presenting his thesis, Yaure has had to dismiss the testimony of Deuteronomy 23:5 [Eng. v. 4].[4] Moreover, he in fact dismisses what he

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[1] He cites the Vulgate and the Peshitta, mentioned above in the present paper, p. 154. Yaure explains the LXX word *phathoura* to be a phonetic transliteration of the Aramaic *pathorah*, which he takes to be an epithet; *ibid.*, p. 311.

[2] "He sent messengers to Laban the Aramean who is Balaam; . . . his place of residence is in Padan which is Pethor, so called after his name pathor *helmaiia*." Here Yaure says the term "Pethor" is explained as an epithet, *ibid.*, p. 312.

[3] Noth, *Numbers*, p. 173.

[4] He speaks of the Deuteronomist as specifically stating, and sanctioning, what Yaure regards to be an error. Yaure, "Elymas--Nehe-lamite—Patheor." p. 310.

has taken to be the intended meaning of Numbers 23:5:

> So far as our traditional text is concerned, it is evident that its writer--be he the original author or, more probably, a later reviser— understood the "pethorah" as a Hebrew locative indicating that Balaam wars a resident of the city called Pethor.[1]

Hence, Yaure rejects internal biblical evidence both from the primary passage (Num. 22:7) and from latter references (e.g. Deut, 23:5 [Eng. v. 4]). His emending the Hebrew text on the basis of the versions is precarious procedure on methodological grounds. It would be a better approach to regard the versional evidence as suspect due to the translators' difficulty with the place name Pethor which they did not recognize.

Summary

In the light of present evidence we may summarize that Balaam was from Northern Syria, from a city called Pethor (Pitru), and an area called Amau. He is thus from the upper Euphrates valley. He is not Israelite, Edomite, Moabite, Ammonite, Musrite, Hittite; but Aramaean.

The Character and Role of Balaam

Introduction

The issue of the character of Balaam is replete with problems and the views are multifarious. How are we to understand this figure whom

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[1] *Ibid*.

one writer has termed "a monstrosity of prophecy"?[1] The question concerning

the character and role of Balaam is not a new question, but has been a matter

of debate for centuries. Hengstenberg surveys the issue by listing a number

of writers in opposing camps. He lists as supporters of the position that

Balaam is to be regarded as a false prophet the following: Philo, Ambrose,

Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret, and many Roman and Reformed theo-

logians. Conversely, he lists those figures who have regarded Balaam as a

true prophet to include: Tertullian, Jerome, Buddeus, Deyling, and Benzel.[2]

The difficulty in assessing the role of Balaam in our narrative

is of such massive proportion, that Bishop Butler regarded Balaam with aston-

ishcd incredulity. He writes:

> So that the object we have now before us is the most astonishing
> in the world: a very wicked man, under a deep sense of God and
> religion, persisting still in his wickedness, and preferring the wages
> of unrighteousness, even when he had before him a lively view of
> death, . . . Good God, what inconsistency, what perplexity is here.[3]

A more modern expression of the difficulty was uttered by Vriezen. Vriezen

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[1] A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophet* , ed. J. A Paterson
(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 10; cited by William Deller Jaggers,
"The Nature of the Balaam Oracles" (unpublished master's thesis, Southern
Baptist Theological Seminary, 1955), p. 35.

[2] Hengstenberg, *The History of Balaam,* pp. 340-41.

[3] Joseph Butler, "Upon the Character of Balaam," *The Works of
the Right Reverend Father in God, Joseph Butler, D. C. L. , Late Lord Bishop
of Durham*, (2 vols.; Oxford: At the University Press, 1850), II, 80.

regards Balaam as a "singular personality, " but who finds it "difficult to give any real shape to his person."[1]

Balaam has been called a prophet of Baal,[2] a clairvoyant,[3] a man of "deep insight into the mysteries of life,"[4] an ecstatic,[5] and even an early example of a "dervish."[6] Our problem becomes more complex when

[1] Th. C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, trans. by Hubert Hoskins (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 208-209.

[2] A suggestion made by Vriezen, *ibid*., p. 208, n. 20.

[3] Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. by J. A. Baker, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, *et al*. (2 vols,; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), I, 296. This was also the opinion of von Orelli: "Balaam is rather an example of a clairvoyant. . . . Here by outward incitements the physico-mental torpor is induced, which makes a man the channel of words, whose meaning he himself does not know." C. von Orelli, *Old Testament Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Chu k, 1892), p. 17.

[4] Alexander R. Gordon, *The Prophets of the Old Testament* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1916), p. 16.

[5] "Der erste im AT geschilderte ekstatische Prophet ist Bileam." A F. Puuko, "Ekstatischc Propheten mit besonderer Reruksichtigung der finnish-ugrischen Parallelen," *ZAW*, LX.III (1935), 23. For an evaluation of ecstasy in the prophets of Israel, see Leon J. Wood, "Ecstasy and Israel's Early Prophets," *BETS*, IX (Summer, 1966), 125-38; Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 53-67.

[6] This is a suggestion made by Samuel Ives Curtis in describing the cataleptic state into which Abdul Huda, an advisor of the Sultan of Turkey, used to fall. "Survivals of Ancient Semitic Religion in Syrian Centres of Moslem and Christian Influence, " *Expos*., 6th series, XI (1905), 424.

Examples of divergent theories could be multiplied further, but the point remains: the character and the role of Balaam are subjects of intense debate.

one attempts to explain Balaam's relationship, or lack thereof, with Yahweh.

There have been those, in the tradition of Tertullian and Jerome, insisted that Balaam was indeed a prophet of God. Alexander Whyte may be taken as a representative of this position. He writes:

> In the first place, then, that True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world kindled up in Balaam to an extraordinary brilliance and beauty, Balaam stands out in the selectest rank of those patriarchs and princes, those prophets and priests, who were raised up outside of the house of Israel in order that men might nowhere be left to live without a divine witness. To keep to the Old Testament--Melchizedek, and Jethro, and Balaam, and Job were all such divine witnesses to the profane lands in which they lived. Balaam, then, in his place, and to begin with, was a true and greatly gifted prophet of Almighty God. Just listen to some passages out of Balaam's prayers and prophecies and exhortations, and judge for yourselves whether he was a man of divine gifts or no.[1]

After citing many verses from the oracles of Balaam, Whyte asks, "Could Moses, could Isaiah, could Paul himself have answered Balak better? No. The Great Prophet Himself never answered Balak better than that."[2]

Another who regarded Balaam in a rather charitable light was Samuel Cox. He wrote, "The Bible denies him no honour; it lavishes on him all the signs and credentials of the true prophet, down even to contumely and rejection, while yet it brands him as false to his prophetic vocation."[3]

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[1] Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters: Adam to Achan* (10th ed.; London and Edinburgh: Oliphants, Ltd., [n. d.] , pp. 264-65.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 266.

[3] Samuel Cox, *Balaam: An Exposition and a Study* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co. 1884), p. 38.

The same writer avers:

> With this conception of Balaam in our minds, this hypothetical solution of our problem--thinking of him as at once a great prophet and a false prophet; great in gifts but false in the use he made of them--we can at least read his history in a just and generous spirit. We need deny him no gift, nor grudge him any good act or word. It is his very greatness which makes him so little, his very goodness which makes him so bad.[1]

Cox, then, takes something of a mediating position between those who would regard Balaam as a false prophet and those who would regard him as a true prophet. For Cox, Balaam is a true prophet who was false to his gift.

We have already seen at some length[2] that the traditional Jewish viewpoint expressed in the Talmud was to regard Balaam quite negatively. The constantly recurring refrain was "Balaam, the wicked."

An approach that could only be made in the critical age is to regard Balaam as a pagan mantic whom the narrator has transformed into a prophet of Yahweh. This seems to be the viewpoint of Yehezkel Kaufmann in his reconstruction of the History of Israel:

> In the Balaam story (Num. 22-24) the pagan magician and Israelite prophet are combined. Balaam the magician is a potent dispenser of blessings and curses; this is the belief of Balak and his officers, and is accepted by the Bible as part of its belief in the reality of non-divine magical forces. Despite his uncanny power as magician, however, Balaam cannot curse "one whom God has not cursed." But he is also a prophet, in Israelite style, and as such he speaks only the word of God.

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[1] *Ibid*., 39-40..
[2] See above, pp. 43-51.

The tendency of the Bible is to transform the blessings of inspired men (corresponding to the magicians' spells) into prophecies, and cultic blessing (corresponding to priestly incantations) into commands of God. Thus Balaam's blessing is formally a prophetic vision.[1]

Along the same lines, but expressed a bit more pointedly, is the estimation of Moriarty. He is of the opinion that the historical Balaam "probably had never heard of Yahweh," but was transformed by the writer "into a devout worshiper of the Lord."[2] Hence, for Moriarty the important issue is not the historical figure, or the historical events; rather that which is important for us today is what the writer wished to teach. His conclusion is that the transformation of the pagan Balaam into the devout prophet, "is the writer's way of telling us that even the decisions of a pagan diviner are under the control of Yahweh."[3]

A rather whimsical approach to the complex problem of the character of Balaam was taken by James Black in his book, *Rogues of the Bible*.[4] His intent in this book was to re-evaluate the characters of the

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[1] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile,* trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 84-85.

[2] Frederick L. Moriarty, *The Book of Numbers. Part 2. With a Commentary*, "Pamphlet Bible Series" (New York: Paulist Press [Paulist Fathers], 1960), p. 6. For an evaluation of the relationship between theological validation and verification in history, see now John Goldingay, "'That You May Know That Yahweh Is God,'" *TB*, LXXII (1972), 80-81.

[3] Moriarty, *Numbers, Part 2*, p. 6.

[4] James Black, "A Discharge for Balaam," *Rogues of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1930), pp. 59-79.

have been, in his words, "immemorially criticised or condemned."[1]

His desire was to present them in a more favorable light. His solution concerning the difficulties relating to the character of Balaam was to posit two rather than one.

> Now it is quite evident from the facts that the Bible tells us of two quite distinct people--one, a noted righteous prophet, a native of distant Mesopotamia, who knew and served the Lord Jehovah with particular fidelity, and worshipped him sincerely, who indeed would do nothing that in any way conflicted with God's will, and who at the close of the great incident of the Blessing of Israel returned openly and definitely to his own home and "his own people"; and second, a soothsayer or oracle-monger of the Midianites who hated Israel and tempted it to folly, who worshipped the brutal and immoral God *Chemosh* and was slaughtered by the army of Moses when they punished Moab and Midian for perverting the morals of Israel.[2]

Hence, the "good" Balaam has been wrongly maligned for millennia. "It is our duty, therefore, as Christian people, " he writes, "to rehabilitate the true Balaam and grant him a discharge from the world's calumnies."[3] Far from being an enemy of God, the Balaam of Pethor should be regarded as one of the heroes of the faith: How then does Black explain the universal view that there was one Balaam, an evil man? He blames this on Jewish prejudice.

> Later Jews, who in the passionate exclusiveness considered Jehovah their own private preserve, did not relish the idea that their Scriptures painted such a hero as springing from a people whom they counted "unenlightened pagans." They were only too glad therefore to identify him with the low conjurer who pandered to the obscenities

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[1] *Ibid*., p. ix.   [2] *Ibid*., p. 67   [3] *Ibid*., p. 68.

of the god of the Moabites. Surely it is our duty, in the light of the Bible itself, to rescue this man from an undeserved shame and contempt. Even his great scene of renunciation has been sadly coloured by our prejudice against his namesake. He has been the most misunderstood and most slandered man in history--so much so that the "Sin of Balaam" is denounced in the Revelation as the last iniquity. It is the last iniquity--but *it is not the iniquity of Balaam of Pethor!* [Emphasis in original.][1]

The same author concludes one of the most novel approaches to the problem of the character of Balaam by an accolade:

Our Balaam is a great white soul who loved the will of God to his own worldly loss. He returned to his own people with his hands empty and his heart full. Whatever he lost, he kept his Lord.

Rest well in Abraham's land, thou man of Abraham's faith![2]

Perhaps the only justification for referring to this aberrant approach in the present paper is that it suggests the necessity to deal with the problem of the personality, character and role of Balaam. We may now turn to more normative approaches, approaches which are based on an induction of all the data relative to the character of Balaam, and which attempt to deal with the text as it stands.

An Approach of Mediation: Hengstenberg

Hengstenberg faced the problem of the character of Balaam and his role in prophetism by taking a view between the two extremes the extremes of false and true prophet. He writes, "so kann nur eine unter

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

berden Extremen vermittelnde Unsicht die richtige senn."[1] He says that there are to be found in the person of Balaam elements of the knowledge of God, but these elements are never to the point of actual conversion. There were clear flashes of light by the Spirit of God, but "mann ihn den Propheten nich beizahlen darf."[2]

A similar viewpoint seems to have been taken by Unger in his book, *Biblical Demonology*. Unger, too, regards Balaam as a man with limited knowledge of Yahweh. He was a pagan magician who had some knowledge of the Lord and was under the overpowering influence of Yahweh for a time; but he served Yahweh with the motivation of greed.

> Balaam's case is indeed a strange anomaly. He knew the Lord, Jehovah of the Israelites, but his knowledge was dimmed and distorted by heathenistic corruptions, and vitiated by covetousness. Such a combination of paganistic magic and personal greed with the service of Jehovah could not be permanent or static. It was compatible only with a transitional state in his experience of the divine dealing.[3]

Unger concludes that for a time Balaam was used by God to the point that he became a genuine prophet of Yahweh, but then he "rejected his chance and chose base gain."[4]

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[1] Hengstenberg, *Die Geschichte Bileams*, p. 11.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest* (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1952), p. 125.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 126. Compare the extensive treatment of Winstead: "We conclude, therefore, that Salaam was a soothsayer, and as such Balak

A question that is debated at length in the literature concerns the issue, was Balaam a genuine prophet or a false prophet? Perhaps the question is poorly worded and wrongly directed. If one means by the question, was Balaam used by Yahweh as a messenger of His word? --the answer would have to be "yes." But if the question is phrased to ask, was Balaam a genuine Yahwist? --the answer would have to be "no." We are best advised to take a mediating course between the extremes of the "true prophet view" and the "false prophet view." Balaam was a pagan diviner; it is also true that he was used of Yahweh to mediate His word.

Of the large number of studies of Balaam that have been published to date, two stand out as definitive treatments concerning the role and character of Balaam. It is to these two studies that we now turn.

An Interpretation of His Character: Butler

The first of the two definitive treatments of the person of Balaam that is before us is the famous sermon by Joseph Butler (1692-1762),

sent for him to come and curse Israel. He was temporarily used by Jehovah which made his contact with the kingdom of God momentary. He did not become a prophet An the truest sense of the term. . . . The true prophet is found in Moses and not in Balaam. He is an illustration off not only how far a little good in a man may go but the extent to which a little bad may develop." Guy F. Winstead, "The False Prophets of the Old Testament" (unpublished doctor's dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1931) pp. 32-33. The comparison that Winstead makes with Moses in this remark is to the point, and will he developed in the present paper.

Lord Bishop of Durham, entitled, "Upon the Character of Balaam."[1] Butler's text is Numbers 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." He suggests that these words lead us immediately to thoughts of the different ends of good and bad men in a general sense. But he hastens to add that it is his purpose to consider these words with "a particular reference or respect to him who spoke them," and he notes that they may afford some "reflection of use and service to ourselves."[2]

Butler summarizes the occasion of Balaam having been hired by Balak and then compares his craft to that of certain Roman cultic functionaries, except that "there was somewhat more particular in the case now before us; Balaam being looked upon as an extraordinary person, whose blessing or curse was thought to be always effectual,"[3] Butler quotes the first oracle (Num. 23: 7-10), and then turns to the word "righteousness" found in verse 10. He states that Balaam must have known well what is meant by righteousness as may be seen in Micah 6:5-8, the entirety of which we are to regard, he suggests, as a quotation of a confrontation between Balaam and Balak that is not given

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[1] *Works of Joseph Butler*, II, 74-86. Reference has been made to this sermon by many writers in the nineteenth century. Recently it has been cited by W. H. Gispen in his article, "Balaam, " *The Encyclopedia of Christianity,* I, 515 (1964). See above, p. 164, for full data of publication.

[2] Butler, *Works*, II, 74-75.

[3] *Ibid*., II, 75. The concept of the effective curse will be discussed below.

in the Numbers account.

> From the mention of Shittim it is manifest, that it is this very story
> which is here referred to, though another part of it, the account of
> which is not now extant; as there are many quotations in scripture
> out of books which are not come down to us. *Remember what Balaam*
> *answered, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord; i. e. the*
> *righteousness which God will accept. Balak demands, Wherewith*
> *shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God"?*
> *Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year*
> *old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with*
> *ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my*
> *transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Balaam*
> *answers him, He hath shewed thee, 0 man, what is good: and what*
> *doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and*
> *to walk humbly with thy God?* [His emphasis, for quotation.][1]

Butler suggests that this putative conversation between Balaam

and Balak shows a contrast between a good man as distinct from a dishonest

and superstitious man. "From hence appears what he meant by the righteous

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[1] *Ibid*., II, 76-77, However,, Butler's premise relative to Micah
6:5-8 is an exegetical flaw. Verses 6-8 are not to be taken as part of the
conversation between Balaam and Balak. Balaam and Balak are mentioned in
verse 5 as part of a series of historical examples in Yahweh's *rib*, with Israel.
Verses 6-7 may be regarded as a rhetorical device whereby the prophet allows
the people of Israel to speak to the prophet. His own response is given in
verse 8. Compare, e. g., Carl Friedrich Keil, T*he Twelve Minor Prophets*
(C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch series), trans. by James Martin (2 vols.; reprint;
Grand Rapids: Wn B, Eerdmans Publishing Company, [n. d.]), I, 492-97;
A. Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets: Hebrew Text and English Translation, With*
Introductions and Commentary, "Soncino Books of the Bible," ed. A Cohere
(London: The Soncino Press, 1948), 180-82; E. Leslie Carlson, "Micah,"
WBC, 859; Henry McKeating, *The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah*, "The
Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible," ed. P. R. Ackroyd,
A. R C. Leaney, J. W. Packer (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1971),
181-86.

whose *death* he desires to die" [emphasis in original].[1] Nevertheless, these excellent sentiments were not expressed in the life of the one who uttered them. The iniquity of his heart began to disclose itself when he did not demure from the later ambassadors of the king after being warned by God in Numbers 22:12. Balaam thus showed himself to be less than honest.

> A thorough [*sic*] honest man would without hesitation have repeated his former answer, that he could not be guilty of so infamous a prostitution of the sacred character with which he was invested, as in the name of a prophet to curse those whom he knew to be blessed.[2]

So Balaam goes with the ambassadors after God gives him the permission he desired. Then, by the use of sacrifices and enchantments he seeks to receive permission from God to curse the people. He does not receive this permission, but neither is he under supernatural restraint, "He is plainly presented to be under no other force or restraint, than the fear of God."[3] He knew that Israel was "a people of virtue and piety" (cf., Num. 23:21), yet he still wished to curse them. "So that the state of Balaam's mind was this: he wanted to do what he knew to be very wicked, and contrary to the express command of God."[4]

Butler continues his classic development of the theme by suggesting that since Balaam was unable to curse Israel he then attempted to find another way "to reconcile this wickedness with his duty. How great a paradox

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[1] Butler, *Works*, II, 77.
[3] *Ibid*., II, 78.
[2] *Ibid*., II, 77-78.
[4] *Ibid*., II, 78-79.

soever this may appear, as it is indeed a contradiction in terms, it is the
very account which the scripture gives us of him."[1] Hence, Balaam becomes
the contriver of the crime of Israel as recorded in Deuteronomy 4, Numbers
25 and Revelation 2.

> This was the man, this Balaam, I say, was the man who desired
> to *die the death of the righteous*, and that his *last end might be like
> his:* and this was the state of his mind when he pronounced those
> words.
>
> So that the object we have now before us is the most astonishing
> in the world; a very wicked man, under a deep sense of God and
> religion, persisting still in his wickedness, and preferring the wages
> of unrighteousness, even when he had before him a lively view of
> death, . . . Good God, what inconsistency, what perplexity is here!
> [His emphasis, for quotation.][2]

He absolutely denied to curse Israel, yet he chose to do the
worse. "What fatality is here:"[3] Yet this very strange behaviour is not
altogether uncommon. "Nay, with some alterations, and put a little lower,
it is applicable to a very considerable part of the world."[4] Butler observes,
"there is no account to be given in the way of reason, of men's so strong
attachments to the present world: our hopes and fears and pursuits are in
degrees beyond all proportion to the known value of the things they respect,"[5]

Though less than concise, perhaps the clearest summary of
Butler's position regarding the character of Balaam may be seen in the follow-
ing words:

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[1] *Ibid*., II, 79.   [2] *Ibid*., II, 80.   [3] *Ibid*., II, 81.
[4] *Ibid*.   [5] *Ibid*.

Balaam had before his eyes the authority of God, absolutely forbidding him what he, for the sake of a reward, had the strongest inclination to: he was likewise in a state of mind sober enough to consider death and his lest end: by these considerations he was restrained, first from going to the king of Moab; and after he did go, from cursing Israel. But notwithstanding this there was great wickedness in his heart. He could not forego the rewards of unrighteousness: he therefore first seeks for indulgences; and when these could not be obtained, he sins against the whole meaning, end, and design of the prohibition, which no consideration in the world could prevail with trim to go against the letter of. And surely that impious counsel he gave to Balak against the children of Israel, was, considered in itself, a greater piece of wickedness, than if he had cursed them in words.[1]

In response to the question as to how such a decision could be made by one who had expressed the hope of dying the death of the righteous Butler concludes: "Consciousness of the wickedness of his heart must necessarily have destroyed all settled hopes of dying the death of the righteous."[2] He adds that those slight concessions to duty might have kept him from perfect despair. Balaam, as may be seen from the passage in Micah 6, he avers, "had the most just and true notions of God and religion,"[3] yet he continually practices self-deception.

It is on this note that Butler concludes his sermon:

How much soever men differ in the course of life they prefer and in their ways of paliating and excusing their vices to themselves; yet all agree in the one thing, desiring to *die the death of the* righteous, This is surely remarkable.[4]

If we discard the exegetical flaw relative to the interpretation 4 he gave to Micah 6, we find in Butler's sermon a rather balanced approach

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[1] *Ibid.*, II, 82.   [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*   [4] *Ibid.*, II, 85.

to the problem of the character of Balaam. Balaam was a man who knew some-
thing of the religion of Israel and of the nature of the God of Israel. But there
was a fundamental flaw in his character, the wickedness of his heart that
destrpued him. He was hence a pagan diviner who was used of God, but who
not rightly related to Yahweh.

An Understanding of His Role: Daiches

If Balaam is not to be regarded as a prophet of Yahweh in the
strict sense, the question still remains, "what was his role?" Our answer
seems to lie in the direction pointed out by Samuel Daiches in 1909.[1] Rather
than point to parallels in the Arabic *higa'* imprecation poetry as is done by
others,[2] Daiches pointed to parallels in the Mesopotamian cultic prophets.
Since we have already established that the homeland of Balaam is in North
Syria, it is more fitting to look for cultural ties in Mesopotamia than in (late)
Arabian society.

It is the position of Daiches that "there exists evidence which
goes to prove that Balaam was a sorcerer pure and simple."[3] It is upon com-
parison with Babylonian religious-magical texts that Daiches suggests that
there are more magical elements in the narrative of Numbers 22-24 than are
generally recognized. In addition to the overt references to magical arts in

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[1] Samuel Daiches, "Balaam--a Babylonian *baru*: The Episode
of Num 22, 2--24, 24 and Some Babylonian Parallels," *Assyrisches und
Archaeologisches Studien: H. V. Hilprecht gewidmet* (Leipzig, 1909), pp.
50-80.

[2] Compare above, pp. 64, 117.   [3] Daiches, "Balaam, " p. 60.

the text,[1] he points to a number of hitherto unrecognized signs of the mantic arts. Some of those parallels are to be found in the Babylonian texts describing the mantic acts of the *baru*, the diviner of Mesopotamia.[2]

Daiches suggests that the reference in Numbers 22:41 to preparatory sacrifice in the morning finds its parallel in the *baru* ceremony. Examples he cites read: "Thy servant, so and so, may in the early morning bring a sacrifice," and "At the dawn of the morning before sunrise, shall the diviner wash himself in the purification vessel."[3] Further, the notice in Numbers 23:1-2 to the offering of seven bulls and seven rams on seven altars has parallels in Babylonian ritual. In addition to altars and sacrifices in threes and eights, Daiches cites the prescription for seven lambs sacrificed on seven altars.[4]

Moreover, the supposed gloss in Numbers 23:2, "and Balak and Balaam offered," is stated to be in full conformity with the Babylonian ritual Daiches writes, "the sacrifices are brought by both the diviner and the person for whom he divines" [his emphasis].[5] Hence, he regards

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[1] Daiches points to Numbers 22:7, "the fees for divination," and 24:1, "and he did not go as at other times to seek Omens. " Ibid., p. 60. There is also the testimony of Joshua 13:22 in which Balaam is termed "The soothsayer," "diviner" [הַקּוֹסֵם].

[2] For a study of the word *baru*, consult CAD, II "B," 121-25; AH, I, 109-110. The dictionaries spell the word *baru*; Daiches, *baru*.

[3] Daiches, "Balaam, " p. 61.

[4] See *CAD*, II "B, " 122: "I convoked the diviners and gave them instructions, I designated one lamb for each: (lit.: seven opposite seven)."

[5] Daiches, "Balaam," p. 62. References are given to literature.

23:21) as quite in order, in that both Balaam and Balak sacrificed.

Further, he argues that it was important that Balak as *bel niqe*, "the owner of the sacrifice, " remain by the burnt offering (Num. 23:3a) to pray while the diviner did his work.[1] The emphasis on the place of sacrifice is fitting as well. The place was called *a-sar purusse baruti*, "the place of the decision, " [*a-sar d*] *i-nim*, "the place of judgment," and *a-sar bi-ra u pur-ussa,* "the place of divination and decision," in the Babylonian texts.[2]

Daiches finds a reference to a magical act of Balaam in Numbers 23:3 in the words "and I will go." He cites a passage where the king of Kutha was in great distress and hence called upon the diviners, prepared sacrifices, erected altars, and asked the gods by means of the diviners what he should do. All of this is quite in keeping with what we read in the Balaam narrative. The section from the Babylonian text continues, "The gods did not give any judgment to my going." The words "my going" (*ana alakiya*) seem to be parallel to my going" (*ana barutiya*), and both refer to "some magical performance."[3]

Another reference to magical acts in Numbers 23:3 is the use of the word יִקָּרֶה. The implication is that God was not expected to appear to him in a vision as to a regular prophet, but as the result of manipulation, or of

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[1] It may be observed, however, that the text does not demand that Balak was praying.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 63.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 63-64. The normalizations are his.

magic. In the Babylonian divination acts the magic used was that of liver-
omina of oil-omina.[1] If favorable, the gods would appear to the *baru*. An
Akkadian parallel used by Daiches is translated, "Then, i, e., if the omina
favourable, Samas and Adad, the great gods, the Lords of the oracle,
the Lords of the decision, will come to him, give a decision for him, answer
him with a firm promise." Daiches says that the Akkadian word *izzazusumma*
("will come to him") may be compared with Hebrew יקרה...לקראתי. Also
the expression in Numbers 23:3, "And whatever he will show me, I will
tell thee," is taken by Daiches as "a clear divination expression." The
word *baru* means the "seer" and *barutu* means "the seeing" of the omina.[2]

Daiches rejects the emendations of the word שְׁפִי in Numbers
23:3 proffered by many commentaries. He suggests the intent of the last
element in verse 3 to be that Balaam performed his divination ceremonies,
looked at his omina, and then awaited the decision of God. He further
suggests that the elliptical statement שְׁפִי may signify the magical work
in a vague way, "in order not to describe in the Bible in detail actual sor-
cery."[3]

As to the meaning of the very difficult word שְׁפִי, usually

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[1] *CAD*, II "B," 121-25, lists the following types of mantic
arts: (1) *extispicy*, divination by the inspection of entrails [the larger
number of entries in the article]; (2) *lecanomancy*, divination by the in-
spection of water (and oil) in a basin; and (3) *libanomancy*, divination by
the inspection of the movement of smoke.

[2] Daiches, "Balaam, " pp. 64-65.   [3] *Ibid*., p. 65.

translated "bare height, " Daiches makes two suggestions on the basis of an Akkadian passage:

> (If the omina are not clear [on the basis of earlier lines], then) the diviner shall wash himself in the purification vessel, in the place of judgment, quietly [*saqumme*], after the step has ceased [*ki sepu parsat*], shall put the (divination) cup and perform the lifting of his hands.

> The word שְׁפִי Daiches suggests, may be related to *saqumme*

in the Babylonian text, and refer to "quietly." Another semantic relationship may be to connect the Hebrew word to *ki sepu parsat*, making שְׁפִי identical to *sepu* and would mean "by pace, step by step." Concerning the latter, Daiches disclaims rashness: "I should, however, like to point out that I put forward this identification with all possible reserve." In either case, there is a reference to magical acts.[1]

Turning to Numbers 23:15, Daiches suggests that the verse should be translated, "Stand *thus* beside your burnt offering. " It is his impression that the Hebrew word כה refers to the manner of standing when

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[1] Ibid , pp. 65-66, 66, n. 4. He writes, "This explanation of שְׁפִי as meaning either "quietly" or with hindered step" (especially the second explanation) would be greatly supported by a Talmudic tradition that Balaam was lame on one leg. Sota 10[a] and Sanhedrin 105[a] we find the following saying of R. Johanan. . . 'Balaam was lame on one leg, because it is written וילך שְׁפִי.' These two words could prove Balaam's lameness only if שְׁפִי means 'slowly, quietly' or, still better, 'with hindered step'. Only then could R. Johanan arrive at the conclusion that Balaam was lame. " Daiches is cautious in pressing this interpretation; he suggests that it is sufficient to suggest the magical associations of "the quiet or hindered step of the diviner." *Ibid*., pp. 66-67. The evidence from the Talmud is cited in the present paper on pp. 43-51. For a recent study in which the older meaning "bare height" is defended, see Karl Elligen, "Der Sinn des hebraischen Wortes שְׁפִי," *ZAW* LXXXIII (1971), 317-29.

anticipating a "decision." Moreover, in both oracles in chapter 23 there is first a reference to or an address to Balak. For Daiches, this is not accidental; rather it is necessary in the *baru* mantic forms. "The *baru*," he writes, "while giving his answer, has to address the person for whom he divines."[1]

The attempt at a third oracle (Num. 23:25-24:9) may have been necessitated because of the role of the number three in the magic of the Mesopotamian culture. Daiches cites Akkadian texts in which incantations had to be recited three times, three altars had to be built, three censors had to be placed before the gods, three lambs had to be sacrificed, and the like. Hence, Balak would not give up until he tried for a third time. However, in the third instance,

> suddenly Balaam gives up his divination. He does not even want to try a third time, perhaps in order not to lose his reputation as a *baru*, as he might have done if he had failed for a third time. Num. 24, 1 tells us clearly that Balaam discarded the magical divination.[2]

Daiches also points to certain designations of Balaam and shows them to correspond to designations used of the *baru*. In Numbers 24:4, 16, Balaam describes himself as "he who hears the words of God" and "who knows the knowledge of the Most High." He then points to the words

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[1] *Ibid*., with references to literature.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 68. Note also that in the third oracle, Balaam does not address Balak as he had done formerly. Daiches' suggestion as to the *reason* for Balaam's action in Numbers 24:1 is only conjecture.

for the Babylonian *baru* which are almost identical: ^{awil} *ummanu mu-du-u na sii piristi ilani rabuti*, "The wise man, the knower, who keeps the mystery of the gods."[1]

Further, the mention of Balaam's father's name (Num. 24:3, 15) be explained as referring to his position as a *baru*. "The *barutu* was hereditary and went from the father to the son. The mentioning of his father's name should show that he was a proper *baru*, descending from a family of diviners."[2] Again, it is of more than passing interest to observe that in the Babylonian texts the *baru* is consulted by the king with frequency.[3] We may conclude this survey of Daiches' work by citing his last paragraph:

> Through the foregoing remarks, I venture to think, the whole Balaam episode becomes clearer. The verses dealing with the preparations for Balaam's 'visions' refer, as shown, to magical ceremonies and performances as prescribed by the Babylonian ritual for the *baru*. It is probable that Balaam's magical work was intentionally referred to in the Bible in a veiled way, and it is through the Babylonian parallels quoted above that the full meaning of the passages in question could be elucidated. . . . And the question as to the character of Balaam can now, I think, be answered with fair certainty. The Babylonian evidence adduced in these pages no doubt goes to show that Balaam was a Babylonian *baru*.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70. Further, he adds in a footnote that the question of the identity of the home of Balaam, Pethor, should be answered as well. "It was no doubt situated in Mesopotamia. It is naturally from the land of magic that the great magician was fetched, " p. 70, n. 1. With this remark, compare the extensive discussion above, pp. 154-56.

A Synthesis: Balaam the Diviner

We may now turn to a synthesis of the character and role of Balaam, that "monstrosity of prophecy." As has been observed in the preceding discussion, the question, "Is Balaam a true prophet of Yahweh?" may not be the best statement of the issue. The question should rather be stated, "In what role does Balaam function?" He is neither a "true prophet" nor a "false prophet," in the usual meaning of those terms. He is rather altogether *outside* the history of prophecy in Israel. He is a pagan diviner, perhaps of the class *baru*. He is to be sure, a pagan diviner used by Yahweh for the communication of His word. But this observation says more about the unsearchable ways of Yahweh than it does concerning the character of Balaam.

The speculation concerning the nature of the role of Balaam may well continue, but it would seem that the article by Daiches points in the correct direction. One may cite the estimation of the article given by Alhright:

> Most of Daiches' comparisons between the qualities and acts attributed Balaam and those characteristic of a Mesopotamian *baru* are still valid; together they are most impressive. There is ample evidence at Mari (Accadian and Hurrian) and Khatti (Bogazkoy) for the extraordinary popularity of Mesopotamian divination and magic in Syria and Asia Minor during the second millennium.[1]

[1] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 231. Westermann states that our Passage is "the only rather extensive section in the Old Testament in which a detailed account of soothsaying appears." Claus Westermann, *Handbook to the Old Testament,* trans. by Robert H. Boyd (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), p. 75.

One may also point to a more recent volume in which the work of Daiches is sustained. In his massive *Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. K. Harrison writes:

> An interesting seal bearing the legend "Manum, the *baru*, the servant of Ea" was recovered from a thirteenth-century B. C. stratum at Beth-shan, and was assigned to the early second millennium B. C., indicating the long tradition of Mesopotamian divinatory influence in in Canaan. It would thus appear, as Daiches pointed out long ago, that Balaam was a typical Mesopotamian diviner (cf. Josh. 13:22), hired it, accordance with the customs of the day for a specific purpose. He was not primarily a prophet, even though, when subject to the will of God, he behaved in a manner very similar to that of the later Hebrew prophets.[1]

A recent attempt to refine Daiches' study was undertaken by Rene Largement.[2] This study is flawed by negative presuppositions concerning the integrity of the text, coupled with a predisposition given

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[1] Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 630. In another work the same writer refers to some of the data cited by Daiches in explaining the parallel between Balaam and the Mesopotamian *baru*. Cf. Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Old Testament Times* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 147-48. Albright also made reference to the seal of Manum; cf. Albright, "Oracles, " p. 231, n. 141. Compare as well, *WB*, I, 226: "Of the magicians and seers found in Mesopotamia, the best known were the priests called in Akkadian *baru* (seers), who fulfilled functions similar to those of Balaam. They pronounced the will of the god to his worshippers and they were also called upon to invoke blessings and curses by means of charms and incantations. Therefore, we need not be surprised at the king of Moab's sending for such a man as far as a twenty day's journey (the distance from Moab to the Euphrates). Cf. Harry M. Orlinsky, *Understanding the Bible Through Archaeology* (Reprint; Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1972), p. 260.

[2] "Les oracles de Bile^cam et la mantique sumero-accadienne," noted above p. 142, n. 2.

to read mythological elements into the narrative. Nevertheless, it is replete with citations from the mantic arts of Mesopotamia. Largement attempts to recast the present form of the oracles into their supposed original mantic formulae. To the present writer, this experiment in tracing the tradition back to Akkadian stages is less than convincing. Largement, however, does develop the concept of Mesopotamian mantic parallels to Balaam.

He refers to the numerous examples of the *baru* at Mari. He cites a text saying that "a *patum* [territorial division] without *baru* does not exist,"[1] The *baru* preceded the armies on campaigns. One Mari text reads: "At the head of my lord's men marches *Ilusunasir*, the diviner, servant of my lord, and with the men of Babylon walks a diviner of Babylon."[2] Moreover, they traveled voluntarily on the backs of donkeys according to at: least one text.[3]

An important parallel to the Balaam account among the *baru* literature is cited by Largement. He writes:

> The Babylonian *baru* must foresee the future, but what is more, he must obtain the victory by provoking the aid of the god for the arms of his country, and by drawing him away from the enemies. He is not only a *baru*, but also an incantator [*un incantateur*] (*asipu*).

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 44, where literature is cited.

[2] *Ibid*. The term used for "diviner" is the Akkadian *baru*. For the complete text, cf. *ANET*, p. 482.

[3] *Ibid*. There is also a feminine form, *baritu*, "female diviner," as listed in *CAD*, II "B", 112.

The usage of imprecation against the enemies of the country at the moment of departure on campaigns is attested by a tablet entitled, "Oracle of the campaign against an enemy country to strike, to crush and to pulverize, for the decision to go and to come."[1]

Largement then presents the oracle:

O Samas, lord of judgment, O Adad, lord of vision, such an one, master of this garment and of that garment, as King of Sumer and Akkad, governor of Babylon, let his heart incline this year to go into they country of his enemy, in such a country to strike his soldiers, his chiefs, who thinks thereon constantly--thy great divinity knows-- by the order of thy great divinity, in this year, . . . by the life of the god Marduk, let him cross the ravines, the precipices and the gorges of the mountain to strike, crush and pulverize the country. . . . Marduk will prepare his route, will ameliorize his way. Do it that such a one, the master of this garment and of that garment, go as far as the country of this enemy, let him pulverize, reassemble, carry off the booty of the great cities of all his country, the booty of his fields and of his small cities. . . .

Thus (let be) the illumination, the vision of Samas and Adad.[2]

Largement is of the opinion that the stories of Balaam do have many features which are similar to the Akkadian texts, but that there are also features that are dissimilar. He feels that there may be a number of explanations for the dissimilarities: (1) Balaam may have accomodated his acts to the given situation; (2) if Balaam was the one who brought the account to Israel,[3] doubtless he presented the state of affairs to his advantage; and

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[1] Largement, "Les oracles, " p. 44. The term *asipu* cited by Largement is discussed in *CAD*, I "A--Part II," 431-35. The term is defined as an "exorcist. " Though widely used, this term does not seem as apt a parallel for Balaam as does *baru*.

[2] Largernent, "Les oracles," p. 45.

[3] He states, "Bile^c am, qui semble etre l'agent de cette trans- mission." *Ibid*., p. 48. Theories of the origin of the Balaam narrative will be noted below.

(4) Israel, in receiving the account, marked it with its own distinct imprint.[1] Then the materials would have been reworked to include distinctively Israelite elements such as the patriarchal benedictions. Thus, although relating the narrative toMesopotamian parallels, Largement concludes by agreeing with the *vaticinia ex eventu* hypothesis of Mowinckel.[2]

Hence, Largement is in general agreement with Daiches concerning the Mesopotamian caste of the account in terms of the mantic acts of the *baru*. His view of the integrity of the text is manifestly weak, however, and this article may not be used by one to interpret the text as it stands; it is rather grist for the mill of the practitioners of the so-called *Uberlieferungsgeschichte.*

Balaam may be seen as a part of ancient Near Eastern divination, a movement of immense proportion. Orlinsky writes, divination "was a universal craft, recognized in all countries and cultures of the ancient world."[3] In another place the same writer has summarized:

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49. He does admit, "Certaines propositions exprimees clans cette etude ont, sans aucun doute, un caractere hypothetique," but he regards the comparative data as furnishing a working hypothesis for further study. *Ibid.*, p. 50. On Mowinckel's view, see above, pp. 68-95.

[3] Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah, " SVT, XIV (1967), p. 116, n. 1. A major study of divination in the ancient Near East was written by Alfred Guillaume. This is his *Prophecy and Divination Among the Hebrews and Other Semites*. "The Bampton Lectures," 1938 (New York and London: Harper and Brother, Publishers, 1938). However, Guillaume relates Balaam

Soothsayers, seers, miracle workers--that is, priests who divined by magic formula, who gave out oracular utterances, who professed expertness in transmitting the supernatural--were a definite social group in the ancient civilizations of the Near East. Ecstasy, frenzy, the examination of the liver and entrails of animals, the flight of birds, the interpretation of dreams, astrology, the casting of lots, divination by water--all these were the property and trademark of the priestly and related guilds from the Euphrates to the Nile. For the seers of antiquity were organized in guilds, which had set rules governing masters and apprentices, as surely as if they were stone-masons. These craftsmen in the supernatural worked both in groups and as individuals.[1]

The most wide-spread method of divination in Mesopotamia was that which related to the examination of the livers of animals. Moscati writes:

Divination was principally carried out by the examination of the liver

not to the *baru* of Mesopotamia, but the *kahin* [seer] of Arabia; cf. pp. 133-139 of his work. His viewpoint regarding Balaam is divergent from that being presented in the present study. He writes: "If it be the function of a prophet to rise above the ignorance and the self-seeking of the men of his day and to proclaim what he believes to be the word of the God who inspires him, Balaam. deserves high rank in the annals of prophecy. Despite all inducements, and all the traditions of his office, he held to his determination to speak the word which God should speak to him. In Balaam the transition from heathen *kahin* to the Hebrew prophet has already begun," p. 138. In his most recent work, Fohrer also relates Balaam to the Arabic *kahin.* Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, trans. by David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 224.

To the present writer, such associations are less than satisfactory, for they are based on the presupposition of the evolution of religion, and they ignore the exact cultural associations Balaam would have had in Mesopotamia.

[1] Harry M. Orlinsky, *Understanding the Bible,* p. 250. Gordon writes on the mobile guilds of soothsayers, comparing Near Eastern models (including Balaam) with the Homerich demioergoi. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 41.

of animals. The Babylonians and Assyrians attached a particular importance to this organ, and a whole branch of science was devoted to its study. Clay models have been found with the detailed indication of all the regions of the liver, and observations as to the meaning of each sector. If for example a king wanted information about the future, he called in the diviner-priest who sacrificed an animal, usually a sheep, and made answer to the king according to the indications he read in the liver.[1]

But prognostication was not limited to extispicy. There were prognostications drawn from almost everything. Moscati lists some examples connected with dogs.

If a dog stops in front of a man: an obstacle will check him.

If a dog stops at his side: the god's protection will be upon him

If a dog lies on his bed: the god's wrath will be against him

If a dog lies on his chair: his wife will follow him into disaster. . . .

If a white dog enters a temple: the foundations of the temple will be stable.

If a black dog enters a temple: the foundations of the temple will not be stable.

If a brown dog enters a temple: prosperity for that temple.

If a yellow dog enters a temple: prosperity for that temple.

If a parti-coloured dog enters a temple: favour of the gods for that temple.[2]

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[1] Sabatino Moscati, *Ancient Semitic Civilizations,* Capricorn Books (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 62, Compare also H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon: A Sketch of the Ancient Civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley*, A Mentor Book (New York: The New American Library, 1908), pp. 331-32; O. R Gurney, *The Hittites* (Rev. ed.; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 158-59.

[2] Sabatino Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient: A Panorama of Near Eastern Civilizations in Pre-Classical Times*, Anchor Books

Even ants were found to be of significance. "When found near a city gate, for instance, by their numbers and the direction of their movements they will indicate the fate of that city."[1] Thus there seems to been no phenomenon in life that was exempt from divination and the mantic arts. Divination was spread throughout the ancient Near East like virulent disease. This was the system of which Balaam was a part. In fact, Balaam in his day was known to have been the best of them all.

Now it is of the highest importance for the purpose of this study to understand that this system, in which Balaam was a part, was loathed by Yahweh. One of the strongest terms for aversion, abhorrence, or loathsomeness in the Old Testament is תּוֹעֵבָה. This is the term that is used to describe Yahweh's utter detesting of divination and all associated therewith. A central passage on this issue is Deuteronomy 18:9-15:

> (9) When you enter the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things [כתועבת] of those nations. (10) There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, (11) or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. (12) For whoever does these things is detestable [תועבת] to Yahweh; and because of these detestable things [התועבת], Yahweh your God will drive them out

(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. , 1962), pp. 73-74. He cites as his source for these data G. Contenau, *La divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens.*

[1] Mosceti, *Face of the Ancient Orient*, p. 74. A brief summary of divination in the ancient Near East is to beg found in Paul van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 167-70.

before you. (13) You shall be blameless before Yahweh your God. (14) For those nations which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you to do so. (15) Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.   [N. A. S. B.][1]

In this passage one is warned by the three-fold use of the word תועכה, how detestable Yahweh regards the mantic arts. There was to be an absolute ban on the paganisms relative to ancient Near Eastern divination, Kaufmann states, "one of the peculiar features of biblical religion is its ban on virtually all of the techniques employed by paganism for obtaining oracles. This ban applies not only to inquiries addressed to 'other gods'; it is an unconditional ban."[2]

The reason for the total and absolute ban on all forms of divination lies in its polytheistic basis. Davies insists, "I have no hesitation in saying that there has never been, and there is not at the present time any magic, any divination, which has not involved and grown out of the conviction that spirits more powerful and more knowing than man, exist and can be

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[1] Compare, Lester J. Kuyper, "Studia Biblica. XIX. The Book of Deuteronomy," *Int*., VI (1952), 335-36,

[2] Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 87; cf. p. 89. Kaufmann is so insistent on this issue, however, that he regards the redaction of the Balaam story as free from any concept of pagan forces: "indeed YHWH is Balaam's god too," p. 78. Again, "Balaam has no contact with gods other than YHWH; he uses magic, builds altars, and goes 'to meet with enchantments,' all without reference to any god, " p. 90. Kaufmann is implying that Balaaam was in reality a polytheist, but that the text does not allow such to be expressed. We would agree that the text does not state that Balaam is a polytheist, but the text does not camouflage his character.

reached by man if he uses the proper means."[1]

A similar sentiment has been expressed by Unger.

The basic presupposition underlying all methods of divination is that certain superhuman spiritual beings exist, are approachable by man, possess knowledge which man does not have, and are willing, upon certain conditions known to diviners, to communicate this information to man.[2]

Note as well, for emphasis, the stricture by Cassuto:

An act of magic is actually an attempt to achieve a given object outside the laws of natural causation, which would otherwise be impossible. The magician believes that he has the power--or others believe so--to compel, by his acts and utterances, the forces of nature and the demons and even the gods, to do his will. Obviously, there is no room for such views in Israel's religion. The laws of nature were established by the Creator, and it is impossible for a human being to change them in any way; *a fortiori* it is unthinkable that a man should be able to force God to do anything contrary to His will. Consequently, the Torah is absolutely opposed to all forms of magic.[3]

Divination and idolatry are intimately linked. Divination is the appanage of idolatry and polytheism. Moreover, divination is linked to demonology. This latter point is stressed in a recent book by Unger.

[1] T. Witton Davies, *Magic, Divination and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors* (reprint of 1898 ed. ; New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1969), pp. 17-18.

[2] Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, p. 120. He adds, "Pure Yahwism, in its basic principle, is and must ever have been inimical to divination of every type. . . . all recourse to illegitimate methods, or appeal to spiritual beings other than God, or search for forbidden, or illicit knowledge which could not pass the divine scrutiny, is taboo. This means, in short, that all divination of every form and description, is excluded from the religion of Israel." Ibid., p. 123.

[3] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Rook of Exodus*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, 1967), p. 95.

The biblical ban of spiritualism and all phases of occultism is inexorable and unrelenting. The reason is clear. Mediums and clairvoyants are linked with demonic spirits who lead devotees to violation of God's first commandment (Exodus 20:3-5). They are an insult and an "abomination" to God because they defile God's people. The term "abomination" has the clear connotation of outrageously affronting God by contaminating his holy worship with the adoration of finite, polluted, false deities.[1]

Deuteronomy 18:9-15 (quoted above) cites divination and the associated mantic arts as among the prime reasons for Yahweh's decision to dispossess the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, for the iniquity of the Amorite was now complete (cf. Gen. 15:16). The idolatry of the Amorites becomes the paradigm of evil in the biblical theology of the Old Testament. It is against that loathsome standard that Ahab is measured in I Kings 21:26. Israel was to have a far superior method of obtaining information beyond normal human ken. She was to receive prophets patterned after Moses, raised up by Yahweh, from among her own people.

Now, when measured against the utter contempt and detestation that Yahweh has for the mantic arts, and in the light of the fact that it was because of the idolatrous-demonic, mantic system that the Canaanites were to be exterminated--the equation of Balaam with divination of the *baru* type becomes frightfully significant. Balaam's function, that of a pagan diviner, is a function loathsome to Yahweh. Yet it was this same Balaam whom God

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[1] Merrill F. Unger, *The Haunting of Bishop Pike: A Christian View of "The Other Side"* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), p. 92.

used to utter the magnificent oracles of Numbers 22-24. It is no wonder that the personality and character of Balaam have caused such difficulties through the ages. Who would have believed that Yahweh would use one who represents something detestable to Him? Yet that is precisely what has happened in our narrative; this, too, is part of the wonder of our God. He ordains glory to Himself, even of instruments such as Balaam.[1]

Viewed as a mantic prophet of the *baru* type, the problem of the origin of Balaam's knowledge of Yahweh diminishes. As a professional trafficker with the gods, a craftsman in the supernatural, Balaam must have kept abreast of new developments in theology. So from his point of view, news of the wonders of Yahweh for His people was important professional information. Viewed from another perspective, the events of the Exodus were not done secretly. These events were calculated to demonstrate to the nations the reality of Yahweh (compare Deut. 2:25 and Exod. 23:27).[2]

The issue does not need to be labored: Balaam could well

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[1] That God at times uses evil instruments is an ethical problem only if one has a low view of the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh in the universe. If Yahweh is sovereign over the universe, He is sovereign in an absolute sense. If He is sovereign at all, He must be sovereign over all. For other Old Testament examples of Yahweh's use of evil instruments for His own purposes and to His own glory, consult: J. M. Ross, who writes, "The Old Testament teems with examples. A familiar one is Cyrus, that warmonger and imperialist, whore the second Isaiah nevertheless calls God's shepherd, because he would be instrumental in rebuilding Jerusalem, and the Anointed of Jehovah, because he was doing the Lord's will in subduing nations and loosing the loins of kings (Is,. 44:28--45:4)." "God's Use of Evil," *CQR*, CIXV (October, 1964), 476.

[2] See above in the present paper, pp. 20-21.

have learned something about Yahweh, even in Pethor. Kerr writes, "Since various groups in the ancient Near East believed in one supreme deity with deities, Balaam may have acknowledged the existence of Israel's God without being in any sense a true believer."[1]

A polytheist has no difficulty admitting the existence of the god of another people.[2] His difficulty may be found in attempting to relate to the new deity. An example of this problem may be seen in I Kings 20. After the first defeat of Syria by Ahab, the counsellors of the king of Syria advised him that the "gods" of Israel appeared to be mountain deities. Hence, they advised that he prepare for a battle in the plain (I Kings 20:23). So, in a similar fashion, Balaam must have known something concerning the nature of Israel's God and he began his attempt to relate to this new addition to his pantheon. How very little he really knew of Yahweh was to be demonstrated when he began to curse the people of that God. He, as the Syrians after him, had much to learn!

A Recent Development: Prophetism at Mari

Albright's praise of Daiches work (noted above) had an element

[1] David W. Kerr, "Numbers, " *The Biblical Expositor: The Living Theme of the Great Book*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Philadelphia: A J. Holman Company, 1960), I, 175.

[2] That Balaam was a polytheist is suggested by Purkiser. "Balaam was apparently a polytheist, a worshipper of many gods, and recognized Jehovah as the God of Israel, " W. T. Purkiser, ed., *Exploring the Old Testament* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1955), p. 133.

of reserve. He wrote that most of Daiches comparisons . . . are still valid."[1] More recent investigation may have removed some of the reason for reserve in the comparative area. One may refer to the recent work done on the role of prophetism in the ancient Near East elucidated by new texts from Mari (Tell Hariri) was one of the major centers of Mesopotamia during the third and early second millennia B. C. The location of the ancient site is near the Euphrates River (near Abu Kemal), about fifteen miles north of the present Syria-Iraq border. Excavations at Mari were begun in 1933 under Andre Parrot, and have continued (with a break during the war years) to the present day.[2]

William L. Moran estimates that "of the many contributions the documents from Mari have made to Old Testament studies, unquestionably one of the most important has been the light they have thrown on the historical background of the prophetic movement in Israel."[3] Of the more than 20,000 cuneiform tablets found at Mari, there are twenty-five new texts

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[1] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 231.

[2] The literature on Mari has become immense. A brief survey If, to be found by Charles Pfeiffer in his *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (London: Pickering & Inglis, Ltd., 1966), pp. 363-64. A fuller and more recent treatment may be found in the article by Abraham Malamat titled "Mari, " *BA*, XXXIV (January, 1971), 2-22 (where a large and select bibliography is presented on p. 22). A brief discussion of the site by the excavator may also be consulted: Andre Parrot, "Mari," *Archaeology and Old Testament Study: Jubilee Volume of the Society for Old Testament Study, 1917- 67*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 136-44.

[3] William L Moran, "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy, " *Biblica*, L (1969), 15.

which relate to intuitive divination as against mantic prognostication.

Malamat summarizes:

> The earliest definite references to intuitive divination are found in some twenty-five Mari texts, revealing a religious phenomenon independent of, but alongside, current external mantic techniques. The diviner-prophets of Mari largely acted as the unsolicited and spontaneous mouthpieces of deities by means of ecstatic trances, dreams and the like. Apart from male and female laity imbued with such esoteric abilities, there were cult diviners, usually attached to sanctuaries (for example, the Dagan temple at Terqa or the temple of the goddess Annunitum at Mari) --professionals designated by such Akkadian terms as *muhhum* (fem. *muhhutum*), 'frenzied one' and *apilum* (fem. *apiltum*) 'respondent.'[1]

Huffmon comments on the class termed *apilu* in his 1968

article in *The Biblical Archaeologist*.

> One class of prophet is termed *apilu* (fem, *apiltu*), "one who answers,' The etymology of the word suggests that the "Answerer" gave oracles in response to questions put to the god, but the texts do not require that interpretation. There is a good possibility of at least indirect solicitation in some instances, but on other occasions it is apparent that the message was not solicited by the person

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[1] Malamat, "Mari, " p. 20. Compare also the same author's "'Prophecy' in the Mari Documents" [Hebrew], *EI*, IV (1956), 74-84 [Eng. summary on pp, vi-vii]; "Prophetic Revelations in New Documents from Mari and the Bible" [Hebrew], *EI*, VIII (1963), 231-40 [Eng, summary on p. 75*]; "Prophetic Revelation in New Documents from Mari and the Bible, SVT, XV (1966), 207-27. Cf. Andre Parrot, "Autels et installations cul-Inches A Mari, " *SVT*, I (1953), 112-19; J. H. Hayes, "Prophetisim at Mari and Old Testament Parallels, " *ATR*, XXXIX (1967), 397-409; James F. Ross, "Prophecy in Hamath, Israel, and Mari, *HTR*, LXJII (January, 1970), 1-28; Jean-Georges Heintz, "Oracles prophetiques et 'guerre sainte' selon les archives royales de Mari et 1'Ancien Testament, " *SVT*, XVII (1969), 112-38; *idem*, "Prophetic in Man and Israel, " *Biblica*, LII (1971), 543-55; H. B. Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters, " *BA*, XXXI (1968), 101-24. The word *apilu* is cited in *CAD* I "A,"--Part II, 170, where it is translated as "an answerer," a cultic functionary.

addressed. . . .

Speculation is tempting, but a reasonable conclusion is that the *apilu* was some kind of cultic personage.[1]

An example of a letter concerning an *apilu* may he given for

illustration.

Speak to my lord: the message of Nur-Sin, your servant, "Once, twice, (even) five times I have written to my lord concerning giving some livestock to Addu and concerning the *nihlatu*-property that Addu, the lord of Kallassu, asks of you . . . (two lines left untranslated and some not preserved).
'Am I not Addu, the lord of Halab, who has raised you and who made you regain the throne of your father's house? I never as [k] anything of you. When a man or woman who has suffered an injustice addresses himself to you, respond to his appeal and give him a ver[dict]. This which I ask of you, this which I have written to you, you will do. You will pay attention to my word, and the country, from its ge[tting up to its lying down], as well as the country of . . . [I will give to you] ' This is what. the *ap[ilum* of Addu, lord of Halab, said to me]."[2]

Another example that may have, relevance to the topic of Balaam

the woe oracle against an enemy. This oracle was written by a high official

Mari to Zimri-lim of Babylon, with Zimri-lim referred to in the third person.

may be seen to have parallels with woe oracles in the Bible.[3]

Speak to my lord: the message of Mukannishum (i), your ser-
vant "(When) I offered a sacrifice to the god Dage [n] for the life
of my lord, the *aplu* of Dagan of the city of Tut [tul] got up and spoke
as follows,' saying, 'O Babylon, what are you trying to do? I will

[1] Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Marl Letters, " p. 105.
[2] Ibid. , p. 109. See also ANTS, pp. 623-32, for a collection
[3] Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters, " p. 109. He suggests comparison with Obadiah.

gather you up in a net. Your god (?) is a wild bull (?). (Or: I will gather you up in a . . . net.) (One line erased.) The (royal) houses of the Seven Allies and all their property (!) I will [pu]t in[to] Z[im] ri-l[im]'s [h]and.

Also, the *aplu* of D[aga]n g[of u]p (?) [and . . .] s[poke-a]s follo[ws . . .] (about five lines lost).[1]

It is tempting to see a parallel between this woe oracle and the curse that Balak expected Balaam to render on Israel. Thus far, this text seems to be only one of a kind, but it is a text that is addressed to an enemy king and is the result of "prophetic" announcement.

Huffmon summarizes the role of the *apilu* in this manner:

> The texts do not tell us the means of inspiration of the *apilu*-Prophet. Since in two instances the message is connected with either a cultic ceremony (XIII. 23, where the woe oracle against the foe might be regarded as a response) or a shrine (X 53, where the oracle is delivered in a temple), one may conjecture that the *apilu* was a part of the cultic staff and--at least on occasion--responded with an oracle received by unstated means to a cultic act or even a specific request for an oracle. But the texts nowhere specifically indicate such a request. The oracle given may be critical of the king for failing in his proper recognition of the god(s) (A. 1121, A. 2925, A. 4260), may generally admonish the king to rule justly (A. 2925), or may declare against a foe and in favor of the king (XIII. 23; cf. A. 4260).[2]

The same writer also speaks of the limitations of the oracles from the 'apilu*, and states that technical divination was still the preferred practice.

That these oracles were not regarded as fully acceptable

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[1] Ibid., p. 109. Compare the translation in *ANES*, p. 625. The spelling *aplu* seems to be a variation of *apilu*.

[2] Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters, " p. 109.

means for divine revelation by the royal administration seems clear from the way in which extispicies, or technical, professional divination results, are cited as conformation [*sic*] of the oracle (A. 1121) or are advised as a means of examining the validity of the oracles and governing the king's reaction (X. 81). As must be expected in any center of Mesopotamian culture even if it is provincial, technical divination was the acceptable practice.[1]

Most of the attention given by scholars to these oracles from Mari stems from an attempt to see if one can demonstrate a link in them in the pre-history of biblical prophecy. This is still a debated issue, with historical, linguistic, and theological (!) ramifications.[2] For our present purpose, this discussion need not detain us. It is sufficient to observe that in addition to the wide-spread use of divination of the class *baru*, there was also a cultic functionary at Mari who received oracles in a more-or-less spontaneous fashion. Whereas the relationship of this type of cultic funstionary to biblical prophets may be debated for some time, the *apilu* may well have some relationship to the role of Balaam, the pagan diviner. Hence,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Kaufmann seems to be a holdout against the prevailing enthusiasm for finding the origins of prophetism at Mari. He insists that the comparisons drawn by many scholars are grossly exaggerated, and that "in Israel the advent of apostolic prophecy is a turning-point, a new phenomenon of tremendous import for the future. . . . Nowhere else was the *mantis* the hearer of a religious-moral ideology. Nowhere else did apostles of a god appear in an ages-long, unbroken succession. Israel's apostle-prophets, the first of whom was Moses, are, therefore an entirely new phenomenon. An external, merely formal resemblance to this or that element in pagan manticism cannot alter this fact." Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 215, n. 1.

further study in the role of Balaam may determine that his was a combined role of *baru* and *apilu*.[1]

A Comparison and a Contrast

We may bring this study of the character and role of Balaam to a conclusion by suggesting a comparison and a contrast. Although perhaps not to be stressed unduly, a comparison may be made between Balaam in Numbers 22-24 and Simon Magus in Acts 8. Hengstenberg suggests such a comparison in his treatise on Balaam.[2] He speaks of Balaam seeking the true God, but not giving his heart entirely to God. Hence, his words "my God," turned out to be the very instrument of his destruction.

The New Testament record of Simon Magus in Acts 8 drops off somewhat abruptly, allowing for the development of conflicting (and in some uses, fantastic) stories concerning him in the history of the early Church. Schaff cites Simon Magus as one of the authors of the paganizing, Gnostic heresy.

> The author, or first representative of this baptized heathenism, according to the uniform testimony of Christian antiquity, is Simon Magus, who unquestionably adulterated Christianity with pagan ideals and practices, and gave himself out, in pantheistic style,

[1] Note that such is suggested by Dewey M. Beegle, *Moses, the Servant of Yahweh* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 321; cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 630.

[2] Hengstenbcrg, *The History of Balaam*, p. 348.

for an emanation of God.[1]

Certainly the lines Dante wrote for Simon Magus may apply to his spiritual prototype:

Woe to thee, Simon Magus: woe to you,
His wretched followers: who the things of God,
Which should be wedded unto goodness, them,
Rapacious as ye are, do prostitute
For gold and silver in adultery.[2]

In terms of contrast to the character of Balaam, one can hardly imagine a more remarkable figure than that of Micaiah ben Imlah in I Kings; 22. Similar words are heard from both Balaam and Micaiah respecting their allegiance to the word of Yahweh placed in their mouths. Balaam says, "what Yahweh speaks, that I will speak" (Num. 24:13). Micaiah says, "what Yahweh says to me, that I will speak (I Kings 22:14). And, indeed, it may be observed in each case the statement was true. Balaam spoke the oracles of Yahweh just as did Micaiah.

But in their characters, they are a study in contrast. Balaam is avaricious, selfish, covetous; Micaiah is utterly selfless. That which

[1] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* I, 566. See also A. F. Walls, "Simon Magus, " *NBD*, 1188-89; Hans Joachim Schoeps, "Simon Magus in der Haggada?" *HUCA*, XXI (1948), 257-74.
[2] Dante, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. by Henry F. Cary, *The Harvard Classics,* ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corporation, 1909), Canto XIX, 1-5 (p. 77).

Balaam spoke by compulsion from without, Micaiah spoke by desire from within.

In each case the word of Yahweh was mediated faithfully. The word of Yahweh was not more "inspired" in the mouth of the good prophet Micaiah than in the mouth of the evil prophet Balaam. Inspiration, properly defined, admits of no degree. But in terms of their respective characters-- Balaam and Micaiah are truly opposites:

Balaam in the Old Testament

Having surveyed the meaning of the name *Balaam*, the place of his origin, as well as the nature of his character and role, we may now turn to those Old Testament references to him that occur outside the narrative proper.

The Sequel--Numbers 25

> Next Chemos, the obscene dread of Moab's sons,
> From Aroar to Nebo, and the wild
> Of southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
> And Horonaim, Seon's realm, beyond
> The flowery dale of Sibma clad with vines,
> And Eleale to the asphaltic pool.
> Peor his other name, when he enticed
> Israel in Sittim on their march from Nile
> To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.[1]

A more dramatic shift, a more unexpected transition from the

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[1] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 405-413. *Paradise Lost and Other Poems*, ed. Maurice Kelley, "The Classics Club" (Roslyn, N.Y. Walter J. Black, Inc., 1943).

preceeding chapters cannot be imagined. Numbers 24:25 ends with both of the

in the attempt to destroy Israel leaving each other in despondent

silence.[1] Our text indicates that both Balaam and Balak left each other's

presence with nothing more to say to each other. Yahweh had been in total

control of the events. The attempts of the enemies of Israel to destroy the

people of God have resulted in utter futility. Yahweh is the defender of His

people from the attacks from without.

Then, without warning, and in the dramatic manner characteristic

of the style of the Torah,[2] Numbers 25:1-3 reads:

> While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to commit
> fornication with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people
> to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate, and prostrated
> themselves before their gods. In this manner Israel yoked themselves
> to the Baal of Peor, and Yahweh was angry with Israel.

Rabbi Hirsch writes, "The sword of no stranger, the curse of no stranger had

the power to damage Israel. Only it itself could bring misfortune, by seceding

from God and His Torah."[3] Similarly, Keil affirms, "The Lord had defended

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[1] That Balaam returned to Pethor is suggested, but not demanded,
by the expression וַיָּשָׁב לִמְקֹמוֹ. The words may mean simply that "he turned
toward his place" (as perhaps also in Genesis 18:33). He may have returned
to Pethor and then came back, or he may have been interrupted in the course
of his journey. The text does not concern itself with this issue. It is enough
to say that he left in futility. Consult Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 202.

[2] Compare, for example, the dramatic shift (and pedagogic tech-
nique'.) in Genesis 39:1, when compared with the record of Genesis 38.

[3] Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch Translated and Ex--
plained*, trans. by Isaac Levy (2d ed.; 7 vols.; London: Isaac Levy, 1964),

His people Israel from Balaam's curse; but the Israelites themselves, instead

the covenant of their God, fell into the snares of heathen seduc-

tion."[1]

Whereas the wrath of Yahweh had once been directed against the

enemy of Israel, Balaam (Num. 22:22), now it was directed against His people

themselves.[2] Here is irony of a bitter sort.[3] Israel, whom Yahweh had

IV, 426. For an evaluation of the historicity of the chapter from a negativistic
viewpoint, tending to historical agnosticism, consult Noth, *Numbers*, pp.
194-99.

[1] Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 203.

[2] One of the least palatable biblical doctrines to the modern
mind is that of the wrath of God. John L McKenzie writes: "Modern unbelief
can sometimes present a very persuasive defence of its positions when these
positions are considered in isolation. One position which it finds easy to
defend is its rejection of the biblical and primitive Christian concept of an
angry and avenging God. " "Vengeance Is Mine, " *Scrip*., XII (April, 1960),
33. In presenting the biblical doctrine, McKenzie notes that "the Hebrews
found the notion of divine anger intelligible because they believed the moral
will of Yahweh was a serious will, " p. 36. Compare also, van Imschoot,
Theology of the Old Testament, I, 81; S. Erlandsson, "The Wrath of God,"
TB, XXIII (1972), 111-16; Athialy Philip Saphir, "The Mysterious Wrath of God:
An Inquiry into the Old Testament Concept of the Suprarational Factor in
Divine Anger" (unpublished doctor's dissertation, Princeton Theological Sem-
linary, 1965).

[3] A full treatment of irony in the Old Testament may be found in
Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster
1965). He defines irony as follows: "irony is criticism, implicit or
explicit which perceives in things as they are an incongruity. The incongruity
is by no means merely mean and contemptible, though it may be willful. Nor
is it only accidental, the work of fate, a matter of the way the ball bounces
or the cookie crumbles. The incongruity may be that of ironic satire, between
what is and what ought to be. It may be an incongruity between what is actu-
ally so and what the object of ironic criticism thinks to be so, as in the

preserved because of His own purity, proves herself to be impure. In this chapter, as in many others, we see the demonstration of the patent falsehood the claim that Israel had a "genius for religion, " as the old liberals used to say. Israel's religious genius was rather for apostasy.[1]

The wrath of God issued forth in the form of a plague in which some 24,000 were slain.[2] But even in the face of the impending doom of the nation, the audacity of the wicked practitioners of iniquity went unchecked. So a Simeonite leader, Zimri, openly cohabited with a Midianite woman named Cozbi. It was the zeal of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar and grandson

irony of tragedy, or in the ironies we perceive in history. But irony is distinguished from other perceptions of incongruity by two characteristics. One Is the means of statement, which we may describe as understatement or a method of suggestion rather than of plain statement. The other is a stance in truth from which the perception comes," p. 31, Jay G. Williams comments on the irony of this passage in his new book, *Understanding the Old Testament* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc. , 1972), p. 130.

[1] See Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 135.

[2] Regarding the supposed discrepancy between this number and the number given in I Corinthians 10:8 (23,000), consult Threeton, who reasons that the number given in the Book of Numbers is a total figure, whereas the number given in I Corinthians is the number of people who died in *one day* of the plague. Abel D. Threeton, "A Critical Analysis of the Current Evangelical Debate on Inerrancy" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1969), pp. 45-46. Cf. S. Lewis Johnson for the same position, *WBC*, pp. 1245-46; but contrast Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, ICC* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), pp. 204-205; Keil, *The Pentateuch,* III, 206.

of Aaron, which finally stayed the plague. He took spear in hand and thrust

the copulating couple. "So the plague on the people of Israel was

(Num. 25:8).[1]

  We would not have known that Balaam was the prime instigator

of this subtle attack on Israel, were it not for the notices given in Numbers

31:16 and Revelation 2:14. Balaam seems to have been the one who devised

the means of seduction to divert the men of Israel to idolatry.[2] Harrison

speaks of the role of Balaam in the events of this chapter:

> Chapter 25:1-18 can be construed as forming an appendix to the
> Balaam oracles, and it is instructive in the light of the fact that the

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[1] For arguments against critical assertions of disunity of this
chapter, consult Aalders. He explains that the critical position divides the
chapter into two sources: (1) a description of idolatry in conjunction with
immorality with Moabite women, and (2) a seduction by Midianite women
(with the counsel of Balaam) by inter-marriage. [A representative of the
critical view is Gray, *Numbers*, p. 381.] Aalders argues that the entire
chapter is concerned with idolatry. This is demonstrated by the special
term used in verse 8 for *tent* [קֻבָּה]. He compares the translation of the
Vulgate, *lupanar*, "brothel." He then states, "it may be more appropriate
to think of a special tabernacle, arranged for the purpose of idolatrous
prostitution. If this be right, the entire chapter deals with idolatry."
As for the " Moabite" --"Midianite" problem, he points to Numbers 22:4,
7, where the Moabites and Midianites were closely related to each other.
"We therefore have to think of Moabitish as well as Midianitish women as
being concerned. " G. Ch. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch*
(London: The Tyndale Press, 1949), p. 53. A different approach to the
problem of the "tent" of verse 8 is taken by Harrison. He avers that "the
qubbah referred to in Numbers 25:8 was the sacred tent, before whose door
the penitent Hebrews were weeping, and as such it has no connection what-
ever with a place reserved for prostitution, as the Vulgate rendering of
lupanar or 'brothel' would seem to indicate. " R. K. Harrison, *Introduction
to the Old Testament*, p. 631. We concur with Aalders. See below, p. 211.

[2] Cf. Kenneth E. Jones, *The Book of Numbers: A Study Manual*
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 76.

Mesopotamian seer subsequently associated himself with the Midianites and counselled them to entice Israel into the licentious cult-worship of Baal-peor (Num. 31:16). The chapter is thus placed into proper religious and historical context, and forms a fitting conclusion to material that is thoroughly Mesopotamian in character, as exemplified by discoveries at Mari and elsewhere that have demonstrated the role occupied by diviners in relationship to military affairs.[1]

Hence, one item of major historical importance in Numbers 25 is the disaster that Balaam was able to effect on Israel. "Although Balaam as an instrument of Satan could not turn the Lord against Israel, he could turn Israel from the Lord."[2] A second element of historical importance within the chapter is the story of the "zeal of Phinehas" which led to the covenant of priesthood in his family (Num. 25:11-13).[3]

A third element of major historical and theological importance in this chapter, often neglected by scholars, is the fact that this chapter is a major scene in the conflict between Yahweh and Baal. This is suggested

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[1] Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* pp. 620-21. The reference to diviners and military affairs has parallels in our own day. Some elements of the army of South Viet Nam are reported to have used diviners before facing battle. See Robin Mannock, "To Ward Off Bullets: Hold Buddha in Jaws, Says Magic Officer, " *The Sunday Oregonian*, August 13, 1972.

[2] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 135; cf. Howard Edward Clark, "The Effects of Balaam's Ministry Upon the History of Israel" (unpublished. master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971), p. 53; Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks* (2d ed.; New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1970), p. 84; Cunningham Geike, *Old Testament Characters* (New York: James Pott & Co. , 1897), p. 118.

[3] Moriarty opines that the zeal of Phinehas was "a fit of misplaced zeal," *Numbers*, Part 2, p. 12. The zeal may be seen to be de-however, in the light of the historical context. The severity of the

some writers,[1] but is developed most thoroughly by Norman C. Habel.[2]

Habel observes that the harlotry of Israel in this passage "was no mere peca-
dillo."[3] This event was long remembered by the prophets of Israel who were
used of God to point back to the Mosaic covenant.

> Hosea claims that Israel's persistent attachment to Baal only adds
> to the disgrace of Shittim (Hos. 5:2; cf. Num. 25:1), for on that
> black day of Israel's youth the excitement of Yahweh's discovery
> of Israel as "grapes in the wilderness" turned to sour disgust.
> "Israel consecrated themselves to Baal" (Hos. 9:10): They even
> "ate sacrifices offered to the dead" on that occasion, replies
> the psalmist (Ps. 106:28). Such a revolting apostasy can hardly
> be regarded as insignificant.[4]

The Baal of Peor in the passage is taken by Habel to be a
designation of the Canaanite Baal, rather than just a local agricultural
deity.

It can be argued, however, that there were many manifestations of

treatment of the Midianite-Moabite confederation is deserved because of
the role these peoples, along with the Canaanites, were to play as "a
constant danger for the religion of the Israelites." Van Imschoot, *Theology
of the Old Testament*, I, 70.

[1] E.g. , van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 37;
Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, pp. 326-37.

[2] Norman C. Habel, "Conflict of Religious Cultures: A Study
in the Relevance of Ugaritic Materials for the Early Faith of Israel" (Un-
published doctor's dissertation, Concordia Seminary, 1962), pp. 35-42;
idem, *Yahweh Versus Baal: A Conflict of Religious Cultures: A Study in the
Relevance of Uaaritic Materials for the Early Faith of Israel* (New York:
Bookman Associates, 1964), pp. 24-26.

[3] Habel, *Yahweh Versus Baal*, p. 24. This is his spelling for
"peccadillo."

[4] *Ibid*. p. 25.

the one Baal rather than many Baals. In any case, the fertility rites alluded to above are consistent with a Baal cultus . . . the sin of Peor persists even in Canaan, presumably because a conflict with the same Baal prevails there (Josh. 22:17).[1]

Habel then turns to the covenantal structure of Deuteronomy, and the covenant renew nature of that book.[2] He observes that in Deuteronomy there are references to the events of Beth-Peor (Deut. 3:29; 4:26), and concludes that "there is nothing inherently improbable in the claim that Israelite tribes concluded a covenant ceremony in Transjordan and that Beth-Peor provides the location for the event."[3]

The redemption experienced by the tribes at Baal Peor corres-- ponds to the release experienced in the exodus events of Exod. 19:4. Through these events, including the covenant curse of the plague, the participants were motivated to covenant renewal. The activities at Beth-Peor, then offer a relevant "conflict" tradition which helps to elucidate the original covenant of Deuteronomy.[4]

It is in this context, then, that the events of Numbers 25 take on their true significance. The sequel to the Balaam narrative is not a minor aberration, but an act of rebellion and spiritual treachery of vast consequence. The deaths of the 24,000 Israelites alone should prove this to be true. The act of faithlessness and perfidy was an assault on the covenant of such a

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] This is a theme developed at length, from an Evangelical viewpoint, by Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy, Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 13-44; reprinted in *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972) , pp. 113-53.

[3] Habel, *Yahweh Versus Baal*, p. 25.   [4] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

magnitude, the covenant needed to be renewed in the Book of Deuteronomy. As Habel writes:

> The later elaboration of this theme in Deut. 4, which forms a prelude to the repetition of the statutes of the decalogue (5:1-21) and the formal conclusion of the covenant, is intimately connected with the specific motifs and terminology of the Sinaitic covenant (in particular Exod. 19:3-6). Specific details of the Sinai covenant experience are recalled (Deut. 4:9-14). There is a consistent repudiation of all idolatrous forms on the grounds "that Yahweh your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" (Deut. 4:15-24). And again it is this jealous overlord whose sovereign choice of Israel as His precious possession and whose salvation of this people from the mighty Egypt are so unique that they presuppose the uniqueness of Yahweh (Deut. 4:20, 32-39). With due solemnity the covenant witnesses of heaven and earth testify to the warning of this jealous King against any corruption comparable to the golden calf or the Beth-Peor incident (Deut. 4:25f.). In short, the events of Beth-Peor offer a notable example of the conflict motif of Yahweh versus the gods of the land.[1]

Such is the nature of the epilogue of the story of Balaam! This is Israel's first experience with the fertility cult of Canaan; it would not be her last.

Other Old Testament Passages

In addition to the narrative proper in Numbers 22-24 and the sequel in Numbers 25, there are a number of citations of Balaam in the Old Testament. It is to these we now turn seriatim.

Numbers 31. --This chapter concerns Israel's holy war on Midian, resulting from the events of Numbers 25. This war was to effect

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[1] *Ibid.*

the vengeance of Yahweh [נִקְמַת יהוה]1 on Midian (Num. 31:3).[2] Phine-

the zealous, was made commander of the army which represented each

twelve tribes. He led Israel in a victorious war over their spiritual

enemies.

There are two verses in this chapter that arrest our attention.
Thcc first is verse 8. This verse details the results of the battle in which

five Midianite kings were slain. Then, with seeming afterthought (or is it

climax?), the writer adds, "and also Balaam the son of Beor they killed with

the sword" (Num. 31:8b). There is no indication given as to how Balaam

came to be numbered among the fallen kings. The fact that his name is

included at the end of this list of kings does suggest, however, that his

position in the enemy camp was one of leadership.

The Israelite army captured the women and the children of

Midian, after slaying the men. They brought the women and the plunder

back to the camp of Israel. Moses was angered that the soldiers had not

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[1] This significant phrase is used "because the seduction had
violated the divinity and honour of Jehovah. " So Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 225.

[2] Moriarty regards this chapter as "a good example of holy
war in Israel, " *Numbers. Part 2*, p. 17. Snaith, however, views the chapter
as but "a midrash, a story invented to illustrate a theme, a law or a regu-
lation." The midrash was developed to give sanction to the priestly line
of Phinehas, he argues. N. H. Snaith, *The Century Bible: Leviticus and
Numbers,* p. 324. Noth also views the chapter with considerable skep-
ticism: "It is, however, certain that the chapter is one of the very late
sections in the Pentateuch." Noth, *Numbers*, p. 229.

put the women to death along with the men. His words form the second verse in the chapter of interest to us respecting Balaam:

> Behold, these were the occasion[1]for an act of treachery against Yahweh for the sons of Israel through the counsel of Balaam in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Yahweh. [Num. 31:16].

Thus it is in this verse that we are finally told that Balaam was the instigator of the treachery against Yahweh described in Numbers 25. The two verses in the present chapter (Num. 31:8, 16) raise a number of questions concerning the activities of Balaam after he left Balak in Numbers 24.[2] But if these verses raise questions, they also answer others. These verses tell us that (1) Balaam was the author of the seductive act that caused a breach in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, and (2) that he met with what Dr. Robert G. Lee might call his "Pay Day."[3]

Deuteronomy 23. -- This chapter begins with important legislation listing those kinds of people who were excluded from the congregation of Israel.

> No one who is emasculated, or has his male organ cut off, shall enter the assembly of Yahweh.
> No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of Yahweh; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of Yahweh.

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[1] The precise meaning of the term ton is in doubt; consult the lexica.

[2] For discussion, see below, pp.

[3] Reference is made to the famous sermon by the pastor emeritus of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn: "Pay Day--Someday" (Waco, Texas: Word Records, W-6137-LP).

No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of Yahweh;
none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall
ever enter the assembly of Yahweh, because they did not meet
you with food and water on the way when you came out from
Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son
of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Neverthe-
less, Yahweh your God was not willing to listen to Balaam,
but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing for you
because Yahweh your God loves you. You shall never seek
their peace or their prosperity all your days.
[Deut. 23:2-7 (Eng. 1-6), N. A. S. B.]

A number of items of interest to our study are presented here.
firstly, if this chapter is from the Mosaic period (and the conservative
assumes that it is), then this is the earliest reference to the oracles of
Balaam outside the narrative proper. Whereas we do not know how the story
of Balaam was transmitted to Israel (on which see below), this passage
would indicate that the oracles were known by Israel at an early period.[1]

Secondly, this passage expresses explicitly an important
element of the theology of the Balaam story that was implied in the text of
Numbers. Yahweh's action on Israel's behalf *vis-a-vis* Balaam was prompted
by his love for his people. Three times in one verse Yahweh is identified
as Israel's God, stressing the action of God is based on his relationship to
his people. He changed the curse into a blessing, "because Yahweh your
God loves you [כִּי אֲהֵבְךָ יהוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ]" (Num. 23:6 [Eng. v. 5]).

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[1] The presupposition of this paragraph, of course, is diamet-
rically opposed to the prevailing view of the date of the Book of Deuteronomy.
For a spirited defense of the integrity of the book, consult Kline, *Treaty of
the Great King*, pr 13-44; cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Old Testament in
Its Context: 2. From Egypt to the Jordan, " *TSFB*, LX (Summer, 1971), 3-11.

Thirdly, this passage details the ongoing judgment of Moab, in part because of their complicity in the events of the Balaam story. The Moabite had the legal status of the bastard in Israel. Both were excluded from the worship community for ten generations. Yet this principle was set aside at least once by Yahweh's grace to a Moabitess of deep faith and out--standing loyal love [חֶסֶד] , a reflection of Yahweh's character.[1]

Joshua 13. --This chapter, in detailing the tribal allotment to the tribe of Reuben, includes the following verse:

> The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor,
> the diviner, with the sword among the rest of the slain,
> [Josh. 13:22, N. A. S. B.]

Here is another link in the chain of our knowledge concerning Balaam in the Old Testament. The historical reference in the verse is to the death of Balaam as recorded in Numbers 31. For scholars whose views of the integrity of the Torah are less than standard, verses such as the present one help to point to the antiquity of the tradition of Balaam in ancient Israel.[2] For our pur-poses, this verse adds an important addition to our understanding of the character of Balaam. In Joshua 13:22 Balaam is clearly denoted "the diviner," [הַקּוֹסֵם], the approach taken in our paper respecting his role.[3]

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[1] The reference, of course, is to the story of Ruth. Although flawed by some presuppositions, a book worthy of reference is Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth*, Facet Books, Biblical Series--23, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

[2] On this issue, consult Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 630.

[3] For an extensive study of this term, see Davies, *Magic*, pp. 78-79.

Joshua 24. --In the setting of the covenant renewal at Shechem under Joshua, there are the following words:

> Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of
> Beor to curse you.
> But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.
> [Josh. 24:9, 10, N. A, S. B.]

In the historical prologue of the dealings between Yahweh and His people Israel we find this emphasis on Yahweh's dealings on Israel's behalf in the events of the Balaam story. In the brief survey of Israel's history that is given in but twelve verses (Josh. 24:2-13), it is of the greatest interest that the story of Balaam be singled out in two verses. The importance of the Balaam narrative for the early history of Israel cannot be underestimated.[1] Moreover, it is of the highest significance for our purposes that this verse relates the incident of Balaam to Old Testament theology, and particularly to the person of Yahweh. Yahweh says, "But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand" (Josh. 24: 10, N. A. S. B.). The story of Balaam is but another chapter in the book titled "The Record of Yahweh's Deeds for His People."

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[1] While we do not agree with his estimation of the development of the Pentateuch (Hexateuch), it is of interest to recall that von Rad regarded Joshua 24:2-13 as "already a Hexateuch in miniature." Hence, he relates the story of Balaam to the innermost kernel of Israel's tradition. See, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," (written in 1938, appearing in the *Beitrage zur Wissenscioift Vom Alten Und Neuen Testament*, 4th series, XXVI,. Stuttgart, reprinted in Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays,* trans. by F. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), p. 8.

Judges 11. --Balak, not Balaam, is mentioned by Jephthah in his taunt to the king of Ammon:

> Since now Yahweh, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before His people Israel, are you then to possess it? Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever Yahweh our God has driven out before us, we will possess it. And now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them?   [Jud. 11:23-25, N. A. S. B.]

The verses quoted on the preceding page (Josh. 24:9, 10) would indicate that Balak did indeed fight against Israel. His warfare was not on the level of human conflict, but was in terms of supernatural struggles. In the present verses, however, Jephthah refers to the acts of Balak with great contempt because of their ineffectiveness. From a purely inductive standpoint, it will be observed that Jephthah's reference to the events of the Balaam story is incidental. So that this reference, too, is strong testimany to the antiquity of the events of the Balaam story in the traditions of ancient Israel. Yahweh's actions for Israel in reversing the curse of Balaam (and Balak) are part of the historical creed of ancient Israel.

Micah 6. --Whereas there are references in the prophets that may reflect the oracles of Balaam,[1] there is one citation that is explicit.

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[1] Compare, for instance, Amos 9:12a: "That they may possess the remnant of Edom," and Numbers 24:13. Balaam's fourth *masa1*. See A. B. Davidson, "The Prophet Amos. I. Jehovah, God of Israel," *Expos*., 3d series, V (1887), 161-79.

This is to be found in Micah 6:

Here now, what Yahweh is saying:

> Arise, plead your case before the mountains,
> And let the hills hear your voice.
> Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of Yahweh,
> And you enduring foundations of the earth,
> Because Yahweh has a case against His people;
> Even with Israel He will dispute.
> My people, what have I done to you,
> And how have I wearied you? Answer Me,
> Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt
> And ransomed you from the house of slavery,
> And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
> My people, remember now
> What Balak king of Moab counselled
> And what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
> And from Shittim to Gilgal,
> In order that you might know the righteous acts of Yahweh.
>
> [Micah 6:1-5, N. A S. B.]

We have already observed above that some have attempted to include verses 6-8 of this chapter as part of the conversation between Balaam and Balak which was not recorded in Numbers, but we regard such as a methodological flaw.[1] Positively, the reference to Balaam and Balak in this chapter is quite significant, in that it forms part of the *rib* motif of Yahweh against His people who have broken His covenant. The events of the story of Balaam are to be regarded as far more than just a sidelight in the story of the wilderness wandering; these events are used in parallel

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[1] Butler, *Works*, II, 76; Geikie, *Old Testament Characters,* pp. 115-16. For a presentation of this viewpoint by Bishop Butler in the present paper, see above, pp. 172-78. For a brief refutation, with reference to literature, see above, p. 174, n. 1.

importance to the very Exodus itself! Micah says that in fact these events

may be said to be part of "the righteous acts of Yahweh" [צִדְקוֹת יהוה]

(Micah 6:5). This is an example within the prophets, therefore, of the

theological import of our passage.[1]

> *Nehemiah 13*. --This chapter begins:

> On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the
> hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that
> no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of
> God, because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread
> and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. How-
> ever, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So it came
> about, that when they heard the law, they excluded all for-
> eigners from Israel.   [Neh. 13:1-3, N. A. S. B.]

Here is a splendid example of the use of the Old Testament by

the Old Testament, a clear citation of Deuteronomy 23:5-6, which we have

observed above. Nothing new is gained in this passage concerning the per-

son of Balaam; the significance for our present purpose is in the citation

itself.

Summary

From the several quotations in the Old Testament concerning

the events of the Balaam narrative, one thing is quite clear: the Balaam

incident was part of the foundation of Old Testament history and theology.

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[1] Philip J. King observes, "Except for this reference, every
other biblical allusion to Balaam outside of Num 22 and 25 is pejorative.
Micah regards Balaam's oracles as part of Yahweh's saving acts." "Micah,"
JBC, 288. We may comment that the person of Balaam is always pejor-
ative; the oracles of Balaam are ever a part of Yahweh's saving acts.

The sequel to the oracles as recorded in Numbers 25 and 31 demonstrates that Balaam figured in the first frontal attack on the religion of Israel as against religion of Canaan. The sorry struggle of Yahwism versus Baalism popular religion of Israel which culminates in the stories of Elijah and Elisha,[1] has its beginning in the events of Numbers 25.

Conversely, the oracles of Balaam, despite his manifold personal flaws (!) become part of the righteous acts of Yahweh, and they form part of the basis for Yahweh's call to the people to return to their covenantal relationship and responsibilities.

Moreover, it may be observed that the Balaam story is noted in all three sections of the Hebrew Bible, Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Certainly this is a subject worthy of theological investigation.

New Testament Citations of Balaam.

In the first chapter of the present study it was noted that there are three places in the New Testament in which Balaam is mentioned.[2] These citations are to be found in II Peter 2:15--16; Jude 11; and Revelation 2:14. It was observed above that in each case Balaam is regarded as the example *par excellence* of false teachers. It would thus appear that for the

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[1] Confer the treatment of Habel, noted above, on pp. 211-13. Sec also Leah Bronner *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics Against Baal Worship*, noted above on p. 144.

[2] See above, pp. 10-11.

illustrative purposes of the New Testament writers, the character of Balaam was clearly evil. This is important confirmation to the approach taken in the present paper concerning the nature of the Old Testament diviner. Balaam is hardly "a great white soul who loved the will of God to his own worldly loss," *a la* Black.[1] Nor were there "two" Balaams as Black's falacious reasoning would suggest. Balaam is the paradigm for false teachers, and so the New Testament understood him.[2]

An important observation to be made concerning the references to Balaam in these three New Testament passages is that in each case, the story of Balaam is used with utter seriousness and sobriety. On substructural grounds, one may insist upon the historical reality of the Balaam story in the minds of the New Testament writers. In the writings of Peter, Jude and John there is no question but that the narrative with which we are concerned is a part of the (genuine) history of the nation. Moreover, it is ironic that the

[1] The reference is to James Black, "A Discharge for Balaam," mentioned above, pp. 168-70.

[2] In the N. S. R. B., at Jude 11, there is a note which reads: "The 'error of Balaam' must be distinguished from the 'way of Balaam' (see 2 Pet. 2:15, note) and the 'doctrine of Balaam' (see Rev. 2:14, note). The 'error of Balaam' was the reasoning from natural morality and seeing the evil in Israel, he supposed a righteous God must curse them. He was blind to the higher morality of the cross, through which God maintains and enforces the authority and awful sanctions of His law, so that He can be just and the Justifier of a believing sinner. The reward of v. 11 is not necessarily money; it may be popularity, fame, or applause, " N. S. R. B., p. 1350. Perhaps the three terms, "error, " "way, " and "doctrine" are to be distinguished; but the explanation of the "error" in this note is lacking in credibility.

one element in the story which is least acceptable for moderns, the speaking donkey, is singled out by Peter: "for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice restrained the madness of the prophet" (II Peter 2:16, N. A. S. B.).[1]

There seems to be but one reference to the oracles of Balaam, against his person, in the New Testament, This is the quotation by our Lord in Revelation 22:16:

> I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things
> for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David,
> the bright morning star.   [N. A. S. B.]

In these last words of our Lord there appears to be at least a tacit reference to Numbers 24:17, "the Star out of Jacob."

Citation in the New Testament of Old Testament events or personalities is not necessary to "make them credible"--at least not for the biblicist. But the confirmatory nature of these New Testament citations apparently is lost on many moderns. Witness, for example, the hermeneutical, theological, and philosophical gymnastics engaged in by D. M, Stanley as he attempts to "explain" Peter's rather sober acceptance of the account of the donkey's speech.[2]

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[1] The role of the donkey will he developed below. See pp. 441-54.

[2] D. M. Stanley, "Balaam's Ass; or a Problem in New Testament Hermeneutics, " *CBQ*, XX (January, 1958), 50--6. It may be observed that a vast "generation gap exists between this study and those of 1940-41 in the same journal, written by Guyot. See Gilmore H. Guyot, "The Prophecy of Balaam, CBQ, II (1940), 330-40; *idem*, "Balaam, " *CBQ*, III (1941), 234-42. Guyot argued strongly for the historicity of the Numbers narrative as well as for the Christological import of Balaam's latter prophecies.

The Source of the Balaam Narrative

There is one question attendant to the study of Balaam that cannot be answered with certainty, but which must be asked. This is the query. What is the source of the Balaam materials in the Book of Numbers? For one who is committed to the literary-analytical approach to Old Testament studies, such a question would seem irrelevant, at best. But for one who holds too the unity of the Torah, and to the hand of Moses in its composition, the question becomes acute. For here is the lengthiest portion of the last four books of the Pentateuch in which neither Moses nor any other Israelite was a participant or an observer. Whereas the conservative may say that Moses was the author of those texts which record incidents in which he was a participant, it becomes difficult to insist that he was the author of an account that was beyond his participation, and perhaps beyond his knowledge.

Kenneth A. Kitchen has recently begun a series of articles in which he attempts to present a positive approach to the composition of the Pentateuch from a conservative viewpoint.1 The editor of his journal observes

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[1] Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Old Testament in Its Context," a series which began in the spring of 1971, and is continuing at the time of the writing of this paper. *TSFB*, LIX (Spring, 1971), 2-10; LK (Summer, 1971), 3-11; XLI (Autumn, 1971), 5-14; LXII (Spring, 1972), 2-10; XIII (Summer, 1972), 1-5; one last installment was due in LXIV (Autumn, 1972 [not yet available to the writer]).

that conservative Old Testament scholars often seem to spend more time demolishing the views of others about the composition of the Old Testament than in putting forward their own positive theories about it."[1]

In the first two installments of his series,[2] Kitchen presents a laced and convincing statement of what may be regarded Mosaic on mini- and maximal grounds. He argues that "indubitable post-Mosaica (other than Dt, 34: 5-12) are very few and hard to prove."[3] However, in his treat- of the material of the Book of Numbers, he makes no mention at all of Balaam narrative and the questions concerning its authorship and inclusion in the Torah.[4]

Yet the question of the source of the Balaam oracles among those holding a "high view" of the integrity of the Torah should be asked. Moreover, it seems to have been an issue of concern to early Judaism. This seems to be reflected in the famous citation from the Talmud concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch. Baba Bathra 14b-15a reads: "Moses wrote

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[1] Editor's note prefacing Kenneth Kitchen, "The Old Testament in Its Context: 1. From the Origins to the Eve of the Exodus," *TSFB*, LIX Spring, 1971), 2.

[2] See note 1, p. 225, above.

[3] Kitchen, "The Old Testament in Its Context: 2. From Egypt to the Jordan," *TSFB*, LX (Summer, 1971), 6, n. 9a.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 3-11. It may be noted in passing that the same neglect is true of two standard conservative introductions; cf. Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), pp. 89-98; Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 233-38.

his own book and the section concerning Balaam, and Job." The inclusion of the words, "the section concerning Balaam," would indicate that this was a matter of concern among the ancients as well. The value of the statement as a record of fact may be questioned, but the importance of the statement as an index of concern is manifest. Even among those who hold to the Mosaic unity and authorship of the Pentateuch, the writing of the story of Balaam poses some difficulty.

Several suggestions have been proffered in the past. One was advanced by Hengstenberg. He attempted to fill in the gaps in the biblical story of Balaam, noting that omissions of material that might be of interest to us, but which did not serve the purpose of the writer, are common in the Torah.[1] Hengstenberg suggests that when Balaam left Balak, "his ambition and avarice sought the satisfaction which, by God's providence, was denied on the part of the Moabites, among the Israelites, on whose gratitude he believed that he had just claims."[2] He then told Moses the details of the narrative in hopes of a reward from Moses to replace that which he had not gained from Balak. He continues:

> That Balaam visited the Israelitish camp is indeed not expressly
> asserted, yet it has not a little psychologically probability--it is
> scarcely conceivable that he would allow an opportunity apparently

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[1] One example he cites is the lack of information on Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, whose death is recorded in Gen. 35:8. Hengstenberg, *The History of Balaam,* p. 513.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 512.

so favourable for gratifying his ruling passion to pass by unimproved--
and it is almost as strong a proof as an express assertion would be,
that the contents of Numb. xxii. -xxiv. could only be obtained from
communications which he made to the elders of Israel.[1]

The scenario advanced by Hengstenberg continues by suggesting
that Moses saw through his base character and he also dismissed Balaam
without a reward. The twice-rebuffed Balaam then turned to the Midianites
in his last vain attempt for payment:

> Balaam, when he could not obtain the hoped for satisfaction of
> his desires among the Israelites, turned again to their enemies,
> incapable of renouncing this satisfaction and of making up his mind
> to return back as empty as he came. But it appears, that he did not
> venture to approach again the king of the Moabites, who had dis-
> missed him so angrily, but addressed his proposals to the Midianites.[2]

In this manner the stage was set for the events of chapter 25, and the report
of the death of Balaam in Numbers 31.[3]

A second approach to the problem of the source of the Balaam
materials in the Pentateuch is to posit that Balaam related the events to
Israel at the time of his death. Keil writes:

> At the time when he fell into the hands of the Israelites, he no doubt
> made a full communication to the Israelitish general, or to Phinehas,
> who accompanied the army as priest, concerning his blessings and
> prophecies, probably in the hope of saving his life; though he failed

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[1] *Ibid.*   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 513.
[3] Dewey M. Beegle observes that "while this reconstruction
may be too neat, it has some basis. *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, p.
330. He also asserts that Balaam may have become a believer who later
lapsed from the faith.

to accomplish his end.[1]

Others who have taken a similar approach include Kerr and Martin.[2]

A refinement of this suggestion was made by Cox, who related' the narration of the events to a judicial death. He takes the expression in Numbers 31:8, "Balaam they slew with the sword," to refer to a "judicial death."

> A judicial death implies some sort of a trial. And what is more natural than that Balaam should plead in his defence the inspirations he had received from Jehovah, and the long series of blessings he had pronounced on Israel when all his interests and perhaps all his inclinations, prompted him to curse them? Such defences, in the East, were commonly autobiographical.[3]

Cox then imagines that Moses and his people must have had a difficult time in putting Balaam to death. Only the crime of Numbers 25 convinced them to do so. "Even with that crime full in their memories, it must have cost Moses and the elders much, one thinks, to condemn to death the man who had told them such a story as this."[4]

Another variation on the theme comes from Aalders, who says, among other things, that "the victorious Israelites might have found a written copy on Balaam's dead body."[5]

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[1] Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 203. On n. 1 of the same page he suggests that Hengstenberg's proposal is a good alternative.
[2] Kerr, "Numbers, I, 175; Martin, "Balaam, p. 35.
[3] Cox, *Balaam*, pp. 14-15.   [4] *Ibid*., p. 16.
[5] Aalders, *Short Introduction*, p. 157. He regards it as improbable, in any case, that Balaam provided the record to save his life.

Harrison makes a couple of suggestions, although he does not press them. One is that the materials may have come to Israel through the agency of a disciple of Balaam.[1] Another is that the story may have been taken from Moabite sources.[2] He adds:

> Linguistic and other considerations would suggest that the oracles were in written form by the twelfth century B. C., and they were probably inserted into the text of Numbers in order to comple- ment the history at some point either in the settlement period or even earlier, and in any event not later than the time of Samuel.[3]

One may note one more hypothesis. This is the proposal that the record of the events is the result of revelation from God. Hengstenberg was familiar with this opinion, but he rejected it as "untenable and contra- dicting all analogy."[4] However, a recent attempt to renew this hypothesis was made by the late Oswald T. Allis in his last major work:

> The clue to the understanding of the Balaam narrative is given us in the words of one of the servants of the king of Syria, who sought to account to their master for the intimate knowledge of his military plans possessed by the king of Israel and to show that it was not due to the disloyalty of any of his own servants: "Nay, my lord the king, but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber" (2 Kings 6:12). This was the explanation of a superstitous pagan. But his words were factually correct as is indicated by the context (vss. 8-10); and they enable us to understand that amazing story, and such an incident as the Balaam story, and perhaps many other narratives, especially speeches, which many critical scholars regard as largely, if not wholly, artificial and

[1] Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 620.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 630.   [3] *Ibid*.
[4] Hengstenberg, *History of Balaam,* p. 512.

imaginary.

> Such narratives as the above form an important part of that Scripture which our Lord declared "cannot be broken," to which he definitely appealed as a record of historical fact, and which the Apostle had in mind when he declared that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."[1]

Each of these several hypotheses is but a guess in the absence of clear scriptural data. We must conclude that although there are a number of possible explanations to the problem of the source of the Balaam story into the Pentateuchal record, we really do not know how in fact these materials were communicated to Israel. Perhaps the most important issue, however, is not the question of how we received it, but a recognition of the fact that we do have the account. Such is the statement of Jones: "There is no way to know how this section came to be a part of the Biblical record. No Israelites were present at the events recorded. How could they have learned these things from their enemies? But the fact is that the story is here, and many of the details fit what we know of Mesopotamian life of that period."[2]

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[1] Oswald T. Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972), p. 127. Quite another approach is taken by Segal. "The story may reasonably be considered as an imaginative representation of the actual occurrence. The details of Bileam's visit to Moab together with his sayings may soon have been reported in the Israelite camp in the plains of Moab, and the Israelite poet told the story in his own, artistic fashion, putting in Bileam's mouth the prophetic poems celebrating the divine care of Israel and Israel's future triumphs over its enemies. " M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Its Authorship, and Other Biblical Studies* (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967), pp. 68-69.

[2] Kenneth E. Jones, *The Book of Numbers: A Study Manual*, p. 68. Harrison concludes: "Precisely how the narratives relating to his

Similarly, before presenting his theory of revelation, Allis writes:

> Whether it was by natural or by supernatural means or by both that this information reached Moses, we are not told. All that we can say is that this amazing story is recorded in the Book of Numbers as actual fact, and is referred to as such several times in Scripture both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.[1]

Whatever the relationship of Balaam may have been to Moses terms of the accounting of his story, there is a strongly implied contrast between the two men. Moses is not mentioned by name once through the chapters on Balaam (Numbers 22-24). Yet there is a real sense in which the shadow of his personality constantly falls across those pages. One who has read the Book of Numbers up to chapter 22 has had so many confrontations with the person of Moses, that he cannot easily dismiss him merely by turning a page or by beginning a new chapter.

The Balaam chronicle seems to bear somewhat the same relationship to the Book of Numbers as chapter 38 of Genesis sustains to the totality of that book.[2] That is, in both cases there are *dramatic and vivid contrasts*

oracles came to be in written form is unknown," *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 620.

[1] Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics*, p. 1.27.

[2] The viewpoint that is herein expressed should be compared to that of Segal. He writes: "The story of Balak and Bileam is not an organic part of the Pentateuchal narrative. It has nothing to say of the covenant and of the promise of Canaan. It is no more than an episode inserted into the narrative " Segal, *The Pentateuch*, p. 69.

implied and demanded. The reading of the Joseph story in Genesis is heightened by the "intrusion" of the contrasting material concerning the base acts of his elder brother Judah. Judah, who should have been the moral leader, proved to be morally degenerate. So far did he fall from the patriarchal ideal that he had to admit that the desperate act of his Canaanite daughter-in-law was a greater display of righteousness and loyal love than was the case in his own life. His acts of cupidity and immorality only serve to heighten the picture of Joseph's selflessness and purity in Genesis 39.

So it is with the "intrusion" of the Balaam story into the Book of Numbers. His personality serves as a foil to demonstrate the excellence of the character of Moses. The significant contrast between Moses and Balaam has been noted by Martin Buber:

> Moses is not named or mentioned in the folk-book of Balaam. But he, who feels himself called to tell Israel in time what work God has in hand, is the unseen opponent of the soothsayer and interpreter of omens. True, the Balaam story, as we have it, "reaches its peak in the meaningful blessings predicting and indeed effecting the happy future of Israel, and which therefore must have been genuine; that is to say, effected, from the Israelite standpoint by YHVH."

> But in addition to this the narrator is certainly very much concerned to show that, by these blessings from the mouth of the heathen, the unsouled *nabi*, YHVH confirms what has been founded by His true emissary.[1]

[1] Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant,* Harper Torchbooks, The Cloister Library (New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1958), p. 171. The quotation is from W. Rudolph, "Der 'Elohist' von Exodu bis Josua, *BZAW* LXVIII (1938), 105.

Conclusion

We may conclude this lengthy study of the many historical problems in the Balaam chapters of Numbers by reasserting that despite all that is yet unknown about the Balaam narrative, the important thing is that the narrative is before us and that it is the Word of God in the absolute sense. It may be said that the shadow of Moses may be seen falling across these pages, however the story became a part of the Torah. The several references to Balaam in other sections of the Torah, as noted above, would indicate that the story was known by Israel from the earliest period. We do not know how the story reached Israel; we do know that the record was inspired by the Spirit of God and that it forms a vital part of the Book of Numbers. Moreover, we also know that it contributes significantly to the story of Moses, of Israel-- and of Yahweh.

CHAPTER V

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY:
THE ORACLES OF BALAAM

Introduction

Hermann Schultz, very early in his theology of the Old Testament, writes, "Die biblische Theologie hangt zunachst unmittelbar mit der Schrift-auslegung."[1] We would agree strongly that the beginning point of biblical theology must be found in an exegesis of the text. We have now completed an extensive and thorough study of the Balaam story in critical literature, and have looked also into the several historical problems from an approach that may be termed harmonistic. Now we may turn to the oracles themselves for an exegetical study.

In the present chapter we will concern ourselves first with the role of the curse in the ancient Near East for perspective on the reason for the oracles. Then we shall turn to the concept of *masal*, the designation of the oracles of Balaam. Then we shall turn to the question of the literary

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[1] Hermann Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie: Die Offen-barungsreligion auf ihrer vorchristlichen Entwicklungsstufe* (5th ed.; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1896), p. 3.

structure and unity of the oracles, from a positive viewpoint. Finally, we present (in brief) an exegesis of the seven oracles.

The Role of the Curse

Before proceeding to the oracles of Balaam in detail, we may first attempt to see them in the context of the concept of the curse in the OId Testament world. The need for such an orientation is indicated by our account. We may cite the words of Balak in his initial request for help from Balaam:

> And now come! curse for me אָרָה־לִּי this people,
> for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I will be able
> to smite them and drive them from the land:
>
> For I know that he whom you bless is blessed,
> and he whom you curse is cursed
> [וַאֲשֶׁר תָּאֹר יוּאָר]   [Num. 22:6]

Three times in this verse Balak uses a form of the Hebrew verb ארר, "to curse, " "to bind with a curse."[1] This verb is cognate to Akkadian *araru* A, which means "to curse" (or in weaker senses, "to treat with disrespect").[2] *Araru* is used in Akkadian inscriptions with god(s) as the subject in vivid and chilling fashion. One example reads:

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[1] Other words for cursing are used in the narrative and the oracles. These will be discussed as they appear in the oracles in the exegetical section, below.

[2] CAD, I, "A" Part II, 234-36. Bezold gives the meaning *binden*, "to bind, " *BAG*, p. 69.

> May the great gods of heaven and nether world curse him
> [*li-ru-ra (su)*], his descendants, his land, his soldiers,
> his people, and his army with a baleful curse, may Enlil
> with his unalterable utterance curse him [*li-ru-ur-su-ma*]
> with these curses so that they speedily affect him.[1]

In this example there is the element of the inflexible nature of a curse once uttered. There is a sense in which the curse may be said to be "bound" on one. People also curse others in the Akkadian texts with the effective element still in force. One ancient citizen gave testimony to this factor in the line: "when you cursed [*ta-ru-ur-ma*] my father, calamity befell him.[2]

The Hebrew cognate ארר seems to be associated with effective power as well. This is certainly true when God is the subject of the verb. One example is to be seen in Genesis 3:14:

> And Yahweh God said to the serpent,
> > Because you have done this,
> > Cursed [אָרוּר] are you more than all cattle
> > And more than every beast of the field;
> > On your belly you shall go,
> > And dust you shall eat
> > All the days of your life.
> > > [N.AS.B.]

The efficacious power of the curse is also to be seen at times when man is the speaker. Perhaps his speaking the curse in this sense is a reflection of the will of God. An example of the effective curse with man as the

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[1] *CAD*, I, "A" Part II, 235.   [2] *Ibid.*

speaker may be seen in Genesis 9:25, where Noah speaks:

> Cursed [אָרוּר] be Canaan;
> A servant of servants
> He shall be to his brothers.
>   [N.AS.B.]

The effective power of the spoken curse is often related to the concept of the spoken word in the ancient Near East. Eichrodt writes: "In Israel as well as elsewhere there was a very real belief that once a word had been spoken it exerted power in a quasi-material way, irresistibly effective in operation and largely independent of the deity---a belief closely related to the primitive ideas of 'power' in general."[1]

Speiser is so convinced of the effective element in the spoken curse, that he translates the Hebrew verb ארר as "to cast a spell" in Numbers 22:6.[2] Blank writes that "there is abundant biblical evidence for

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[1] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A Baker, "The Old Testament Library, " ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (2 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), I, 173; compare johs, Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, trans. by Aslaug Miller, Annie L Fausboll and the author (I-II, III-IV; London: Geoffrey Cumberledge; Copenhagen: Branner og Kordh, 1926, 1940), I-II, 182, 183, 190. Pedersen relates the spoken word to one's *nepes*. "The soul is a whole saturated with power," I-II, 182. See also Frank E. Eakin, *The Religion and Culture of Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Thought* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. , 1971), pp. 120-21; George A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1964), pp. 56-57.

[2] E. A. Speiser, "An Angelic 'Curse': Exodus 14:20, " *JAOS* LXXX (1960), 198.

the belief in the effective power of the spoken word--human as well as divine."[1]

It may be observed, however, that the concept of anything being "irresistibly effective in operation and largely independent of the deity, as Eichrodt describes the curse in the quotation above,[2] is a pagan concept. One cannot have a sound view of the sovereignty of God and believe that a mere spoken word from a frail human can effect one's will in the universe. yet, as these several scholars have observed, such seems to have been the case in the ancient Near East. This was the prevailing opinion ---but it was a pagan opinion. Now, this pagan concept must have influenced many Israelites as well. But it cannot be said to have been a part of normative Yahwism. It would appear that many err in attributing substandard thoughts to genuine piety.

Hence, we agree with the analysis of the curse as presented by van Imschoot. There may have been a popular level in Israel in which the curse was regarded on a magical level, but such was not a part of normative Yahwism. Van Imschoot writes:

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[1] Sheldon H. Blank, "Curse, Blasphemy, Spell and Oath," *HUCA*, XXIII, Part I (1950-51), 78.

[2] See above, page 238, and note 1 on that page.

The efficacy of the word is attributed either to the formula itself--this is the case of the magic formulas of all countries and times--or to the power of him who says it; also then it may be considered as capable of constraining the gods and remains in the sphere of magic. In Egypt, and even in Babylon, one does not always see clearly whether the word acts by itself or by the power of a god. In Israel, without doubt, the use of magic formulas has existed at all times among the lower classes, but has been reproved by the official religion (Ex 22:17; Lev 20:6. 27; Dt 18:9-13; 1 Sm 15:23; 28:3; Mi 5:11; Jer 27:9; Ez 13:18-20; Mal 3:5). The efficacy of curses and of blessings is derived from Yahweh (Prv 3:33; Sir 4:6; Gn 12:3; Nm 22:6; 23:8; the curse can be obstructed (Nm 22:22ff.), weakened (prv 26:2) or changed into a blessing by Yahweh (Dt 23:6); it is ordinarily pronounced in the form of a prayer (Jer 15:15; 18:19-23; Ps 109, etc.).[1]

An understanding of this issue is so crucial to our present

study that we now quote at length from Cassuto because of his balanced

and judicious handling of the curse motif.

In the ancient East there was current the belief, based on the concept of the magic power of the spoken word, that blessings and curses, and particularly curses, once uttered, act automatically and are fulfilled of their own accord, as it were, unless another force opposes and annuls them. This explains the important place occupied in Eastern religions, and especially in the cults of the Mesopotamian peoples and the Hittites, by the magical incantations of the priests, whose object was to nullify the power of the anathamas pronounced by one of the gods or a human being. The belief in the power of blessing and curse existed among the Israelites, too, not only in the Biblical period but also in Talmudic times (see, for instance, B. Megillah 15a; B. Baba Qamma 93a), and it continues to our own day (it will suffice to draw attention to the custom of 'the dissolution of curses'). In the Bible we find traces of this belief not only in the cited statements of Gentiles--for instance,

[1] Paul van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* Vol. I. God, trans. by Kathryn Sullivan and Fidelis Buck (Tournai: Descl e & Co., 1935), I, 189-90. It may be observed that he regards the curses in our passage as having their efficacy in Yahweh and being blocked by Him.

the words of the king of Moab, who believed in the magic power of Balaam's imprecations (Num. xxii 6: *for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed)*, but also in the utterances of Israelites. For example, Micah's mother, who had previously cursed the one who stole a sum of money from her, on hearing that the thief was her son, instantly hastened to nullify the power of the curse by a blessing: *Blessed be my son by the Lord* (Judges xvii 2). Similarly, to quote another example, when Jacob was afraid lest his father curse him, if he should come before him instead of his elder brother, Rebekah immediately said to him: *Upon me be your curse, my son* (Gen. xxvii 13), in order to remove the effect of the curse from her son onto herself. But these are only the remarks of individual Israelites, and the Bible simply relates the stories and reflects the beliefs current among the people, which do not, however, accord with Israel's true faith. The sublime religion of Israel cannot acquiesce in such a conception. In the view of Israel's Torah, it is impossible to imagine that a man's word should have the power to effect anything without God's will, for only from the Lord do evil and good issue. Human blessings, are, according to the Torah, no more than wishes and prayers that God may be willing to do this or that. So, too, human imprecations, in so far as they are not iniquitous, are, in the ultimate analysis, but prayers that God may act in a given way. The Lord, needless to say, may not grant the request of the person that blesses or curses, and he may or may not act according to his wish; it all depends on the Divine will (compare Psa. cix 28: *Let them curse, but do Thou bless!   When they arise they shall be put to shame, but Thy servant shall rejoice*). [Emphasis in original, for quotations.][1]

We have quoted Cassuto at such length because his view on

the subject of cursings in the biblical record seems to be very balanced.

On the one hand, one may point to the popular expressions of the curse

in which the speaker seems to indicate that the power is in his very words.

Such, however, is never to be thought of as normative Yahwism. Cassuto

indicates that many scholars have refused to differentiate between the

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[1] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (2 vols.; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1961, 1964), II, 155-56.

folk beliefs and the true theology of the Bible. This he brands as a mis-understanding of the biblical text.

> The majority of contemporary exegetes, it is true, are inclined to attribute to the Torah itself the belief in the magic power of blessing and curse, but those who hold these views have not distinguished between folk beliefs and the concepts of the Torah, and have failed to understand the passages properly. Not only the antithesis between the popular cult and the basic principles of the Pentateuch but also the wording of the blessings and curses to which the Torah attaches importance rebuts this view. In particular, two aspects of the formulation call for attention: (a) the verbs appear mostly in the jussive (shortened form of the imperfect or the like), which expresses a desire or request, a petition or prayer; (b) the good or evil deed is attributed mostly to God himself (for example, Gen. xxvii 28, in the benediction of Isaac: *May God give you*, etc.). It is clear from this that in such cases the one who blesses or curses is only making a supplication to God.[1]   [Emphasis in original.]

When we turn from normative Yahwism, however, and seek to determine the meaning of the term curse in Balak's mind, we may well impute to him belief in the curse in a magical and inherently effective way. In fact, he says to Balaam: "'I know that he whom you bless is blessed and he whom you curse is cursed" (Num. 22:6). In this case the uttered word was indeed a most potent fetish,[2] and may be compared to the *higa'* imprecation poetry of the early Arabs.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, II, 156.

[2] Confer, T. Witton Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demon-olony Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors* (Reprint of 1898 ed. ; New York: Ktav Publishing house, Inc., 1969), p. 33. Cf. Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1948), I, 141-42.

[3] See Thendor H. Gaster. *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament:* A Comparative Study with Chapters From Sir James G.

Yet even Balaam seems to attribute his power to the gods. This may be inferred by Balaam's response to the messengers of Balak: "Spend the night here, and I will bring back to you as Yahweh may speak to me" (Num. 22:8. To be sure, in this verse he uses Yahweh; but one suspects that had the oracle been intended against another nation, he would have used the name of the god of that nation.[1] Balaam seems to be a trafficker with the gods, a craftsman with the supernatural.

Moreover, Balaam's repeated expressions that he is powerless to change that which Yahweh wished to speak through him gave the lie to the effective curse in this instance. Balaam is ineffective in pronouncing a curse, unless given leave by Yahweh.

The Term Masal

A second element that is quite important to the thrust of this chapter is the meaning of the term *masal*. It is to this question we now turn. Each of Balaam's seven prophetic announcements is termed a *masal* [מָשָׁל] Considerable debate has been directed to the meaning of this term.[2] One

Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), p. xlii; also see in the present paper, above, pp. 64, 76, 116.

[1] See further, below, p. 158.

[2] Some of the literature on the topic includes: Otto Eissfeldt, *Der Maschal im Alten Testament*, *BZAW*. XXIV (1913); Allen Howard Godbey, "The Hebrew Masal," SJSLL (1922-23),, 89-1.08; J. Pirot, "Le 'Masal' dans

approach that is taken by a number of scholars is to relate the Hebrew word

masal with the verb מָשַׁל III, "to rule." Such is done, for instance, by

Bentzen:

> But the best explanation is certainly given by Bostrom, based on
> hints given by Johs. Pedersen, starting from the meaning of the root
> "to rule. " The noun then signifies a sentence spoken by "rulers",
> filled with the power of mighty souls. In similar manner Hylmo
> speaks of a "winged word", outliving the fleeting moment.[1]

> A more normative approach, however, is to relate the word

masal to the Hebrew root מָשַׁל I, "to be like, to be similar, to represent."[2]

Lusseau writes:

> It is difficult to find an exact word in our modern languages
> that has the different meanings of the word *masal*. If it were
> possible to resort to the root *msl* III, to govern, Pedersen, Bostrom,
> cf. Bentzen, *Introd.* , I, 168), in relation to the Arabic: *to be more
> valuable or superior*, the substantives *directive, instruction, rule*
> would seem to be indicated. But the verbal root *msl* III has as

l'Ancien Testament, *RSR*, XXXVII (1950), 565-80; A. S. Herbert, "The 'Parable'
(*Masal*) in the Old Testament, " *SJT*, VII (1954), 180-96; A. R Johnson,
"מָשַׁל," *SVT*, III (Reprint, 1969), 162-69; Friedrich Hauck, "**Parabolh**,"
TDNT, **C-Pa**, 744-60; William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach,* "The
Old Testament Library," ed. Peter Ackroyd, et al. (Philadelphia: The West-
minster Press, 1970), pp. 22-32.

[1] Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* I, 167-68. The
literature he cites [all unavailable to the present writer]: G. Bostrom,
Paronomasi i den aldre i:ebreiska maschallliteraturen (1928); Johs. Pedersen,
Der Eid bei den Semiten (1914); G. Hylmo, *Gamla testamentets literatur-
historia* (1938).

[2] So *BDB*, p. 605; *KBL*, p. 576; *KHAL*, p. 253. Compare Akkad-
ian masalu, "to qe resembling, to be like, " Bezold, *BAG*, p. 184. Compare
also Arabic,   XXXXX, "a like; a similar person or thing, " Lane, I (Supp.),
3017. Lane cites: XXXX XXXX XXXX, "*the similitude of Zeyd is the
similitude*, or *is that, of such a one*; for a similitude is a description by way
of comparison." Note also in the present paper, above, p. 52, n. 1.

nominal derivatives only *mimsal* and *memsalah* meaning *government, rule*, whereas for the block of Semitic languages *masal*, coming from the root *msl* I, always carries the idea of *comparison, fable, proverb*. The English translation does not avoid the etymological difficulty. Perhaps the term *sayings* with its broad usage would be more suitable.[1]

Similarly, Johnson says, "basically the term implies 'likeness.'"[2]

If *masal* is related to the Hebrew verb meaning "to be like," the precise significance of its use in the Balaam story is difficult to ascertain. Eissfeldt suggests with some caution the meaning "*Orakelrede*."[3] Pirot argues that the use in Balaam's case is satirical and ironic.[4] Perhaps the most balanced approach is to be seen in the conclusion of the article by

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[1] H. Lusseau, "The Other Hagiographers, " in A. Robert and A. Fouillet, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* trans. by Patrick Skehan *et al.* from the 2d French ed. (New York: Desclefe Company, 1968), p. 408. It may be observed that von Pakozdy attempts to relate the two roots to a common origin: "kann nicht Stamm מָשַׁל I, "gleichsein, " and מָשַׁל II "herrschen" auf einen Grundstamm zuruckgefuhrt werden?" 'Teologische Redactionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope (Num 22-24), *Von Ugarit nach. Cumran,* ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Berlin: Vorlag Alfred Topelmann, 1958), p. 167, n. 28. Norden comments on the difficulty of the word by saying: "In trying to determine what an Old Testament parable is, not only Bible dictionaries but other resource books, as well, afford little help." Rudolph F. Norden, *Parables of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 29.

[2] Johnson, "מָשָׁל" p. 162.

[3] Eissfeldt, *Der Maschal*, p. 30.

[4] Pirot, "Le 'Masal' dans l'Ancien Testament," p. 572. There Certainly are elements of satire and irony in the oracles (and in the narrative), but it seems difficult to render the term *masal* in this sense.

Herbert. After debating the origin of the word, he turns to its usage in the Old Testament and states that there does not seem to be any need to distinguish diverse meanings such as "Taunt song, Popular Proverb, Teaching, Oracular speech, Apocalyptic utterance . . . symbol, prophetic revelation, allegory, proverb, test case . . . . "[1] Rather, he states:

> It is always a Parable expressed in brief pithy sentence, a vivid and striking speech, a rapidly drawn picture. Not only is it verbal: even a person, individual or corporate, e, g. Job or Israel may be a Parable. It has a clearly recognisable purpose: that of quickening an apprehension of the real as distinct from the wished for, or complacently accepted; of compelling the hearer or reader to form a judgment on himself, his situation or his conduct. It is a recognised and accepted rhetorical or literary genre, as witness the use of a *masal* by the contemporaries of Ezekiel. But as used by the prophets, it is especially intended to awaken men to the supreme reality of God's present judgment with the intent that they may be saved. This usage persists in 4 Ezra and Enoch, and comes to its finest expression in the Parables of Jesus.[2]

If this evaluation proves to be correct, then we may see an excellent reason for the employment of the term *masal* in the Balaam narrative. The oracles of Balaam turned out to be blessing rather than curses for Israel; they became curses rather than blessing for the nations. In this sense they served as a quickening of the "apprehensions of the real as against the wished for, or complacently accepted."[3] After these issues, our author suggests that the expression, "to take up a parable" (as we have it seven

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[1] Herbert, "The Parable (*Masal*) in the Old Testament, " p. 196.
[2] *Ibid.*   [3] *Ibid.*

times in the Balaam oracles, may mean to *utter solemnly*.[1]

Finally, a word may be said concerning the fact that the oracles of Balaam are written in poetry. Some have suggested that poetry and reality may be divorced, that poetry transcends reality.[2] While such may be true for some poetry, it cannot be said to be true of all poetry, and particularly of biblical poetry. Norden avers:

> Poetic utterances in the Old Testament do not reflect human fancy which one may regard as opposite to the truth of prose. The "more truth than poetry" saying of everyday conversation implies a contrast which may apply to some human statements, but it is not applicable to the language of the Bible. One cannot make a distinction and say that Biblical prose presents fact but Biblical poetry reflects fiction. The all-inclusive statement of Paul: "All Scripture is given by inspiration" puts also the poetical elements of the Old Testament Bible under the truth of the written Word of God. Poetry in the Bible is to be honored as God's Word, with its meaning to be determined by giving due consideration to the words, text, context, relation to clear passages elsewhere in Holy Writ, and by following the pinciples of Scriptural interpretation.[3]

So our method of hermeneutics in the present chapter will be the "Normal" method throughout. The poetry of the Old Testament is every whit as reliable a mode for the communication of reality as is the prose, though poetry does aid in communicating experience.

It may be observed that the usual form of oracles in the ancient Near East was in poetry. This is to be seen in the oracles of Egypt, Canaan,

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[1] Ibid., p. 188.

[2] See Laurence Perrine, *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* (3d ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. , 1969), pp. 3-11.

[3] Norden, *Parables of the Old Testament*, p. 13.

Mesopotamia and Arabia.[1]

The Unity and Structure of the Oracles

In Chapter III of the present paper, considerable space was given to a survey of the Balaam oracles in critical literature. It was seen that with few exceptions the prevailing approach to our corpus is to regard the oracles of chapter 23 as coming from the putative Elohist and the two larger oracles of Numbers 24 as coming from the putative Yahwist. The remaining three oracles of chapter 24 are dismissed by many scholars as being very late additions to the corpus.

Such reconstructions of the text are possible only if one first adopts the critical presuppositions of literary analysis, a method that should be held in disrepute in our day.[2] Rather than attempt to animadvert upon the many weaknesses of the literary critical position *vis-a-vis* our

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[1] Compare Cyrus H. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 121; Theodore H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*, p. xlviii; George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry Considered With Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Reprint ed.; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), p. 219 and n. 1; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 300-301.

[2] See the telling criticisms of the literary analytical method in the sources cited above in the present paper, p. 93, n. 3. Cf. also the article by Cyrus Gordon, "Higher Critics and Forbidden Fruit, "' *CT*, IV (November 23, 1959), 3-6, cited in the present paper, above, p. 6.

text in Numbers 23-24, it would seem to be better to present the matter positively, from the harmonistic viewpoint. For, viewed apart from the structures of the atomizing approach, our passage may be seen to display progressive, and dynamic unity.

Consider first, the number of the oracles. Were one to glance at Numers 23-24 somewhat rapidly, he might conclude that there were four oracles. In fact, there are seven, and each of the seven is introduced with precisely the identical formula, "and he took up his oracle and said" [וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר] (Num. 23:7a, 18a; 24:3a, 15a, 20b, 21b, 23a). Considering the role that the number seven plays in the narrative of our section and in the Torah in general, this can hardly be accidental.[1]

One may observe that there are three times in which the narrator presents three sets of sevens within these chapters. In Numbers 23:1 Balaam says to Balak, "build *seven* altars for me here and prepare *seven* bulls and *seven* rams for me here." The next verse details the fact that these seven altars were built and that the seven bulls and seven rams were offered, one of each on each of the seven altars. This same practice in numerical mysticism was repeated in Numbers 23:14, and then repeated again in Numbers 23:19. With this use of seven so paramount in the background of our story,

[1] For an amazing and convincing demonstration of the use of the number seven to indicate the unity of a passage, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Rook of Genesis,* I, 12-15. On the use of numbers in the Bible in general, see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968).

there is little wonder that the oracles are found to number seven as well.

Cassuto remarks on the use of the number seven in the ancient Near East. He writes,

> Both to the Israelites and to the Gentiles, in the East and also in the West--but especially in the East--it was the number of *perfection* and the basis of ordered arrangement; and particular importance attached to it in the symbolism of numbers. The work of the Creator, which is marked by absolute perfection and flawless systematic order-liness, is distributed over seven days: six days of labour and a seventh day set aside for the enjoyment of the completed tasks [Emphasis in original.]1

Hence, it may be suggested that the number seven in our oracles argues strongly for the unity of the passage.

Secondly, one may point to the progression and development within the exordia of the oracles. In the first oracle (Num. 23:7-10) the exordium states the historical setting, with Balaam addressing Balak in the third person:

> From Aram Balak has brought me,
> Moab's king from the mountains of the East,
> Come curse Jacob for me,
> And come, denounce Israel.
> 　　　[Num. 23:7, N. A. S. B.]

In the second oracle (Num. 23:18-24) the exordium is brief, and Balaam addressed Balak in the second person:

> Arise, O Balak, and hear;
> Give ear to me, 0 son of Zippor!
> 　　　[Num. 23:18, N. A. S. B.]

In the third oracle (Num 24:3-9), there is a more lengthy

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1 Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, I, 12.

exodium (one line of bicola and one line of tricola), in which Balak is receding out of the picture:

> The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
> And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened;
> The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
> Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
> Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered,
>   [Num. 24:3-4, N. A. S. B.]

In the fourth oracle (Num. 24:15-19), the exordium of oracle III is repeated and enlarged (one line of bicola plus two lines of bicola), and Balak is out of the picture altogether:

> The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
> And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
> The oracle 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.
>   [Num. 24:15b-16, N. A. S. B.]

In the last three oracles, exordia are omitted. The oracles are spoken in stacatto fashion.

Now, it may be seen that in the four longer oracles there are two pairs of oracles. Those of chapter 23 are somewhat distinct from those in chapter 24. But the difference between the oracles in the two chapters is not to be sought in terms of putative source analysis and the change of theology in the intervening centuries from J to E (as is done by Eissfeldt, *et al*.).[1] *The change is indicated by the context itself.*

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[1] See above, pp. 125-132.

Oracles I and II were each preceded by mantic procedures as is suggested
by 23:1-2, but is expressly stated in 24:1:

> When Balaam saw that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel,
> he did not go as at other times to seek omens [וְלֹא הָלַךְ
> כְּפַעַם בְּפַעַם לִקְרַאת נְחָשִׁים] but he set his
> face toward the wilderness.
>   [N. A S. B.][1]

At this point the Spirit of God came upon him (Num. 24:2), fully accounting
for the slight shifts in direction between the first pair and the second pair
of oracles. Moreover, this shift is indicated by the fact that there is no
preparation at all for the fourth oracle. Balaam just speaks. Oracles V,
VI, and VII come without any interruption. Certainly the exordia in these
Several oracles argue for the unity of the whole, and the development and
progression of the text. The unity is not static, it is dynamic.

A third element contributing to the unity and development of
the oracles is to be seen in the distribution of words for cursing and blessing.
In the first oracle (23:7-10) there are terms of cursing only: קבב ,ארר
(two times),   זעם (three times); and perhaps מנה, and מספר.
In the second oracle (23:18-24) there are the following words for cursing:
קסס, נחש ,עמל ,און; and the major word for blessing: ברך
(two times). In the third oracle (24:3-9) there is a mixture of words for
cursing: ארר (two times); and blessing: ברך (two times). In the
fourth oracle (24:15-19) there are no words for cursing or blessing, although

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[1] Note the distributive use of פעם; cf. *WHS*, pp. 23-24;
GKC, section 123c, p. 395.

the concepts are there.

Another verbal element tying the oracles together is the employ-
ment of the concept of Balaam ("the Seer") *seeing* Israel. This is to be found
in the first oracle (23:9) and the fourth (24:17a). Elements of imagery also
serve as unifying factors. The lion is found in oracle II (23:24) and oracle
(24:9). The aurochs is found in oracle II (23:22) and oracle III (24:8).
yet another element, to be developed at some length, is Balaam's employment
of the designations for deity.[1]

Balaam's terms for Israel also serve as unifying features, as
may be seen in the following scheme:

Oracle I	Jacob/Israel	23:7
	Jacob/Israel	23:10
Oracle II	Jacob/Israel	23:21
	Jacob/Israel	23:23
	Jacob/Israel	23:23
Oracle III	Jacob/Israel	24:5
Oracle IV	Jacob/Israel	24:17
	Israel	24:18
	Jacob	24:19

There are also examples of verbal agreement; compare in oracle II (23:22)

the words: "God brings him out of Egypt, He is for them like the horns
of the wild ox, "
and in oracle III (24:8) the words:

"God brings him out of Egypt, He is for him like the horns
of the wild ox. "

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[1] See below, pp. 358-402.

Further, as has already been observed, the exordia of III and IV are in verbal agreement except for the expansion of one element in oracle IV.

By these several elements, therefore, one may see a genuine unity, within the oracle corpus. It is not a static unity, but a dynamic and progressive unity. This unity may be demonstrated, moreover, by a structural analysis.

Viewed structurally, with the assumption of unity, there is a magnificent movement to the oracle chapters. There is a repetitive nature to the structure, but not static repetition. Rather there is to be seen a development, a growing intensity; indeed, a crescendo. In our present body of material we will first observe the full complement of elements in Numbers 22:41-23:12, and then will move through the several remaining blocks. As we move into each successive block of verses there is to be seen a decrease of the magical corresponding to an increase of the spiritual.

I. The first movement: 22:41-23:12. The following steps are to be observed:

(1)   The selection of the cultic site (22:41).
(2)   The building of altars and the sacrificial acts (23:1-2).
(3)   Balaam seeking revelation (23:3).
(4)   God reveals Himself to Balaam (23:4-5).
(5)   Balaam returns to the altar (23:6).
(6)   The introductory formula (23:7a).
(7)   The oracle proper, beginning with exordium (23:7b-10).
(8)   The objection of Balak (23:11).
(9)   The disclaimer of Balaam (23:12).

II. The second movement: 23.13-26. The same several steps are
   to be observed:

   (1)   The selection of the cultic site (23:13-14a).
   (2)   The building of altars and the sacrificial acts (23:14b).
   (3)   Balaam seeking revelation (23:15).
   (4)   God reveals Himself to Balaam (23:16-17).
   (5)   Balaam returns to the altar (23:17a).
   (5b)   [New element] The apprehension of Balak (23:17b).
   (6)   The introductory formula (23:18a).
   (7)   The oracle proper, beginning with exordium (23:18b-24).
   (8)   The objection of Balak (stronger) (23:25).
   (9)   The disclaimer of Balaam (23:26).

III. The third movement: 23:27-24:13. The steps begin the same,
   but soon there are dramatic shifts.

   (1)   The selection of the cultic site (23:27-28).
   (2)   The building of altars and the sacrificial acts (23:29-30).
   (3)   [Change] Balaam not seeking revelation in the
           same manner (24:1).
   (4)   [Change] God reveals Himself, but this time the wording
           is heightened: "The Spirit of God came upon him" (24:2b).
   (5)   [Change] Balaam is already at the altar; hence, does
           not need to return (24:3).
   (6)   The introductory formula (24:3a).
   (7)   The oracle proper, beginning with exordium (24:3b-9).
   (8)   The objection of Balak (stronger) (24:10-11).
   (9)   The disclaimer of Balaam (stronger) (24:12-13).

IV. The fourth movement: 24:14-19. The introductory steps are
   omitted altogether, as are the concluding steps. Only the
   introductory formula and the oracle appear.

   (1-5)   Omitted.
   (6)   The introductory formula (24:15a).
   (7)   The oracle proper, beginning with exordium (24:15b-19).
   (8-9)   Omitted

Next, three brief oracles come in stacatto fashion, each with
introductory formula only.

V. The fifth movement: 24:20.

> (1-5) Omitted.
> (6) The introductory formula (24:20a).
> (7) The oracle proper without exordium (24:20b).
> (8-9) Omitted.

VI. The sixth movement: 24:21-22.

> (1-5) Omitted.
> (6) The introductory formula (24:21a).
> (7) The oracle proper without exordium (24:21b-22).
> (8-9) Omitted.

VII. The seventh movement: 24:23-24.

> (1-5) Omitted.
> (6) The introductory formula (24:23a).
> (7) The oracle proper without exordium (24:23b-24).
> (8-9) Omitted.

Epilogue: Both characters leave and go their own way, lost in own thoughts, saying not a word to the other.

Curtain.

Hence, it may be said that the structure betrays unity, but more importantly, it demonstrates progression and crescendo. Balaam who had been hired to curse Israel blesses Israel and curses Moab instead (24:17). Then the scene enlarges to include the cursing of the other nations that might prove to be enemies of the blessed people Israel. Balak protests at first. His protestations become quite strong after the third oracle. But then even Balak is silenced as the oracles are spoken without interruption. Finally, Balaam, too, is silent. Both men part, each still wondering at these strange events.

An Exegesis of the Oracles

The First Oracle (Numbers 23:7-10)

The theme of this oracle may be stated to be: *Israel's Blessing is Unique: Cursing Her is Ineffective*. This theme is developed and intensified throughout the set. Israel is a nation distinct from all others. Israel is unique. Her uniqueness is to be found in her God. The present oracle may be outlined as follows:

> *Introductory formula:* Balaam takes up his oracle (7a).
> *Exordium*: Balaam states his purpose to curse Israel (7b).
> *Blessing*:
> A.   Balaam is unable to curse Israel (8).
>   1.   God has not cursed Israel.
>   2.   Balaam cannot curse Israel.
> B.   Balaam blesses Israel as unique among the nations (9-10a).
>   1.   Balaam views Israel as unique among the nations.
>   2.   Balaam regards Israel as immune from curses.
> C.   Balaam expresses a desire to share in Israel's blessing (lob).

We may now turn to the oracle proper.

Introductory formula and exordium (23:7).--The text and its translation lotion read:

וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר
מִן־אֲרָם יַנְחֵנִי בָלָק מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב
מֵהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶם
לְכָה אָרָה־לִּי יַעֲקֹב
וּלְכָה זֹעֲמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

Then Balaam took up his oracle and said:
> Balak the king of Moab brought me from Aram,
> From the mountains of the East:
> > Go, curse for me Jacob!
> > And Go, execrate Israel!

This verse is composed of one line of monocolon and two lines of bicola. The introductory monocolon (7a) serves as the introductory formula. it has a count of 3 and ends with *'Atnah*, the major disjunctive accent. Each oracle in the corpus is introduced by the same formula. The wording, "he took up" may refer to speaking solemnly.[1] The two lines of bicola serve as the oxordium for the oracle.

In the first line of bicola we meet a rather unexpected accentual division, rendering a 4:1 meter with synthetic parallelism, a b c // A' . This pattern seems demanded by the disjunctive accent *Pasta* with the word "Moab."[2] Hence, on the basis of accentuation, the line is to be read:

Balak the king of Moab brought me from Aram,
From the mountains of the East.

This is the way in which the bicola are read in the A. V. , and in some other translations.[3] There is also limited support in critical commentaries, as in

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[1] See above, p. 247; see also *BDB*, p. 670.

[2] The accents are discussed in *GKC*, section 15, pp. 57-63. Jouon reminds the reader that "la connaissance des accents est parfois importante pour la grammaire et aussi pour le sens. " Jouon, Grammaire, section 15, p. 45; cf. pp. 39-46. The major work on the accents is William Wickes, *Two Treatises on the Accentuation of the Old Testament*, "The Library of Biblical Studies, " ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (Reprint of 1881, 1887 ed.; New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1970). He discusses *Pasta* with *Zaqep*, *qaton*, in the section, II, 75-76.

[3] See also the A. O. T. , KJ-II and A. T. The Vulgate agrees. The Jerusalem Targum renders: "Balak, the king of Moabaee, hath brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east." The Targum of Onkelos reads: "Balak, king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east."

work of Keil, who makes no attempt to render the line as a balanced bicola.[1]

Against such a reading, however, it may be argued that this results in a 4:1 meter, which seems to be a rather drastic irregularity when compared with the bicola which follow, most of which are 3:3 in meter.[2] Many modern translations follow the LXX by rendering the line as a balanced bicolon with 3:3 meter, breaking the cola with "Balak," despite the *M^e huppakh* accent. Compare, for instance, the N. A. S. B.

> From Aram Balak has brought me,
> Moab's king from the mountains of the East.

Such is also the approach of most modern commentaries, including the important article by Albright.[3]

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[1] C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. by James Martin (3 vols.; reprint; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. [n. d.]), III, 178.

[2] Albright argues for a 3:3 meter throughout, but such seems to be an oversimplification. See William Foxwell Albright, "The Oracles of Balaam, " *JBL* LXIII (1944), e. g. , pp. 211, 224. Further, metric regularity may not be posited as a necessity. Circular reasoning is inherent in emendations *metri causa*; cf. David Noel Freedman, "Prolegomenon, " George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry*, "The Library of Biblical Studies, " ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (Reprint; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), p. xxxix.

[3] Albright's work is noted in note 2, above. See also, e. g., the A. S. V. , R. S. V. , B. V , SBSeg. , SBJer., Torah. The N. E. B. has gone its own way: "From Aram, from the mountains of the east, / Balak king of Moab has brought me. " So, predictably (:) has L. B.: "King Balak, king of Moab, has brought me / From the land of Aram, / From the eastern mountains." Modern commentaries that may be cited agreeing with N. A. S. B., et al., include Julius H. Greenstone, T*he Holy Scriptures: Numbers: With Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948), p. 254; end Arnold Goldberg, *Das Buch Numeri* (Dusseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1970), p. 98.

Considerable space has been expended on the rather moot point of the metric division of the first bicola in verse 7, principally because of the importance of the issue of methodology. We regard the accentual system as an authentic appenage of the oral tradition. We prefer to follow the accentual pattern transmitted by the Massoretes unless the given situation seems quite impossible. The seeming anomaly of our present verse is more likely to be the original intent of our verse, rather than the more balanced reading of many moderns.

In terms of metric analysis, two approaches may be cited. One method, represented by Albright, attempts to count stress patterns in the pre-Massoretic text.[1] Another current methodology is presented by Frank Moore Cross, Jr. , and David Noel Freedman. They advocate the use of syllable Counting instead or, or in addition to, word or stress counting, for metric analysis. Freedman writes: "counting the total number of syllables in lines and larger units produces a more reliable picture of the metrical structure than any other procedure now in use."[2]

Both of these methods have their difficulties, however. For in

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[1] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 211. In his treatment Albright has reconstructed the spellings as they might have occurred before the addition of vowel letters, etc. For such the reader is referred to his article. In the present paper, the emphasis will be on an interpretation of the text as it stands.

[2] Freedman, "Prolegomenon, " p. xxxii; cf. p. xxxv. Frank Moore Cross, Jr. , argued along similar lines in a paper titled, "Prose and Poetry in Ugaritic" (unpublished paper presented to the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1972).

both instances the respective scholars argue on the basis of the putative pre-Massoretic text. We feel it more judicious to attempt to explain the text as it stands, rather than to attempt to reconstruct the text as it might have been. Moreover, whether one wishes to use stress-counts or syllable-counts, it is not necessary to insist on absolute balance between paired cola. On this point Cyrus Gordon has resolutely insisted for caution in the attempt to force absolute balance from metric reasons.[1] We may mention, however, that a spirited defense of the reading of our bicola as rendered by the N. A. S. B., is to be found in *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* by Stanley Gevirtz.[2]

The second bicola of our verse. (23:7d-e) has synonymous parallelism with the pattern a b c // a b' c' . The meter of this bicola is 3:3. The verbal forms in this bicola all have the so-called "paragogic He, " and may be regarded as "emphatic imperatives," displaying the remnant of *-a* in second millennium B. C. North West Semitics.[3] These verbs are expressive of the great urgency with which Balak beseeched Balaam to come.

[1] Gordon, *UT*, p. 131, n. 2. Compare also G. D. Young, "Ugaritic Prosody, " *JNES*, IX (1950), 124-33. Young concluded: "the poet of Ugarit felt no constraint to abide by strict poetic codes, " p. 132. An example of an attempt to place a rigid metrical and strophic format on the Balaam oracles is to be seen in the article by Sigmund Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung der Bil'amsage," *ZAW*, XLVIII (1930), pp. 233-71.

[2] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 48-50.

[3] Compare Sabatino Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964), pp. 135-37; compare *GKC*, 481, pp. 131-32; Jouon, *Grammar* 48d,

The verb ארר "to curse" is cognate to Akkadian *araru* (A), "to curse, to treat with disrespect, to insult, to disown, to disavow." This term is used with both gods and man as subject.[1] In Hebrew the word ארר has an ominous history indeed. This is the word that Yahweh used to shatter the calm of Eden in Genesis 3:14, when He cursed the serpent, and in verse 17 in His curse of the ground. In Genesis 4:11 it is used respecting the curse on Cain for the crime of fratricide. Again, the same term is employed in prophetic curse oracles such as Noah's curse of Canaan in Genesis 9:25.

But perhaps the most telling use of this word, and the reference to which our minds should spring involuntarily, is Genesis 12:3:

> And I will bless those who bless you,
> But the one who contemns you I will curse [אָרֹר]

Of course! This is the point of the Balaam-Balak escapade in a moment. It is a test case for the Abrahamic covenant in its most elemental and fundamental level Balaam was called by Balak to put Yahweh to the test, though neither of them knew the nature of the roles in which they found themselves.

The second word for "curse" in our bicola is the term זעם.[2]

BDB gives the basic meaning of this root as "to be indignant. " This word is

pp. 108-109. Compare Wright, *GAL*, section 99, I, 62 for a similar phenomenon in Arabic; cf. Gordon, *UT*, section 9. 20, p. 77, for the same in Ugaritic.

[1] *CAD*, "A" Part II, 234-36; see above, pp. 236-37 for examples.

[2] For an explanation of the rare spellings of these two verbs, see *GKC* sections 64c, 67o, pp. 16 9, 179; Jouon, *Grammaire*, section 102k, p. 272.

related to the Arabic XXXX which in Theme V means "to groan repeatedly." It is so used of a camel. When the subject is a man, the word means "to speak angrily.[1] Hence, this is an example of onomatopoeia.[2]

One of the most telling examples of the use of the Hebrew verb is in Psalm 7:12 [Eng. v. 11]

> God is a righteous judge,
> And God is *thundering indignation* [זֹעֵם] every day!

Delitzsch comments on the force of this word as it is used in this psalm:

> If God will in the end let his wrath break forth, He will not do it without having previously given threatenings thereof every day, viz. to the ungodly, cf. Isa. lxvi. 14, Mal. i. 4. He makes these feel His זעם beforehand in order to strike a wholesome terror into them.[3]

In Numbers 23:7 the verb זעם is colored by its relationship to the verb ארר. It means to express indignation to the point of execration.[4]

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[1] J. G. Hava, *Al-Faraid: Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1964), p. 290.

[2] "The formation of a word that sounds like its referent, as *buzz, crack, cuckoo*." *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. William Morris (Boston: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc, , and Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), p. 919.

[3] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. by Francis Bolton (3 vols.; reprint; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House [n. d.]), I, 144.

[4] Compare the Latin and German terms given by Lisowsky, KHAT, p. 450: *exsecrari, increpare; verwunschen, schelten*. Goldberg reads: "Yomm, schilt Israel!" Numeri, p. 99. Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung, "reads: and verw,nsch' mir Israel!" Greenstone, *Numbers*, p. 254, reads "And come, execrate Israel."

The nuance that this verb adds to its parallel אָרַר is that of anger.[1]

The next feature of this bicola to which our attention comes is the parallelism "Jacob // Israel." It is significant that these two words form a regular "a-b" pair in our oracles some seven times (Num. 23:7, 10, 21, 23, 23: 24:5, 17). In addition, the word "Israel occurs in 24:18 and the word "Jacob" in 24:19. Stanley Gevirtz has commented on this phenomenon at length in his monograph, citing the aberrant views of von Gall on this pair.[2] He also notes that Binns and Marsh both state that this is a rare pair of words. Such a claim is patently false, he argues, as the pair occurs some fifty-six times.[3]

In the first verse of our oracle we have seen the introductory monocolon followed by two lines of bicola comprising the exordium. In these lines there is the setting of the stage. Balaam emphasizes the distance from which he has been summoned, and he states the reasons for which he has

[1] So Hengstenberg, *A Dissertation on the History and Prophecies of Balaam*, trans. by J. E. Ryland (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1848), p. 402.

[2] Gevirtz, *Patterns*, pp. 52-55. Von Gall argued that the parallel was used only by late writers. Compare also the attack on von Gall by John Mauchlin, "The Balaam-Balak Songs and Saga, " *Presentation Volume to William Barron Stevenson,* "Studia Semitica et Orientalia II (Glasgow: Glasgow University Oriental Society, 1945), pp. 75-76.

[3] Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 53. Cf. , L. Elliott Binns, *The Book of Numbers,* "The Westminster Commentaries," ed. Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson (London: Methuen & Co. , Ltd. , 1927), p. 161; John Marsh, "The Book of Numbers, " *The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. George Arthur Buttrick (12 vols.; York: Abingdon Press, 1953), II, 255. For a fine treatment of "a--b" words in Hebrew poetry, see Robert G. Boling, "'Synonymous' Parallelism in the Psalms, " *JSS*, V (1960), 221-55.

come: to curse Israel, to execrate the nation of God.

Balaam's inability to curse Israel (23:8). --Balaam's inability
to do that for which he was summoned is stated in these words:

<div dir="rtl">

מָה אֶקֹּב לֹא קַבֹּה אֵל
וּמָה אֶזְעֹם לֹא זָעַם יהוה:

</div>

How am I able to imprecate whom God has not imprecated?
And how am I able to execrate whom Yahweh has not execrated?

In this line of bicola we are told that God has not cursed Israel and that
Balaam is unable to curse Israel. The rather long meter of this bicola is 5:5
by stress count. The parallelism is a fully balanced, a b c // a' b' c' , with
the interesting shift in that the "b" and "c" members of each colon are made
of forms of the same verb.[1] The word מָה is used to introduce each colon,
as an adverbial interrogative, expressing that which is regarded as impossible.[2]

The new word for "curse" in this verse is קבב. Both uses
are in the Qal, but the second has a rare 3ms suffix as in Exodus 32:25
פְּרָעֹה "Aaron had let them get out of control."[3] The verb קבב "to utter a
curse, " does not have any known cognates in the standard reference languages

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[1] Albright terms this "etymological assonance," and feels that
it is a later type of poetic-rhetorical device than that of repetitive parallelism.
William Foxwell Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical
Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Com-
pany, Inc., 1968), p. 16.

[2] *BDB*, p. 553; see also *WHS*, p. 125.

[3] See *GKC*, section 58 g, pp. 156-57; Jouon, *Grammaire*, section
61i, p. 131.

It is used regularly throughout our corpus (Num. 22:11, 17; 23:8, 11, 13, 25, 27; 24:10), and in four other places (Job 3:8; 5:3; Prov. 11:26; 24:24). The parallelism קבב//זעם is found in Proverbs 24:24.[1]

As to the absolute impossibility of Balaam to curse Israel, Unger has written:

> It was impossible for Balaam to curse or denounce Israel whom God had blessed, 8-9. The reason is that Israel's standing as a redeemed people was immutable in the light of the serpent "lifted up" (21:5-9) and the water out of the struck rock (20:11). Israel's state was morally-reprehensible, but this called for the Lord's disciplinary action against the people, not His judgment or curse upon them (Rom 11:29).[2]

The imperfects of the verse are fine examples of potential imperfects which are negated, and may be compared to "How am I able to bear alone . . . " of Deuteronomy 1:12.[3]

The alternation of divine names as a criterion for source analysis runs counter to our present verse where El and Yahweh are parallel. Noth states, "the archaic word *'el* ('God') is found with the same meaning as the

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[1] Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 55. Gevirtz observes the interchange of verbs for cursing in verses 7-8 of our oracle and abstracts the pattern: "Curse // execrate :: imprecate // execrate, " or a // b :: c // b. He finds the same pattern in Genesis 27:29 in the words "serve // bow down :: be lord // bow down." In our present text the *silluq*, intervenes; but the interchange may still be deliberate, even if one does not wish to use the term "parallelism."

[2] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 134.

[3] Compare, Waltke, *HSN*, p. 38.

divine name 'Yahweh,' which is used even in E in the solemn mode of expression employed in the Balaam discourse."[1] Yet it was on the alternation of "Yahweh" and "Elohim" that he concluded that chapters 22-24 are "obviously not a unified whole."[2] Indeed, the use of the designations for deity in the Balaam materials must remain a constant embarrassment to literary criticism.[3]

Balaam blesses Israel as unique among the nations (23:9).--In verse nine Balaam views Israel as unique among the nations:

כִּי מֵרֹאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ
וּמִגְּבָעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ
הֶן־עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן
וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב:

When from the top of the mountains I see him,
And from the hills I gaze at him:
>   Look! A people that dwells alone,
>   And among the nations it is not reckoned!

[1] Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, trans. by James Martin, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 183.

[2] Ibid., p. 171.

[3] The use of the designations for deity is developed in full below, pp. 358-402. Even Eissfeldt had to abandon this criterion in the Balaam oracles. See Otto Eissfeldt, "Die Komposition der Bileam-Erzahlung, Eine Nachprofung von Rudolphs Beitrag -.ur Hexateuchkritik, *ZAW*, LVII (1939), 212-41. Compare also J. Coppers, "Les Oracles de Bileam: leur origine litteraire et leur portee prophetiaque, " *Melanges Eugene Tisserant*, Vol. I. *Ecriture Sainte-- Ancien Orient*, "Studi e Testi, " 231 (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticunna, 1964), p. 73. On the translation problems of this verse in the LXX, see Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek,* rev. by Richard Rusden Ottley; appendix added by H. St J. Thackeray (reprint of 1902 ed.; New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1968), p. 332.

This verse contains two lines of bicola. The first line of bicola has a 3:2 meter and is in synonymous parallelism, a b c // b' c' . The second line has 1:3 meter with synthetic parallelism, a b c // C'. The translation given suggests that this verse contains a protasis and an apodosis in the respective of bicola. This is the position maintained by Gevirtz.[1] The particle כִּי is thus to be taken in a temporal sense, rather than a causal sense, and it does double duty for both members of the first line of bicola.[2]

The parallelism of the words "see" // "gaze" [שׁוּר // רָאָה] Is noted by Gevirtz in his monograph as another example of a fixed pair.[3] Indeed, the same coupling of words, in the same order, may be found in Balaam's fourth oracle, Numbers 24:17 a-b, as well as in Job 35:5.[4] The verb רָאָר, "to see, " is an exceedingly common root in Hebrew, whereas the parallel word שׁוּר II, "to behold, regard, is relatively rare, being used only sixteen times (ten of which are in Job). No cognates are given to this latter word in the standard lexica. In Hosea 14:9 [Eng. v. 8] Yahweh asks,

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[1] Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 55.

[2] For the uses of this particle see Williams, *WHS*, sections 444-445, p. 74, and section 496, p. 84; *GKC*, section 164d, p. 502; Jouon, *Grammaire*, section 166, a-p, pp. 511-12. For k in a temporal sense in Ugaritic, see *UT*, p. 41.6, item 1183; *WUS*, p. 142, item 1271.

[3] Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 56.

[4] Roots cognate to רָאָה "to see" and שׁוּר "to behold, "have not been isolated in Ugaritic. The verbal roots semantically related to "see" are: (1) *'mr*, (2) *bdy*, (3) *ᶜyn*, and (4) *ph*.

"O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?" He then adds, "It is I who answer and look after him. [אֲנִי עָנִיתִי וַאֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ]." Its association in this verse with "answer" justifies the rendering of the verb שׁוּר, "to regard with watchful care." In our verse the word means "to observe closely."

The parallelism "mountains // hills" [גְּבָעוֹת//צָרִים] in our verse calls for comment. The usual pair in Hebrew is גְּבָעוֹת//הָרִים, a set occurring quite often in Hebrew poetry. The pair in our verse reflects a fixed pair in Ugaritic poetry: *gb^c* "hill" // *gr* "mountain." This latter pair occurs Some six times in the Ugaritic texts and its use in our bicola seems to argue for a northern dialect of Balaam.[1]

The word הן, "behold" calls attention to the apodosis in the second bicola of our verse. Israel is a people unique from the nations. As Isaiah 1:4 would indicate, the words גוי and עם may be used as synonyms

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[1] So Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 57. One may now confirm his count by referring to the new volume by Richard E. Whitaker, *A Concordance of Ugaritic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 161; a volume which replaces G. Doublas Young's *Concordance of Ugaritic* (Roma: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1956). Whitiker shows a listing of the word *gr* some 57 times in all. As to the problem of associating Hebrew צוּר with Ugaritic *gr*, see Gevirtz, *Patterns*, pp. 56-57. The letter *g* is polyphonous in Ugaritic as may be seen in the chart in *UT*, p. 28. It may be stated to be somewhat surprising, therefore, that *KBL* does not list.*gr* as cognate with צוּר on p. 799. Albright speaks of the association of these terms in his article, "Oracles, " p. 212. The most recent discussion of the parallelism *gb^c* // *gr* is to be found in *RSP*, p. 306, item II. 449. There is the following word of caution in this work, however "It must be noted . . . that *gr* is probably the least precisely defined vocable in Ugaritic, " p. 435, item III. 94.

and are not to be distinguished in all cases. But in our verse a contrast seems clearly implied (note the לֹא in the second member). Speiser writes that "where the Bible juxtaposes [c]*am* and *goy*, it does so deliberately and for purposes of subtle distinction."[1] The word עם would seem to relate more to a sense of community than does גּוֹי. Often, but not always, the word עַם is used for Israel, whereas גּוֹי is reserved for non-Hebrew peoples.[2] In our verse Israel the עַם is totally distinct from the גּוֹיִם.

The key term in the bicola seems to be the word לְבָדָד "alone." This word is related to the root בדד I, "to be separated, isolated," and may be compared with XXXXX which means: II "to separate;" IV "to divide;" V "to become separated;" and X "to be alone, independent."[3] Significant parallel passages in the Hebrew Bible for the use of this word include:

> [The leper] shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone [בָּדָד]; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.   [Lev. 13:46]

> So Israel dwells securely;
> The fountain of Jacob secluded.[בָּדָד] [Deut 33:28]

> Yahweh alone [בָּדָד] guides him,
> And there was no foreign god with him. [Deut. 32:12]

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[1] E. A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel, " *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser*, ed. J. J. Finkelstein and Moshe Greenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), p. 164.

[2] See the summary of the usage in *BDB*, p. 156.

[3] Lane, I, i, 160-63.

Our passage expands the thought of the colon, "a people that dwells alone," by adding the synthetic parallel, "and among the nations it is reckoned." The term יִתְחַשָּׁב, is a Hithpael from חשׁב, and as such is a *hapax legomenon*. The Qal of this root means "to think, account," and is used widely; the root also occurs in Niphal and Piel themes. Although discounted by Gevirtz,[1] the term יִתְחַשָּׁב seems admirably fitted as a parallel for the word לְבָדָד. Israel is distinct from the nations. She is unique. This fact seems to overwhelm Balaam. He looks intently and steadfastly at the nation, and then shouts: "Look!' --Here is a people that is utterly distinct from all the nations!" This thought forms one of the important contributions of the Balaam oracles to the theology of Israel Israel is "alone" because she is distinctly Yahweh's possession (Deut. 4:20), and Yahweh's inheritance (Deut. 9:29). This was part of her promise (Exod. 19:5-6), and this was one of the themes sung by Moses as well as Balaam (compare Deut. 32.7 9- 33: 28-29).

Buber remarks on Israel's distinction merely in terms of her being an עם rather than a גוי.[2] Yet it is more than her sense of community

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[1] Gevirtz goes quite his own way in this bicola. He dismisses the *hapax legomenon* merely because it is a *hapax legomenon* and thus does not fit into his scheme of fixed pairs, *Patterns*, p. 59. Such is an example of a method becoming a master. We may cite Freedman's strong words of caution against emendation for whatever reason, "Prolegomenon," pp. xxxix-xli. K. A. Kitchen has stated that "No matter how brilliant, or finely adorned with all the critical acumen of scholarly judgment, guesswork remains qualitatively guesswork, from the point of view of a strict and proper methodology." "Historical Method and Early Hebrew Tradition, " *TB*, XVII (1966), 65, n. 3.

[2] Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*

that makes Israel distinct: it is her unique relationship with Yahweh, a point to be developed in the subsequent oracles. Moriarty writes, "Israel is Yahweh's chosen people, set apart from all other nations. It is to be different from them just as Yahweh is different from their gods."[1] Even more strongly stated is this estimation by Habel:

> A sovereign choice and historical selection of this caliber inevitably involves a choice on the part of the chosen. *Israel is surrounded by the isolation of divine intervention*. Israel is different by virtue of this interference; it is *qados*, because of Yahweh's self-revelation in the election. The pagan prophet Balaam also senses this characteristic. [Emphasis in original.][2]

When verse 9 is understood aright, it lends a major contribution to our theology of God and His people. They are alone and distinct, because they are related to him who is holy and unique. This verse implies more about Yahweh than it states about His people.

Balaam's Expression of Futility (23:10). --Having stated the grand words of verse 9, Balaam then expresses his utter futility:

מִי מָנָה עֲפַר יַעֲקֹב
וּמִסְפָּר אֶת־רֹבַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
תָּמֹת נַפְשִׁי מוֹת יְשָׁרִים
וּתְהִי אַחֲרִיתִי כָּמֹהוּ׃

Harper Torchbooks, The Cloister Library (New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1958), p. 32.

[1] Frederick L. Moriarty, *The Book of Numbers, Part II, With a Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press [Paulist Fathers] , 1960), p. 8.

[2] Norman C. Habel, *Yahweh Versus Baal: A Conflict of Religious Cultures* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1964), p. 43.

Who has ever numbered the dust of Jacob?
Or who has ever counted the dust-cloud of Israel?
Let me die the death of the upright!
O that my latter end could be like his

This verse is comprised of two lines of bicola. Each line has a 4:3 meter and has synonymous parallelism with the pattern a b c // a' b' c' . Together, these two lines are in formal parallelism when taken together. In the first line Balaam expresses his own futility as against the manifold blessing of Israel. In the second line he utters a futile wish to share in the blessing of Israel. This verse has been debated keenly by exegetes; a suggested interpretation will be given with attention to some of the literature.

The first line of bicola has a grammatical problem in the second member in the word וּמִסְפָּר. Rather than emend the word, as many have done, it seems best to regard this form as an abbreviation for וּמִי סָפַר, "and who has ever counted;" thus yielding nice parallelism with the first colon.[1]

A second difficulty lies in the word רֹבַע. If it is taken as "one-fourth, " as in most translations, it seems a rather poor parallel for עֲפַר, "dust, " the leading term in the pair. We accept as most probable a solution proposed by many scholars that the Hebrew word רבע may be compared to

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[1] So, e. g. , Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (reprint of 1896 ed.; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1966), p. 168; G. R. Driver, "Abbreviations in 'the Massoretic Text," *Textus*, I (1960), 112-31.

the Akkadian *turbu'u* "dust cloud," and the Arabic XXXXX with the same meaning.[1] The image "dust // dust clouds seems to be an explicit reference to the patriarchal blessing, as in Genesis 13:16:

> And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth;
> so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then
> your descendants can also be numbered.
>
> [N. A. S. B., cf. Gen. 28:14]

There may also be an *implicit* reference to mantic acts in the parallel "Number // count " as is true in some Akkadian texts.[2] In either case, No one has ever numbered the dust of Jacob or counted the dust-cloud of Israel!

The second line of bicola of our verse is no less problematic then the first in the eyes of many scholars. Nevertheless, the text seems to indicate the expression of a futile desire by Balaam to participate in the blessing of Israel. Now, this is marvelous. He who came to curse Israel asks to join Israel in her blessing. The irony of this verse seems to surpass

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[1] Compare H. L. Ginsberg, "Lexicographical Notes. 3. רֹבַע Dust," *ZAW*, LI (1933), 309; J. H. Hertz, "Numbers XXIII, 9b 10, " *ET*, XLV (1933-34), 524; D. Winton Thomas, "The Word רֹבַע in Numbers XXIII. 10," *ET*, XLVI (1934-35), 285. This solution is also accepted in our newest Hebrew lexicon; see Holladay, *CHAL*, p. 331. Others who support this view include A. R. Hulst, *et al., Old Testament Translation Problems*, "Helps for Translators Prepared Under the Auspices of the United Bible Societies, " Vol. I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 11; and even (the cautious:) James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1968), index. Dahood goes another direction by suggesting that רבע be read as "stag, " as a reference to the "warriors" of Jacob. For the literature on this position, and a critique (supporting "dust"), see D. Miller, "Animal Names in Ugaritic," *UF*, II, 184.

[2] For the evidence, as well as a word of caution in terms of North West Semitic uses of מנה // ספר in this light, see *RSP*, pp. 285-86, section II. 401.

even that of the donkey narrative.

The term "upright" [יְשָׁרִים] may be an example of a singular enclitic *mem*, and thus agreeing in number with the singular suffix of the last word of the second colon כָּמֹהוּ.[1] The word נֶפֶשׁ in our verse clearly speaks of *life* rather than just "soul."[2] The parallel אַחֲרִית appears to refer to "latter end" or "death" rather than "progeny" as some have supposed.[3] This verse may thus be seen as a statement of futility. Balaam is unable to affect the people of Israel with a curse. Rather than curse them he is used by God to bless them, and then he utters the futile wish to join real in her blessing. This is a forlorn hope, however. His death was in fact in the enemy camp (Numbers 31:8, 16).

Hence, in this introductory oracle, we have the major elements on display. Balaam is unable to curse; Israel is unique because of her blessing; Balak is furious--and Yahweh is sovereign.

The Second Oracle (Numbers 23:18-24)

The theme of this oracle may be stated to be: Israel's Unique

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[1] So Albright, "Oracles, " p. 231, n. 28a; cf. David Noel Freedman, "Archaic Forms in Early Hebrew Poetry, ZAW, LXXII (1960), 104. Others have taken this word as a misspelling of יְשֻׁרוּן; see Harry M. Orlinsky, *SVT*, XIV, 18, n. 6; S. E. Loewenstamm, "The death of the Upright and the World to Core " *JJS*, XVI (1965), 183-86.

[2] Compare von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 153.

[3] E. g., A. Thom, "Balaam's Prayer," *ET*, XVI (1904-05), 334; Cf. Hulst, *et al.*, *Old Testament Translation Problems,* p. 11.

Blessing Comes from Her Unique Relationship to God. In this oracle, what was implicit in the first oracle become explicit. The uniqueness of Israel is to be found in her unique relationship to her God. This is the reason that cursing her is ineffective. This oracle may be outlined as follows:

> *Introductory formula:* Balaam takes up his oracle (18a).
> *Exordium*:　　Balaam demands the attention of his hearer for the stunning
> 　　　　　　　oracle he is about to pronounce (18b).
> *Blessing*:
> A.　　Israel's unique blessing issues from her unique God (19).
> 　　　1.　　He is totally unlike man in His person.
> 　　　2.　　He is totally unlike man in His word.
> B.　　Israel's unique blessing is irrevocable, as it was given to her
> 　　　by her God (20).
> 　　　1.　　Balaam is commanded to bless.
> 　　　2.　　Balaam is powerless to curse.
> C.　　Israel's unique blessing is explained by the presence of her
> 　　　God (21-23).
> 　　　1.　　God permits no cursing of Israel (21a).
> 　　　2.　　God is present with Israel (21b).
> 　　　3.　　God is the protector of Israel (22).
> 　　　4.　　God is the power effective in Israel (23).
> D.　　Israel's unique blessing is to be exhibited in her power in
> 　　　battle (24).
> 　　　1.　　As a lion she rises for the kill.
> 　　　2.　　As a lion she feasts on the slain.

*Introductory Formula and Exordium (18). --*This oracle is characterized by a full use of fixed pairs of parallel words as well as the employment of arresting figures. The Person of God as the effective force in Israel permeates the oracle. God is different from man; His word is different from that of man. God is the source of blessing, not man. Yahweh is with His people and is their king. God is the deliverer from Egypt, and is the strength of His people. Because of God, His people become victorious. Hence, it

may be seen that more is said in this oracle concerning God and His power than any other subject. The introductory formula is the same throughout the oracle corpus, as we have noted above. The exordium is quite different, how-ever, and the difference may be explained in part by the intensification of the thematic nature of the oracle itself. וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר

קוּם בָּלָק וּשֲׁמָע

הַאֲזִינָה עָדַי בְּנוֹ צִפֹּר:

> And he took up his oracle and said:
>> Rise, 0 Balak and hear!
>> Give ear to me 0 son of Zippor!

The introductory monocolon has a count of 3. The second part of the verse is made up of one line of bicola in synonymous parallelism, with a meter of 3:4. The introductory word קוּם is used to command attention, much dike the German "Achtung!"[1] The parallelism may be represented as a b c // c' b' . " Balak" is parallel to "son of Zippor." The word בְּנוֹ is to be ex-plained as the word "son" with the archaic nominative case ending, an indicator of the antiquity of the poem, and a witness to the fact that it was not modern-ized as greatly as other parts of the Torah.[2] The name of Balak's father [צִפּוֹר] means "bird," or perhaps, "sparrow."[3]

The parallel pair for words of hearing is common in the Hebrew

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[1] Norman Snaith, ed., *The Century Bible: Leviticus and Numbers* (New ed.; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. , 1967), p. 293.

[2] See Albright, "Oracles, " p. 216, n. 54; idem, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. p. 11. Cf. , *GKC*, section 90 o, 96.

[3] So BDB, p. 862. Compare צִפֹּרָה, Moses' wife (Exod. 2:21).

Bible, and this pair (in terms of roots) may also be found in Ugaritic.[1] שָׁמַע

is the common Hebrew verb for "hear." אָזַן is a denominative verb from

the noun אֹזֶן, "ear," and may be rendered, "give ear, use your ears, make

with the ears." The repetitive pair seem to be used to lend gravity and

solemnity to the announcement that is about to be given (as may be seen in

Isaiah 1:2.

Israel's Unique Blessing Issues from Her God (19)--In this

section of the oracle we learn that Yahweh is totally unlike man in His

person, and He is totally unlike man in His word. Verse 19 consists of two

lines of bicola. The first line has the meter 4:2, and the parallelism is

a b c // b' c'. The second line has the meter 4:3, and the parallelism is

a b c // a' b' c' . Each line is in synonymous parallelism, and the two lines

together may be regarded as synthetic, for the second line builds on the

statement of the first.

<div dir="rtl">

לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וִיכַזֵּב
וּבֶן־אָדָם וְיִתְנֶחָם
הַהוּא אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה
וְדִבֶּר וְלֹא יְקִימֶנָּה׃

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God is not a man, that He is able to lie,
Nor is He a son of man that He is able to be sorry (concerning
    what he has spoken).
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken and will He not confirm it?

In this great verse it is seen that Israel's blessing depends

[1] Compare *RSP*, p. 360, section II. 565.

on God cannot change His word of blessing. He has bound the fulfillment of His word to His own character. God is different from man in that, unlike man, God is *unable* to lie. The verb וְיִכַזֵּב may be taken as a potential imperfect that is negated. The Mighty is unable--unable to contradict His character, unable to demean His excellences. "Not a man is God." The word order in our verse places emphasis on the negation. God is utterly different from man. Something that comes far too easy for many men is impossible for an Almighty God: He cannot lie.

The verb כָּזַב is used of man in Proverbs 14:5 in, a significant contrast to our verse:

A faithful witness does not lie [יְכַזֵּב]
But a false witness breathes out lies [כְּזָבִים],

A use that is complementary to our verse is found in Psalm 89:36, where Yahweh speaks through the Psalmist:

Once I have sworn by my holiness,
I will not lie [אֲכַזֵּב] to David.

The word נחם is used widely in the Old Testament. In the Niphal theme it may mean "to be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion." In the Piel theme it may be used in the sense "to comfort, to console. " In the Hithpael, as in this verse, this word may mean "to be sorry, to rue or repent, to comfort oneself, to ease onself by taking vengeance."[1] It would seem that incur verse the word כזב colors the use of the word נחם. The

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[1] See *BDB*, p. 636; compare Holladay, *CHAL*, p. 234.

word "to lie" is parallel to the verb "to repent" in the sense of being "sorry for what one has said." The sense would then be, "to take back, to revoke, to withdraw"--or to wish to do such. Hence Eissfeldt translates the word with the German verb *zurucknehmen*.[1] Our verse is taken by some theologians to be an example of anti-anthropomorphism, stressing the difference between God and man. It should be compared with I Samuel 15:29.[2]

Not only is God distinct from man with respect to His person, He is distinct with respect to His word. He must fulfill His promise, for He has bound His character to His word. The verb "to do" [עשׂה] is paired by the term "to carry out, to confirm" [קום in the Hiphil). There are several occurrences of this verb used of Yahweh in which the covenant or a promise are in view (Gen. 26:3; Lev. 26:9; I Kings 6:12; Deut. 8:18). What God has spoken to Israel is His blessing. This is what He is bound to confirm. It was not a lie, nor is it something for which God is sorry. He will do it-- He must do it. He is bound by His word.

It is on this basis that *verse 20 is given in which the blessing of God is seen to be irrevocable:*

הִנֵּה בָרֵךְ לָקָחְתִּי
וּבֵרֵךְ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנָה:

Behold! I have received (orders) to bless;
Since He has blessed, I am unable to revoke it!

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[1] Otto Eissfeldt, "Sinai-Erzahlung and Bileam-Spruche, " *HUCA*, XXXII (1961), p. 188. See also Snaith, *Numbers*, p. 294.
[2] See Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 27.

This verse is composed on one line of bicola, with 3:3 meter. The parallelism appears to be synthetic, bound together by the uses of the verb "to bless." Balaam is under orders to bless. Since Yahweh has blessed Israel, Balaam is quite unable to revoke the blessing. The first word of the verse is the lively introductory element הִנֵּה, calling attention to the settled fact announced in the verse: He has blessed, I cannot change it. The wording of the verse is quite forceful, with the omission of a word for "command," "orders," or the like. "Behold! To bless . . . I have received." The verb שׁוּב is given as a potential imperfect with negation, in the Hiphil theme.

Similar uses of this word are found in the refrain in the first two chapters of Amos (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) where Yahweh says, "I will not revoke (its punishment)."

The next movement in our oracle is found in *verses 21-23 in which it is insisted that Israel's unique blessing is to be found in the presence of her God.* Verse 21 is the first statement of this concept:

לֹא הִבִּיט אָוֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב
וְלֹא־רָאָה עָמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
יהוה אֱלֹהָיו עִמּוֹ
וּתְרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ:

He has not seen evil in Jacob,
Nor has He observed trouble in Israel.
Yahweh his God is with Him.
And the battle cry of a King is in him!

This verse has two lines of bicola. Each has a meter of 3:3, and is synony-

mous. The two lines taken as a unit form antithetical parallelism: "There is no trouble in Israel, but Yahweh is in Israel." The pattern of the first bicola is a b c // a' b' c'. The pattern of the second is a b // a' b' . Pairs of parallel words include the common couplings: עָמָל // אָוֶן ;רָאָה // נָבַט; יִשְׂרָאֵל // יַעֲקֹב // יהוה אֱלֹהָיו. There is a unique coupling in the second bicola: תְּרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ //.

The term אָוֶן is often a word for sin, more specifically for "iniquity." The word עָמָל means "trouble, labor, toil, or sorrow." These words form a common pair in Hebrew poetry. In the present context they may refer to Israel's standing as against her state, as suggested by Unger and others.[1] They may, however, refer to mantic powers and the curse. Our narrative is surrounded with the manifest iniquity of Israel. Chapter 21 deals with an act of iniquity so severe that a terrible punishment was effected, a punishment which was alleviated only through the grace of God in the provision of the bronze serpent raised on a standard. Numbers 25 concerns another act of iniquity which was severely punished by Yahweh. Since our passage is in the midst of the iniquity of Israel, as it seems; it may be difficult to sustain the argument of *standing* as against *state*, as Unger does. The words in view *may* be a reference to evil and trouble *from without* in the sense of mantic acts and magic arts. The *beth* in each case, may be used in the sense of *against*. This verse would then be a milder statement of that which becomes

[1] See above, p. 266.

more explicit in verse 23, where the normative terms for the mantic arts are used. Since God does not see iniquity and trouble in Israel, Balaam the "seer" cannot see such either.

The reason is stated clearly: "Yahweh his God is with him, and the battle cry of a King is among them " This is a people indwelt by Yahweh. Hence, this is a people immune from verbal and mantic acts of iniquity and sorrow from without The ascription of the term "king" to Yahweh is a first in Pentateuchal theology. This is remarkable! One of the grandest titles of God, and one which becomes the designation of the Lord Jesus Christ, was first applied by Balaam the pagan mantic who was used as Yahweh's tool

With verse 22 we have come face-to-face with the central fact of Israel's history--her redemption from Egypt:

אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרָיִם
כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ:

God is bringing them out of Egypt,
He is for him as the horns of the aurochs.'

This verse has one line of bicola, with formal parallelism and a meter of 3:3. God was bringing them out of Egypt. The verb is a participle, expressive of the fact that the Exodus which began a generation ago had not yet come to its climax. There is a sense in which the Exodus does not find completion until Joshua assumes command and the Conquest begins. Hence, even the Balaam story may be regarded as a part of the larger story of the Exodus from Egypt. This is the greatest act in the history of the nation,

corresponding to the Old Testament believer to the meaning of the resurrection of Christ for the New Testament believer.

Israel was not wandering about on her own; she was being led by God. Israel was immune to the attacks of the enemy; her strength was in God. Balaam uses a vivid and arresting figure, the horns of the aurochs (the wild ox of the ancient Near East)--a traditional image of power, but here applied to Yahweh in dramatic fashion.[1]

Verse 23 serves as the climax of the present division of the oracle in which the presence of God is given as the explanation of Israel's unique blessing:

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[1] It may be noted briefly that the "unicorn" of the King James Version was a mistranslation from the beginning, as may be seen from the plural word for horns [תּוֹעֲפֹת], if nothing else. The word רְאֵם, is now identified as *Bos primigenius*, the aurochs common to Mesopotamia, cf. *WB*, I, 228; G. S. Cansdale, *All the Animals of the Bible Lands* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 82-84. The error concerning the "unicorn" seems to have begun with the LXX which rendered the Hebrew term רְאֵם as *monokeros*. On this subject, see "Allen Howard Godbey, "The Unicorn in the Old Testament," *AJSLL*, LVI (1939), 256-96. Some scholars prefer to identify our Hebrew word with the oryx rather than the aurochs. See F. S. Bodenheimer, *Animals and Man in the Bible Lands*, "Collection de travaux de l'Academie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, " No. 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), pp. 52-53; cf. the 5 agarot stamp in the nature reserve series issued by the state of Israel in 1971, in which the white oryx is identified as the רְאֵם. The image of the aurochs is not to be equated with the sexual bull motif of Canaan, cf. John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament*, SVT (2d rev. ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 158-59. See also, in this regard, van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 26; contra, von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament,* I, 24. The purpose of the image is to refer to strength. The same image is used in this sense in Ugaritic; see below, p. 369. Finally, reference may be made to Rembert Sorg, *Habaqquk III and Selah* (Fifield, Wisc.: King of Martyrs Priory, 1968), pp. 51-64 (a section titled, "Toward a Theology of Horns").

כִּי לֹא־נַחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב
וְלֹא־קֶסֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
כָּעֵת יֵאָמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב
וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מַה־פָּעַל אֵל׃

For there is no divination against Jacob,
Neither is there augury against Israel.
Now it must be said for Jacob,
And for Israel--What God has done.

Verse 23 contains two lines of bicola. The first has synony-mous parallelism in the pattern a b c // a' b' c', with a 3: 2 meter. The second line of bicola has what appears to be climactic parallelism. The first colon is incomplete in itself; the words find their completion in the second colon. The pattern is a b c // c' d e, with a 3:3 meter. Viewed as a verse, the two lines are in antithetical parallelism. God! --not divination or sor-cery--is effective in Israel. The position of *El* at the end of the verse lends to the suspense of the whole, its climax and effectiveness. *El* began verse 22, it concludes verse 23.

The very important word נַחַשׁ as a noun occurs only in our pericope (here and in 24:21). The verb נָחַשׁ is used in the Piel with the meaning, "to practice divination, divine, observe signs. The noun may mean "divination," or may even have the sense of "spell," "bewitchment," or "magic curse."[2] The verb נָחַשׁ is used of Laban (Gen. 30:27), the

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[1] See *BDB*, p. 638.
[2] See Lisowsky, *KHAT*, p. 919; Holladay, *CHAL*, p. 235.

cup of Joseph (Gen. 44:5, 15) and is prohibited of Israel (Gen. 19:26; Deut. 18:10). In fact, the employment of divination by later Israel becomes one of the reasons for Israel's punishment by Yahweh (II Kings 17:17; 21:6; II Chron. 33:6).

The noun קֶסֶם is a synonym of נַחַשׁ and is used here in parallel construction. The noun קֶסֶם or the verb קָסַם are often used in association with the verb נָחַשׁ. The word קֶסֶם is used in our corpus in 22:7 in the expression, קְסָמִים בְּיָדָם, "rewards of divination in their hands." Furthermore, Balaam is called הַקּוֹסֵם Joshua 13:22. There is but one instance in which this noun seems to be used in a good sense:

> A *decision* is on the lips of the king,
> In judgment his mouth shall not be unfaithful.
> [Prov. 16:10]

In all other cases, the word is always negative in the viewpoint of normative Yahwism. It is prohibited in Israel in Deuteronomy 18:10 (along with נַחַשׁ). Saul was excoriated by Samuel for his preference of divination over the clear word of Yahweh in I Samuel 15:23:

> For rebellion is as the sin of divination [קֶסֶם],
> And refractoriness is as iniquity and *teraphim;*
> Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh,
> He has rejected you from (being) king.

In this verse divination is not only related to the sin of rebellion, but also idolatry. The rejection of the clear word of God for the vagaries and caprice of the mantics is folly of the highest magnitude!

Another signal use of the noun (along with its verbal cognate) is found in Ezekiel 13:26 [Eng. v. 21]:

> For the King of Babylon stands at the "mother of the way" [parting, or fork in the road] , at the head of the two roads, to divine divination [לִקְסָם־קָסֶם]; he shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim, he observes the liver.

In our present verse we have two examples of the parallelism Jacob // Israel. In the first pair, the preposition beth is used in the sense "against."[1] Whereas Israel herself might one day fall prey to divination from within, there would never be any effectiveness to mantic acts attacking Israel from without. God wishes His majesty to be declared through the people of Israel. Hence, the majestic line: "Now it must be said for Jacob / and for Israel: What God has done:" In this translation, the verb יֵאָמֵר, is taken as an obligatory imperfect, and the term כָּעֵת is translated "now" as in the standard lexica.[2] The point seems to' be that at the very moment of the enunciation of the Balaam oracle it was evident that God was at work for Israel. The verb פעל is a synonym of עשׂה, used in poetry, meaning "to do, to make."

In the final verse of the oracle we come *to the results for God's*

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[1] So *BDB*, p. 890; cf. the adversative *beth* in *WHS*, p. 47.
[2] So *BDB*, p. 773; *KBL*, p. 746; *KHAW*, p. 354, *CHAL*, p. 287. This may be compared to the expression in I Samuel 9:16, כָּעֵת מָחָר, "at this very moment tomorrow, " cf. *WHS*, p. 50. כָּעֵת by itself is rendered by all the mentioned lexica as "now," not as "at the proper time," as is found, e. g. , in the N. A. S. B.

people coming from His effective power in her: Israel's blessing is exhibited to battle power.

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הֶן־עָם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם
וְכַאֲרִי יִתְנַשָּׂא
לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֹאכַל טֶרֶף
וְדַם־חֲלָלִים יִשְׁתֶּה:

</div>

Look! a people rises as a lioness,
And as a lion it lifts itself;
It will not lie down until it devours the prey,
And drinks the blood of the slain.

Because of the power of Yahweh at work within the nation, Israel is powerful, yea, invincible in battle. The vivid image of a lion is used to describe Israel in her virile power. This verse has two lines of bicola. The first line of bicola has a 3:2 meter and has synonymous parallelism with the pattern a b c // b'c'. The second line has a 4:2 meter, with synonymous parallelism and the pattern a b c // c' b' . Taken together, these two lines exhibit emblematic parallelism, the extended projection of the lion image. The pairs of words used are: אָכַל // שָׁתָה; נָשָׂא // קוּם; אֲרִי//לָבִיא; and דָם־חֲלָלִים//טֶרֶף.[1]

The effectiveness of the lion image was not lost on Israel. Witness the seal from Megiddo with the figure of the roaring lion, inscribed, "Belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam."[2] Moreover, the image is a

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[1] On the set שָׁתָה // אָכַל, see *RSP*, p. 109, section II. 29f.
[2] Item 276, *ANEP*.

reflection of the earliest patriarchal imagery (cf. Gen. 49:9). Vischer remarks on this image as depicting Israel's vocation of "the warrior of God" with triumphant power on the earth.[1] The force of the image is related in these words:

> In Balaam's discourse, as in the Blessings of Jacob and Moses (Gen. 49:9; Deut. 33:20, 22), the lion--the king of animals, and the most dangerous of beasts of prey--is used to symbolize the military prowess of Israel. The awesome spectacle of the lion rearing up to devour its prey sank deep into the imagination of the ancients. This moment, in which the fate of man and beast is decided, makes even the stoutesthearted hunter quake. Such scenes naturally stirred the artistic imagination of the poets, painters and sculptors of antiquity and left their mark on many poems and other works of art in the ancient East.[2]

The image of the lion depicting Israel is also used by the later Israelite prophets. Note especially Micah 5:8:

> And the remnant of Jacob
> Will be among the nations,
> Among many peoples
> Like a lion among the beasts of the forests,
> Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
> Which, if he passes through,
> Tramples down and tears,
> And there is none to rescue.
>   [N.AS.B.]

The concluding verse of the oracle of Balaam serves as a very chilling close to the *masal*. Israel the lion was about to rise, and would not lie down until she had vanquished her foes and feasted upon them. Balak's chagrin is fitting. He had asked Balaam to curse Israel, and found that not only had Balaam blessed Israel, but he had also placed the enemies of Israel

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[1] Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, I, *The Pentateuch*, trans. by A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth Press 1949), p. 234.

[2] *WB*, I, 229; cf. I, 120-21. Cf. Cansdale, *All the Animals*, pp. 105-11.

(including Moab) under the threat of Israel. Implicit in the blessing on Israel is a curse on Moab. Balak's response is one of stunned incredulity. Whereas the first oracle elucidated his surprise:

> What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies,
>
> but behold, you have actually blessed them!
>
> > [Num. 23:11, N. A S. B.]

The second oracle reveals his incredulity and helplessness:

> Do not curse them at all nor bless them at all!
>
> > [Num. 23:25, N. A S. B.]

The theme of the oracle has been demonstrated: *Israel's Unique Blessing Comes from Her Unique Relationship to God.*

The Third Oracle (Numbers 24:3-9)

The oracles of chapter 23 relate to Israel as it was at the time of Balaam. In the oracles of chapter 24 Balaam is given authentic prophetic projection so that he describes Israel as it would be. The difference in the chapters is certainly not to be explained as *vaticinia ex eventu*, but (according to the clear wording of the text), to the fact that the Spirit of God came upon him (24:2) in a gracious and miraculous manner for His own purposes and for His own glory. As has been noted above, there are differences between the two groups of oracles but there are also many points of relationship. The unity of the oracle corpus is not a static unity, but one that is dynamic and progressive.

Concerning the blessings of the third oracle, compare the words

of Milton:

> Meanwhile they in their earthly Canaan placed
> Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins
> National interrupt their public peace,
> Provoking God to raise them enemies:
> From whom as oft he saves them penitent
> By judges first, then under kings; of whom
> The second, both for piety renowned
> And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive
> Irrevocable, that his regal throne
> Forever shall endure; the like shall sing
> All prophecy, that of the royal stock
> Of David (so I name this king) shall rise
> A son, the woman's seed to thee foretold,
> Foretold to Abraham, as in whom shall trust
> All nations, and to kings foretold, of kings
> The last, for of his reign shall be no end.[1]

These words describe Israel the blessed whose blessing finally culminates

in the Blessing of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the third oracle

this is foreshadowed, in the fourth it is stated more dramatically.

The theme of the third oracle may be stated: Israel's Blessing

is Absolute.   An outline of the oracle may be given:

Introductory formula: Balaam takes up his oracle (3a).
Exordium: Balaam, empowered by the Holy Spirit, speaks in a new way
                     of the source of his revelation (3b-4).
Blessing:
A.   The Blessings of Israel will be demonstrated in the land (5-7).
    1.   Israel's dwellings will be beautiful (5).
    2.   Israel's productivity will be bountiful (6).
    3.   Israel's resources will be plentiful (7a).
    4.   Israel's king and kingdom will be powerful (7b).

[1] *Paradise Lost*, XII, 315-330.

B.   The Blessings of Israel are in her God (8).
    1.   Israel's God is her deliverer (8a).
    2.   Israel's God is her protector (8b).
    3.   Israel's God makes her victorious (8c, d, e).
C.   The Blessings of Israel are Absolute (9).
    1.   Israel is like a lion, sovereign and grand (9a).
    2.   Israel's blessing is vouchsafed by the promise of God (9b).

We may now look to the oracle itself.

The introductory formula and the exordium (3-4). --The introductory formula is always the same, but the exordium in this oracle is quite different from those of the two preceding oracles:

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וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר

נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר

וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן:

נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל

אֲשֶׁר מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה

נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם:

</div>

And he took up his oracle and said:

> The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,
> Even the utterance of the strong man whose eye is opened;
> The utterance of the one who hears the words of God,
> Who sees the vision of Shaddai;
> Falling down, but whose eyes are uncovered:

Verse three is composed of an introductory monocolon with the count of 3, and one line of bicola with the meter 4:4. The parallelism in the bicola is synthetic with the pattern, a b c //a d e. The first colon is arresting in the solemn pattern of four words each of two syllables with the accent on

the ultima. Moreover, there is assonance in the three words of the colon
beginning with *beth*. The solemnity and gravity of the oracle is enhanced
by the repetition of the word נְאֻם three times, introducing the first three
cola of the exordium. This term נְאֻם is a solemn technical term used in
oracles. Of the 360 times this word is used it is used of men only nine times
(cf. 2 Sam. 23:1). The employment of this term, "whisper, utterance, dec-
laration," three times in this exordium serves to elevate the importance of
of the oracle and to prepare the listener for its amazing revelation. The use
of the phrase, "son of Beor," may serve to strengthen Balaam's claim to
authority as a *baru*.[1]

Balaam uses the term גֶּבֶר respecting himself, a word denoting
a young, strong man. This word is used at times in wisdom sayings (see, e. g.,
Jer., 17:5; 17:7; Psalm 34:9). He makes two references to his eyes in the
exordium. The first is highly debated. Many scholars wish to emend the
text to read שְׁתֻם as שְׁתֻם and mean "the man whose eye is closed."[2] This,
however, does not accord with 24:4c, "whose eyes are uncovered." Hence,
we prefer to read שָׁתַם as the root in the first instance, with the meaning
"open."[3] This would then be a designation that Balaam is a "seer."

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[1] See above, p. 184.

[2] *KBL*, p. 1015, followed by Holladay, *CHAL*, p. 355, reads
the root שָׁתַם, "to obstruct. " The Vulgate rendered "closed" as well

[3] See *BDB*, p. 1060, *GB*, p. 867, *KHAW*, p, 531. For a later(!)
use of this term, see Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1.639: שָׁתַם, "to open, to unseal."
This word is used of boring a hole through a vessel in order to get wine through

The second verse of the oracle forms a part of the lengthy exordium. Verse 4 has one line of tricola with the meter 3:4:3. The first two cola are synonymously parallel and the third colon is synthetically parallel to the others. The pattern is a b c // c' b' // d e f. The repetition of the word נאם in the first colon serves to connect this verse with the former verse in this extensive exordium. The last colon of verse 4 relates to the second colon of verse 3, another means of interrelating the two verses.

In this second verse of the exordium there are two things said respecting Balaam's reception of revelation and one assertion is made concerning his condition. Respecting his reception of revelation, we are told that he "hears the words of God," and he "sees the vision of Shaddai."[1] Although prostrate, his eyes are open. He is a *seer*, but now his visions come from the God of Israel. In chapter 22 there seemed to be a play on the concept that Balaam was a seer, for he was unable to see that which his donkey observed. But in this chapter he is an effective instrument in

a tube. The same meaning is given for Aramaic שְׁתַם. Fohrer may be cited as a recent authority to retain "open" as the meaning for the word, though he does so with a question mark, cf. *FHAW*, p. 296. Allegro attempts to relate the Hebrew word of our text to an Arabic word *satimun*, meaning "austere, grim-faced. " He thus reads "the grim-faced one." J. M. Allegro, "The Meaning of the Phrase setum hacayi.n in Num. MV 3. 15." *VT*, IV (1954), 78-79.

[1] An extensive survey of the employment of the several designations for deity in these verses is given in chapter VI of the present paper.

mediating the message of God.

"Hearing the words of God" and "seeing the vision of Shaddai" are expressions authenticating his message as from Yahweh. These words of the reception of the divine revelation are determinative for the message that follows. Although Balaam himself is to be regarded as morally and spiritually degenerate, his reception of the message of Yahweh is as authentic as that of any prophet of the Old Testament. One need only compare these terms used of Balaam and the terms used of the writing prophets to demonstrate this.[1] The introductory words to our oracle are crucial for an appreciation of the message. In this oracle by the power of the Spirit of God, Balaam is transported in authentic prophetic projection and vision to a picture of the glories of Israel in the land of Canaan. Hearing God's words, and seeing Shaddai's vision--Balaam views Israel in magnificent material blessing, to the chagrin of Balak, and to his own startled surprise. So important are the words of this oracle, and so unexpected is the human agent of revelation, that this strategic two-verse, five-cola, exordium is necessary.

The Blessing proper begins in the fifth verse. The first segment is found in verses 5-7: *The Blessings of Israel will be demonstrated in the land.* The first point under this division is the promise that *Israel's dwellings will be beautiful (24:5):*

[1] Compare Isaiah 2:1, Amos 1:1, and Micah 1:1.

מַה־טֹּבוּ אֹהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב

מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob,
Your tabernacles, O Israel!

This verse has one line of bicola with synonymous parallelism in the pattern a b c // b' c' , with a 3:2 meter. The pairs are מִשְׁכָּן // אהל;[1] and יִשְׂרָאֵל // יעקב. The verb טֹבוּ does double-duty for both lines,[2] and is prefaced by the exclamatory use of מַה, "how!"--expressing admiration or astonishment.[3] As Noth remarks, this is "an admirable apostrophe,"[4] and becomes one of the most loved designations of Israel in the Old Testament.[5] The beauty of Israel's dwellings is part of her blessing, resulting from the goodness of her indwelling God.

The second demonstration of the blessing of Israel in the land is given in verse 6: *Israel's productivity will be bountiful.*

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[1] For a discussion of the pair מִשְׁכָּן // אהל in Ugaritic and in Hebrew, see *RSP*, pp. 1-2-103, section II, 15e; Gevirtz, *Patterns*, p. 55, n. 19; U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath; Canaanite Epics of the Patriarch Age*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1971), pp. 28-29; *idem, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus,* trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The-Hebrew University, 1967), pp. 322-23; 345-46; Gordon, *UT*, p. 145.

[2] Jouon, *Grammaire*, section 112a, renders "ils s ont beaux." He cites this as an example of the *Qatal* of a stative, translated by the present.

[3] Ibid., sections 144 c, 162 a; *GKC*, section 148b; *WHS*, p. 27.

[4] Noth, *Numbers*, p. 190.

[5] See above, p. 13.

כִּנְחָלִים נִטָּיוּ
כְּגַנֹּת עֲלֵי נָהָר
כַּאֲהָלִים נָטַע יהוה
כַּאֲרָזִים עֲלֵי־מָיִם:

As palm trees which stretch themselves out,
As orchards beside the river,
As aloes planted by Yahweh,
As cedars by the waters.

Verse 6 consists of two lines of bicola with synonymous par-
allelism throughout. The first line of bicola has the meter 2:3 and the pattern
a b // a' b'. The second has the meter 3:2, with the pattern a b c // a' b'.
The introductory כְּ in each colon serves to indicate this verse is an extended
metaphor describing the beauty of the dwellings of Israel described in verse
5.

Of the four elements in the comparison, the identification of
the first has been a matter of debate. The word נַחַל occurs often with the
meaning "wady, " and has been understood in that way in this verse by many.[1]
However, because of the following three terms in parallel construction, all
denoting trees and plantings, we prefer to understand the word נַחַל in this

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[1] So, e.g., A. V., Y.L.T., A.O.T., K. J.-II, L. B., J. B., R S. V.,
B. V., S. B. J., S. B. S., AT., etc., etc.

verse to be from another root, meaning palm tree(s).   This is the reading

given in the *New English Bible* and the *Torah*.[1] The verb נטה in the

Niphal in this colon fits the image of trees viewed figuratively as "stretching

themselves out. "

The second colon presents the image of "gardens," or better

"orchards."[3] The is an oft-used and beautiful description of the blessing

of Yahweh on His people. Orchards on the river bespeak luxuriance and

productivity, and form a fitting parallel to the preceding term

The third comparison is that of aloes. Smith writes:

> this is the lofty eaglewood (*aquilaria agollocha*), native to Cochin-
> China, north India, and Malaya, which sometimes gives off a pleas-
> ant smell, as the cedar always does. LXX reads other vowels and
> translates 'tents which God has pitched', and so V and DV. Some
> scholars, knowing that this tree is not native to Palestine, inter-
> change two consonants and read 'terebinths'. But if we are thinking
> in terms of exotic trees, there is no reason why we should not retain
> 'aloes' and even think, as Rashi did, of the aloes which God planted

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[1] This suggestion was made already in *BDB*, p. 636, comparing
Hebrew נהל with Arabic XXXXX; cf. *KBL*, p. 607. The Arabic entry in Lane is
in an uncompleted section, but one may consult the Supplement, I, 8, 3030,
for XXXXX, a cultivator of palm trees. For XXXXX "date palm," see
Han s. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* ed. J. Milton Cowan
(Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), p. 950. See margin, N. A S. B.

[2] On the form, see *GKC*, section 75x.

[3] Compare Arabia XXXX a walled garden of trees or palm trees,
Lane, I, 2, 462-64; cf. XXXXX, the garden of Paradise; *gannatu* occurs in
Akkadian as perhaps an Aramaic loan word, see *CAD*, V, 41. LXX has *para-deisoi*, a "tree park, " (English, "paradise").

in Eden.[1]

The fourth term is אֲרָזִים, "cedars," for which we may compare XXXX, "pine tree." The cedars (of Lebanon) are often used in the Old Testament as a symbol of power, stateliness, and majesty.[2] Israel is compared to a cedar in Psalm 80:11 [Eng. v. 10].

The word "river" at the end of the second colon relates to the word "waters" at the end of the fourth colon, tying the two lines of bicola more closely together. The phrase נָטַע יהוה speaks to the center of the theology of the oracles. Whatever Israel is is to be attributed to Yahweh working for her and in her. Whatever Israel will become is also due only to Yahweh. The four-element conceit of Israel as luxuriant trees planted by Yahweh is marvelous poetry and significant theology indeed. What a contrast to her meager existence for thirty-eight years in the wilderness.

Two more elements are presented in verse 7 respecting the blessings of Israel in the land: (3) Israel's resources will be plentiful (v. 7a and (4) *Israel's king and kingdom will be powerful (v. 7b).*

יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו

וְזַרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים

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[1] Snaith, *Numbers*, p. 298; see also R H. Harrison, *Healing Herbs of the Bible* (Leiden: R J. B:rill, 1966), pp. 15-16.

[2] See *BDB*, p. 72.

וְיָרֹם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכּוֹ
וְתִנַּשֵּׂא מַלְכֻתוֹ:

Water flows from his buckets,
And his seed is by many waters;
And His king is higher than Agag,
And his kingdom is exalted.

Verse 7 is composed of two lines of bicola, each synonymously parallel. The first has the meter 2:3 with the pattern a b c // b' c'. The socond has the meter 3:2 with the pattern a b c // a' c'. The two lines appear to be related formally.

The first line of bicola bespeaks Israel's great natural resources under the hand of God. Water, ever a precious item in the ancient (and modern!) Near East, is said to flow from his buckets.[1] The verb נזל, "to flow, trickle, drip" is an apt description of abundant water. Water sloshing from buckets describes plenty of that which is most necessary for the good life. Moreover, Israel's seed will, exist beside "many waters." The word "seed" may mean "offspring, descendants" in Hebrew, as well as in the Arabic and Akkadian cognates.[2]

The second bicola describe Israel's future king and kingdom, but in terms of exaltation. The reference to Agag in this verse has occasioned

[1] This is a dual form with a suffix; see *GKC*, section 93z.
[2] See *BDB*, pp. 282-83; Lane, I, 3, 1225-26; *CAD*, XXI, 89-97.

debate the cite of the writing of this oracle, as was noted in the chapter

on Balaam in modern scholarship. Suffice it to say that "Agag" does not have

to refer to the Agag of Saul's day (I Sam. 15), but may have been an hereditary

title as was common among Semitic kings.[1] The mention of Agag here and of

Amalek in the fifth oracle point to the bitter attack on Israel by Amalek at

Rephidim (Exod. 17:8-13; Deut. 25:17, 18). This was an attack that Amalek

would rue one day. The word "king" in our verse is not used of Yahweh, as

in 23:21, but of a human king who would one day rule Israel. Ultimately, the

reference may be to Messiah,[2] but the first reference is to Saul-David-Solomon.

It may be added that whereas the primary reference in this verse

seems to be to material blessing, the word "seed" may denote semen virile,

and the expression "water from his buckets" may be a parallel expression in

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[1] This is suggested even in *BDB*, p. 8. See also, *NBD*, p. 18;
Downy M. Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh* (Grand Rapids: William B.
Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 324-25; Edward J. Young, *An Intro-duction to the Old Testament* (rev., ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub-lishing Company, 1960), p. 98.

[2] So Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 135; also H. Cazelles,
"The Torah, " in A. Robert and A. Feuillet, *Introduction to the Old Testament,*
p. 137. The Jerusalem Targum takes the verse Messianically: "And the King-dom of King Messiah will be exalted." For the difficult problem of the reading
of LXX in this verse, see now F. F. Bruce, "The Earliest Old Testament Interp-rotation, " *OS*, XVII (1972), 40-41. On the variants in the SP, see Bruce K.
Waltke, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament," *New
Perspectives on the Old Testament,* ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, Tex.: Word
Hooks, Publisher, 1970), p. 220.

euphemism. For a full development of this concept, not without problems,

see Rembert Sorg's treatise, *Ecumenic Psalm 87*.

The second major division of the blessing section of this oracle

is found in verse 8: *The Blessings of Israel are in her God*.

אֵל מוֹצִיאוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם
כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ
יֹאכַל גּוֹיִם צָרָיו
וְעַצְמֹתֵיהֶם יְגָרֵם
וְחִצָּיו יִמְחָץ׃

God is bringing him out of Egypt,
He is for him as the horns of the aurochs'
He will devour the nations his enemies,
And their bones he will crush,
And their arrows he will shatter.

The first point that is made in this verse is repetitive from the

second oracle: (1) Israel's God is her Deliverer (8a). In verses 8 and 9 of

the present oracle there is a development of elements from the second oracle.

Verse 8 is composed of one line of bicola and one line of tricola. The first

line is identical with 23:22, except for a singular suffix as against a plural

[1](Fifield, Wis. : King of Martyrs Priory, 1969), pp. 36, 46-52.
Sorg terms Numbers 24:7 "*he graphe*" to which our Lord referred in John 7:37-39,
" . . . as the Scripture said, 'From his belly shall flow rivers of living water."
He states that there is no other reference nearly so fitting as the present verse,
and that our Lord rendered the indelicate expression "his buckets" by "his
holly. " See also David Adams Martin, "The Balaam Oracles and Exegesis and
Exposition of Numbers 22-24" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological
Seminary, 1950), where similar comparisons are made, but with less detail.

on the participle מוֹצִיא. The second point is found in the balancing colon,

(2) Israel's God is her protector (8b). This image of the aurochs as the symbol of power has been developed above. The repetition in this bicola displays unity, not "intrusion from other sources."

The third element in the development of the theme of verse 8 is found in the tricola: *(3) Israel's God makes her victorious (8 c. d. .e).* the present verse the image of the aurochs is extended by developing the martial power of Israel animated by the "horns of the aurochs, "the Lord of Israel. The tricola line has the meter 3:2:2. The parallelism is synonymous with the pattern a b c // a' b' // a" b". The nations who dare oppose Israel are also opposing Israel's God. Hence their destiny is to be devoured, gushed, shattered. Since Israel is animated by the power of God, opposition to her must be futile.

The brutal image of crushing bones is to be found in an Akkadian text: "I had his (own) sons crush these bones, the bones of PN, which they had taken to Assyria from GN."[1] The breaking of bones and the shattering of arrow; speak in stark terms of complete victory over enemies. Blessing on Israel is often accompanied by promises of defeat of her enemies. Compare, e. g., Genesis 22:16--17, where the great blessing promised to Abraham in-cludes the possession of the gate of the enemies.

[1] *CAD*, IV, 342. "PN" stand for "personal name, " and "GN" for "geographical name."

Another approach to the first colon of the second part of verse
8 is taken by Moriarty. He suggests that the word גּוֹיִם "enemies" may be
read as גְּוִיּ plus an enclitic *mem*, meaning "bodies" or "backs." The re-
Supin) translation is., "he shall consume the flesh of his enemies." This
lands a closer parallel to "bones, " and relieves the somewhat awkward con-
truction of the absolute גּוֹיִם where one might expect a construct. This is
sited only as suggestive.[1] The translation we have given above makes good
sense. The first colon, "He will devour the nations, his enemies," is the
general statement; the two cola following give some of the details.

The third section of the blessing of the oracle is given in verse
9 . In this verse we have the theme: The Blessings of Israel Are Absolute.

כָּרַע שָׁכַב כַּאֲרִי
וּכְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֶנּוּ
מְבָרְכֶיךָ בָרוּךְ
וְאֹרְרֶיךָ אָרוּר:

He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion who dares to rouse him?
All who bless you are blessed;
But all who curse you are cursed.

Verse 9 is composed of two lines of bicola. The first line has
synthetic parallelism, with a partially chiastic pattern: a b c // c' d e. The
meter is 3:2. The second line is in antithetical parallelism with a 2:2 meter,

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[1] Moriarty, "Numbers, " *JBC*, I, 96.

having the pattern a b c // d b e [wi,.1l "b" representing the pronoun "you"].[1]
The first point made in this verse may be stated: (1) Israel is like a lion,
sovereign and grand (9a). This line develops the image of the lion used in
23:24. That it is not mere repetition is to be demonstrated by a comparison
of trre lines. The pair לביא / / ארי in the former verse is reversed in the
pr sent verse: ארי // לביא. Whereas the former verse depicted the in-
vincibility of the lion, the present verse depicts the sovereign majesty of
the lion. When the lion couches and lies down, who dares rouse him?

Then in stunning climax come the final words: (2) Israel's
blessing is vouchsafed by the promise of God (9b). The very meter of this
bicola (2:2) seems to give these words a finality and solemnity. These words
are in fact a curse: a curse on Balak and Balaam--the ones attempting to
break the blessing enunciated. Balaam is constrained to bless in absolute
terms the nation he was hired to curse. Yahweh's words in his mouth are
repetitive and confirmatory of Israel's original blessing uttered in the Abra-
hamic covenant. Hence, to Balak and Balaam, this is a direct application
of the curse element of the covenant. The irony cannot be missed.[2] Vischer
writes concerning the import of this verse: "No power in the world can abolish
Israel's blessing, for it is anchored in God's Word and faithfulness. Nothing

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[1] On the parallelism of the first line, see Gray, *Forms of Hebrew
Poetry,* pp. 78-79.
[2] See Genesis 12:3; 27:29.

therefore can change Israel's character as given in the blessing."[1] C. H. MacKintosh, writes:

> "Higher and higher yet" is surely the motto here. We may well shout, "Excelsior!" as we mount to the top of the rocks and hearken to those brilliant utterances which the false prophet was forced to give out. It was better and better for Israel, worse and worse for Balak. He had to stand by and not only hear Israel "blessed, " but hear himself "cursed" for seeking to curse them.[2]

The oracles could well have ended here. Certainly Balak wished that they had concluded at this point. But Balaam, abandoning all cultic and mantic acts, is animated by the Spirit to outdo all that had gone before this moment. The rage of Balak does not deter him; the Spirit of Yahweh is animating him. Now comes the most far-reaching oracle of them all.

Fourth Oracle (Numbers 24:15-19)

The oracle corpus has a dynamic unity. Each of the oracles is a curse turned into a blessing. Whereas Balak and Balaam attempted to curse Israel, each attempt became more frustrated, as the blessing of Israel became more pronounced. In the first oracle there was the theme: Israel's blessing is unique, cursing her is ineffective. The second oracle had the theme: Israel's unique blessing comes from her unique relationship to God. The third

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[1] Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ,* pp. 233-34; compare Unger, Unger's Bible Handbook, p. 136.

[2] C. H. MacKintosh, *Notes on the Book of Numbers* (reprint of 1880 ed.; Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Publishers [n. d.]), p. 419.

oracle advanced on the others by having the theme, Israel's blessing is ab-
solute. Such could well have been the conclusion of the corpus. But then
by the grace of God there comes the climax in the fourth oracle. The theme
of this oracle may be stated to be: Israel's Ultimate Blessing Centers in Her

Deliverer from All Her Enemies.

The seventeenth-century American poet-preacher Edward Taylor
exulted on this passage in terms of Christ, the Star out of Jacob:

> Grant me, my Lord, by thee, my Star to steere,
> > Through this darke vale of tears untill I meet,
> Thee here my morning Star outshining cleare,
> > Shewing my night is past, and day doth peep.
> > When thou my Sun of Righteousness makst day.
> > My Harp shall thy Eternall praise then play.
>
> Thou Jacobs Star, in's Horizon didst rise.
> > And fix't in Heaven, Heavens Steeridge Star.
> To steer poor sinners out from Enemies
> > Coasts unto Graces Realm, (Best State by far).
> > Thou sentst a star in th'East. to lead Wise men
> > Thence to thyselfe, when bom in Bethlehem.[1]

Our passage may be outlined as follows:

Introductory formula: Balaam takes up his oracle (15a).
Exordium: Balaam about to utter his most important oracle, expands
the exordium of the preceding section (15b-16).
Blessing:
A.   Israel has a coming deliverer (17).
1.   The deliverer will come in the future (17a, b).
2.   The deliverer will be like star and scepter (17c, d).
3.   The deliverer will bring victory over the enemies (17e, f).

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[1] Edward Taylor [1642 (?) --1729] , "The Bright and Morning
Star," lines 43-54. *Major Writers of America*, ed. Perry Miller (2 vols; New
York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), I, 79.

B.   Israel has a coming dominion (18-19).

1.   Her enemies will be destroyed (18).

2.   Her people will have dominion (19).

Our oracle begins with the familiar introductory formula and followed by an extensive exordium (24:15-16).

וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר
נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר
וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן:
נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל
וְיֹדֵעַ דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן
מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה
נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם:

And he took up his oracle and said:
        The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,
        And the utterance of the strong man whose eye is opened;
        The utterance of the one who hears the words of God,
        And who knows the knowledge of the Most High,
        And who sees the vision of Shaddai;
        Falling down, but whose eyes are uncovered.

In this extended exordium there is a one-colon expansion of the exordium of the third oracle. . The expansion changes the line arrangement of the second verse from a line of tricola (24:4) to two lines of bicola (24:16). The additional colon, "and who knows the knowledge of the Most High," serves to intensify the anticipation for the blessing that follows. The meter of verse 16 is 3:3 and 3:3. The first line of bicola is in synonymous parallelism. The second line is in synthetic parallelism, with the

first colon in synonymous parallelism with the two members of the preceding line. These several descriptive elements in the exordium serve to prepare the hearer of the words for the stunning blessing that comes.

Without question, the most debated and the most important verse in the oracle corpus is Numbers 24:17:

אֶרְאֶנּוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה

אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב

דָּרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיַּעֲקֹב

וְקָם שֵׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

וּמָחַץ פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב

וְקַרְקַר כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת׃

I see him, but not now,

I behold him, but not near,

A star shall march out from Jacob,

And a scepter shall rise from Israel--

And shall crush the temples of Moab,

Even tear down all the sons of sheth.

The theme of this verse may be stated in the words: *Israel Has a Coming Deliverer* (17). This keenly debated verse has been debased by Allegro,[1] and has been devalued by a large number of scholars including even

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[1] Allegro attempts to join this verse to his pan-phallic and hallucinogenic cult. See his aberrant book, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity Within the Fertility, Cults of the Ancient Near East* (reprint; New York: Bantam Books, 1971). A review of this book by an Evangelical (Edwin M. Yamauchi) may be found in *Eternity*, XX (November, 1971), 54-55.

Luther.[1] It has been used for somewhat bizarre ends by Burrows,[2] and has allegorized by many on a simplistic basis.[3] Others have seen in the verse the person of Messiah, but have done so apart from any firm basis in a historical reality respecting the events of Numbers 22-24.[4]

For our part, we agree with the concensus of the early church[5] and early Judaism that this passage indeed refers to the Messiah. Concernlog the statements of early Judaism upon this verse, we may note the compilation by Pick. He lists the following citations as examples of Numbers 24:17 being regarded Messianically by early Judaism:

> *The Targum Onkelos:* When a mighty king of Jacob's house will reign, and the Messiah will-be magnified.

> *The Targum Jonathan:* When there shall reign a strong king of the house of Jacob, and Messiah shall be anointed, and a strong sceptre shall be from Israel . . .

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[1] Luther was not able to regard this passage as speaking of Christ because he regarded Balaam as an unworthy prophet for so grand a prophecy. See Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. by tric W. Gritsch and Ruth C. Gritsch, ed. Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 240, n. 72.

[2] See above, pp. 95-100. For a more recent attempt to read astrological motifs in this verse, see Roy A. Rosenberg, "The 'Star of Messiah' Reconsidered," *Biblica*, LIII (1972), 105-109. Opposition to the astrological view in our passage is presented by Paul Hillman, "Astrology and the Old Testament" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972), pp. 31-32.

[3] Such refer to the star of Bethlehem as the fulfillment of the passage, See Paul L. Maier, "The Magi and the Star, " *Mankind*, III (February, 1972), p. 5. Contra, see Norden, *Parables of the Old Testament*, p. 18.

[4] Gerhard von Rad writes: "Der Messias'"   See his "Die Bileam Perikope, " *DP*, XL (1936), 53.

[5] See above, chapter I.

Rabbi Simeon the son of Yochai lectured: Rabbi Akiba, my teacher, explained, "There stall come a star of Jacob," Cosiba comes of Jacob, for when he saw Bar Cosiba, he exclaimed, This is the King Messiah. --*Jerusalem Taanith*, fol. 68, col. 4.

The Israelites said to God, How long shall we be in bondage? He replied, 'Fill the day comes of which it is said, "There shall come a star of Jacob."-- *Debarim Rabba*, sec. 1.

Our Rabbis have a tradition that in the week in which Messiah will be born, there will be a bright star in the east, which is the star of the Messiah. --*Pesikta Sotarta*, fol. 58, col. 1, 1

There appears to be a tendency among many Old Testament scholars in our day (of varied traditions) to minimize the number of explicitly Messianic references in the Old Testament. This is regrettable. Some cite s lack of specific New Testament reference to our passage as proof against tho Messianic interpretation. However, it does not appear that explicit New Testament citations have to be given to "make" an Old Testament passage Messianic. Indeed, there are those New Testament citations of other passages as Messianic which are dismissed by scholars of some schools as being distortions of the Old Testament texts. This explanation is but a dodge. .

We would agree with Unger, who writes:

This is the most remarkable of the four parables, containing a magnificent messianic prophecy of "the Star out of Jacob" and a "Sceptre out of Israel, " which "shall smite the corners [of the head] of Moab" and destroy "all the sons of Sheth, " Although the royal symbols "star"

[1] B. Pick, "Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied," Hebraica, II (October, 1885), 29.

and "sceptre"' include David, whose empire encompassed the Promised Land (Gen 49:10), yet they find their fulfillment only in the greater David when at the second advent the kingdom is restored to Israel (Acts 1:6). Then Israel's foes, Moab, Edom, Amalek, Asshur, Eber, and Kittim, that portray the latter-day Gentile world powers, will be judged (Mt 25:31-46), before Israel's kingdom is set up.[1]

The first bicola have the meter 3:3 with synonymous parallelism in the pattern a b c // a' b' c'. The parallelism of the first line of bicola in reminiscent of Numbers 23:9 where the same suffixed parallel pair ראה // שׁור is used. In that verse the 3ms suffix referred to Israel. In the present verse the 3ms suffix seems to be used proleptically of the "star// scepter" in the next bicola. The other pair in this line is קָרוֹב // עַתָּה. Both of these words are adverbs of time. The first means "now" and the second means "near." As both of these elements are negated, they point clearly to the future as the period of fulfillment of the prophecy in the lines. Indeed, this is the first oracle that is introduced with such a futuristic note. Numbers 24:14 reads:

> And now behold, I am about to return. to my people; come
> and I will advise you concerning that which this people will
> do to your people in the latter days [בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים]

The expressions "not now" and "not near" couple with the phrase "in the latter days" to denote quite clearly futurity in the oracle. The third oracle was also a prophecy of the future, as was seen from context. It would seem that the signals for the future in the present oracle intensify the future

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[1] Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 135.   See also, Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, pp. 235-38.

element intrinsic to the present oracle. None of these elements "proves" an eschatological setting by itself, but these elements do argue for a time relatively later to the time of the prophecies of the preceding oracle. Since the third orcle spoke of the Golden Age of Israel under kings Saul-David-Solomon, it is satisfying to relate the present oracle to the Messiah, Now this is remarkable. Balaam the pagan saw Him for whom all the ages longed and on whom all history turns and takes on its meaning. Never had the term "seer" been more appropriate to this man.

The second line of bicola has a 3:3 meter and is made of synonymous parallelism, a b c // a' b' c'. The two verbs that are parallel are דָּרַךְ and קוּם. The use of the verb דָּרַךְ for the action of the star immediately guggests something more than just a "star." Whereas a star may be said to "rise" from a phenomological point of view, the verb דָּרַךְ, means "to tread, to march." Hence, we read, "a star shall march out from Jacob." Both this verb and its parallel are prophetic perfects.

The second verb, קוּם, means "to arise" in the sense, "to come on the scene, to appear" as is used of leaders, prophets, and kings (Jud. 5:7; 10:1 3; Deut. 13:7 [Eng. v. 1]; 34:10; II Kings 23:25, etc.]

The two nouns "star and scepter" bespeak Messiah's royalty. Whereas the word "stars" (in the plural) is often used symbolically in the Hebrew Bible the noun "star" [כּוֹכָב] (in the singular) is used only twice here and in Amos 5:26 (where it is used with reference to pagan worship: "your

[1] See *BDB*, p, 878,

star gods"). The use of "star" as a metaphor for a king is frequent in the ancient Near Eastern literature, but not in the Bible.[1] The noun שֵׁבֶט is read by some as "comet, a close parallel to star."[2] But if the word star is taken as a symbol of royalty, "scepter" forms an admirable parallel. The word "scepter" is used several times in the Old Testament as a symbol of royalty (cf. Gen. 49:10; Psalm Psalm 2:9; Isa. 14:5).

Many scholars relate Numbers 24:17 to David, of course. Some do so for critical reasons. Bewer, for instance, regards the oracle as a poetic description of David written during the time of his. reign.[3] There are conservatives, however, who have also taken these words to refer to David, though prophetically. Kerr may be cited as illustrative:

> In the midst of this oracle is embedded a prediction of the appearance of a leader who shall be the Star of Jacob and the Sceptre of Israel. He will act as the destroyer of their enemies, :Moab and Edom and give dominion to Israel (24:17, 18).. This prophecy was understood by the rabbis to refer to the ideal king or Messiah to come, and it has been applied by many Christians tojesus. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to translate all the physical terms into spiritual counterparts. It is better to see the fulfillment of this prophecy in David, the king of Israel who did actually crush both Moab and Edom. The ideal can be transferred to the Messiah only in the

[1] See Snaith, *Numbers*, p. 299; Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 192. In Arabic one of the symbolic uses of XXXX is "chief, lord, prince. " See Lane, I, 7, 2623.

[2] So, B. Gemser, "Der Stern aus Jakob (Num 24 17), " *ZAW*, XLIII (1925), 301-302; S. Mowinckel, "Der.Ursprung der Bil'amsage, " p. 246, n. 3 Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, p. 325.

[3] Julius A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), p. 67; cf. Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, trans, by David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 348.

sense that the throne of David prefigured the rule of Jesus Christ over an infinitely greater kingdom.[1]

The charge of literal fulfillment as against figurative is less than valid, however. As Clark has written, a literal fulfillment in the time of David is less than assured.

> It was not until the time of David that the Israelites seriously attacked Moab and were able to hand her a serious defeat. Although many of the people of Moab were slaughtered (II Sam. 8:2), they were not completely destroyed and during the period of the divided kingdom they rebelled following the death of Ahab (II Kings 1:1). This would exclude the possibility of David's wars being the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy of Balaam.[2]

We may add the evidence of the Mesha Stele (ca. 830 B. C.) as extrabiblical evidence of the fact that Moab was not permanently vanquished by David. The continued prophetic oracles against Moab after the time of David (cf. Isa. 15:1-16:14; Jer. 48:39-47, etc.) also speak of future subjugation. So whereas there was fulfill ment. of a kind in the wars of David, the pas sage was not exhausted by his conquests. Ultimate fulfillment appears to be in the person of Messiah who will win final victory over the enemies of Israel, represented in our passage by Moab and Edom.

The third bicola in verse 17 present the victory that will come to Israel in the person of her coming deliverer. This last line of bicola exhibits synonymous parallelism with 3:2 meter and a b c // a' b' pattern. The

[1] David W. Kerr, "Numbers, " *The Bible Expositor: The Living Theme of the Great Book*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (5 vols.; Philadelphia: A. J. Ilolman Company, 1960), I, 176.
[2] Howard Edward Clark, "The Effects of Balaam's Ministry Upon the History of Israel" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1971), pp. 43-44,

verb מָחַץ is a term of strong connotation, "to smite through, wound severely, shatter.'' This verb was used in the oracle corpus above in Numbers 24:8, of Israel shattering the arrows of her enemies. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it is used of Jael piercing the temple of Sisera with a tent peg (Jud. 5:20), and in other contexts of "shattering the heads of the enemies" (Psalm 68:22 [Eng. v. 21] has רֹאשׁ and קָדְקֹד as objects of this verb; cf. Hab. 3:13, with רֹאשׁ.

In the present verse the object of the verb מָחַץ in the first colon is פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב, "the temples of Moab." The word פֵּאָה literally means "corner, side," but is used of the temples of one's head several times Lev. 19:27; Jer. 9:25 [Eng. v. 26]; 25:23; 48:45; 49:32).

The second colon of this line begins with a problematic term, וְקַרְקַר. If this word is retained, it is to be parsed as a Pilpel Infinitive of the rare root meaning "to tear down" (used only elsewhere in Isaiah 22:5, it-self a doubtful passage).[1] The lexica, agreeing with SP, suggest we emend to קָדְקֹד, a noun meaning "crown, head," and which occurs elsewhere par-allel to פֵּאָה (as in Isa. 3:17).[2]

A very important parallel to our line is Jeremiah 48:45, e, f, which is in the context of an oracle against Moab:

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[1] *BDB* gives the root as קרר, pp. 903, 885. Zorell lists the root as קוּר, LHAVT, p. 742. Others give the root as קיר; so Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 193.
[2] So *BDB*, p. 903; *KBL*, p. 859.

וַתֹּאכַל פְּאַת מוֹאָב
וְקָדְקֹד בְּנֵי שָׁאוֹן

And it has devoured the temple of Moab,
And the crown of the sons of tumult.

Here Jeremiah uses the words of Balaam, slightly rephrased, but employing the parallelism קָדְקֹד // פֵּאָה.[1] It would appear to be somewhat hazardess to attempt to emend the Numbers passage on the basis of Jeremiah, however. Jeremiah frequently quotes from earlier materials in a rather free manner "by altering the expressions employed, and substituting in the place of unusual words either more common ones, or such as are similar in sound."[2] Jeremiah has substituted the common verb אָכַל for the relatively rare verb מָחַץ of Numbers. He may well have substituted קָדְקֹד for the hapox legomenon in our verse. Hence, the rare word of our text shall be retained and translated "tear down, break down."

The expression כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת "all the sons of Sheth" has occasioned some difficulty as well. Some have related שֵׁת to Seth of Genesis 4:25, the third son of Adam. Such would then mean "all mankind," or the like. But the destruction of all mankind does not seem a fitting parallel to the

[1] So, e. g. , Albright, "Oracles, " p. 220.
[2] Keil, The Pentateuch, III, 193. Note further, that the normal fixed pair is not קָדְקֹד // פֵּאָה, but קָדְקֹד // רֹאשׁ both in Hebrew and in Ugaritic. Cf. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath,* p. 27.

destruction of Moab. An early alternative suggestion was that שֵׁת is a con-

traction of שְׁאת as in Lamentations 3:47, meaning "destruction."[1] The phrase

"sons of destruction" would then be a figure used of Moab. This would be

similar to Jeremiah's 1i99-'?P, "sons of tumult" (Jer, 48:45).

Albright suggested that בְּנֵי שֵׁת refers to an ancient tribal

name, the Sutu (swtw) of the Egyptian execration texts of the 20th and 19th

centuries B. C.[2] In terms of the context of the use of the term, it should be

e parallel to Moab. In the absence of more information concerning the tribe

tutu, and its relationship to Moab, the rendering "sons of confusion" seems

preferable. It seems that Balaam begins with Moab, then moves to Edom

(verse 18), and in the successive verses moves to other peoples. The rele-

vance to an otherwise unknown tribe seems out of order here, and does not

bgree with Jeremiah 48:45, Moreover, as two terms are used for Israel in

verse 17 and two terms are used for Edom in verse 19, it seems fitting for

there to be two terms for Moab in our verse,

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[1] So *BDB*, p. 981; Keil, *The Pentateuch,* III, 193.

[2] Albright, "Oracles, " p. 220, n. 89; *idem, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan,* p. 47, n. 94. He is followed by Moriarty, 'Numbers, " JBC, I, 96, and Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, p. 3.25. For an altogether different approach, see A. H. Sayce, "Balaam's Prophecy (Numbers XXIV, 17-24) and the God Sheth, " *Hebraica* (October, 1887), 1-6. He argues that "Sheth" was the native name of the Moabite god "Baal-peor, " p. 5. He Points to a pottery handle found in the Hinnom Valley of Jerusalem by Warren inscribed למלך שת. He translates this "belonging to Melech-Sheth," or even, "to Moloch who is Sheth. " He also points to the word שֵׁת in the Hebrew Bible in II Samuel 10:4, where he renders "phallus" rather than the traditional "buttocks;" equating the phallic signification to the pagan deity.

In verse 17 then there is the thematic statement: Israel has a deliverer. This deliverer (1) will come in the future (17 a, b); (2) he will be like star and scepter in his royalty (17 c, d); and (3) he will bring victory over the enemy (17 e, f). It is certainly significant that the enemy sited first is none other than Moab. The third oracle ended with an implied curse on Moab in general terms; the fourth oracle has a curse on Moab in very detailed terms. Moab the curser becomes Moab the cursed--in fulfill-mont of the Abrahamic covenant.

Verses 18-19 build upon verse 17, and give the second element In the development of the oracle: *Israel has a coming dominion*. In this verso the spotlight of curse turns from Moab to Edom.

וְהָיָה אֱדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה
וְהָיָה וְרֵשָׁה שֵׂעִיר אֹיְבָיו
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֶׂה חָיִל:
וְיֵרְדְּ מִיַּעֲקֹב
וְהֶאֱבִיד שָׂרִיד מֵעִיר:

And Edom will become a possession,
And Seir, his enemies, will be a possession,
While Israel is demonstrating power.
One from Jacob will have dominion,
And shall destroy the remnant of the city.

In this division of the oracle there are two elements: (1) Her enemies will be destroyed, and (2) her people will have dominion. Verse 18

is made of one line of tricola with 3:4:3 meter. The parallelism is a b c // a c f,' d // e f g. As may be seen from this schematic, the first two cola are synonynous and the third is synthetically parallel. The first two cola begin with the verb וְהָיָה and then have chiasm between the "b" and "c" elements, "Edom // Seir " and "possession // possession." Rather than use a synonym for possession," the shift in word order was employed by the poet allowing for desired literary variety.[1] The word "his enemies" at the end of the second colon is a bit unexpected, and is hence somewhat stressed by position. The third colon is a synthetic development of the first two: since Edom is its possession, Israel is displaying strength,

Edom, along with Moab, was one of the nations Israel was forbidden to attack, as has been discussed above.[2] But since this oracle has a future prophetic projection, the enmity of Edom against Israel is presumed (cf. Obadiah'), and final subjugation is promised.

The term "Seir" [שֵׂעִיר] refers to a mountain range in Edom, and is used regularly as a parallel for "Edom" (Gen. 32:4; 36:8, 9) or a substitute for Edom (Deut. 1:44; 2:4, 8, 12, etc.). The feminine singular noun is used only in this verse with this spelling. Usually the feminine singular

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[1] Beegle, following Albright, speaks of this as "perfect Canaanite format." *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, p. 325.

[2] See above, pp. 19-24, for discussion.

noun "possession" is spelled יְרֻשָּׁה (see, e. g. , Deut. 2:5).[1]

Whereas David conquered Edom (II Sam. 8:14), after the division of the Israelite state, Edom became independent again (II Kings 8:20-22). It then became an implacable foe of Israel, awaiting the final wrath of God (Isa. 63:1-6).[2] Here again, Numbers 24 has some reference to the conquests of David, but deems to refer as well to the final destruction of Israel's foes Under the Messiah. The last colon of verse 18 employs the idiom 5?n fmY Meaning "achieves might" or "does valiantly." When Edom falls, Israel demonstrates power. In the eschaton, when the enemies of Israel are vanwished, Israel will achieve might.[3]

Verse 19 is composed of one line of bicola in formal parallelism, a b // c d e. The meter is 2:3. The subject of the verb וְיֵרְדְּ is indefinite, but probably refers to the Star-Scepter of verse 17.[4] This verb רָדָה means "to have dominion, rule, dominate." The Star-Scepter makes Israel triumphant as he gains dominion over the enemies of God's people.

The coming one will destroy the remnant of the city. The verb in the Hiphil means "to destroy, " "to put to death, " and refers to the

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[1] There is also a feminine singular noun מוֹרָשָׁה, as in Exod. 6:8, and a masculine singular noun מוֹרָשׁ, e. g., Isa. 14:23.

[2] A full summary of the hostility of Edom and Israel, culminating in the Herodian era, is given by Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 194-95.

[3] 0n the idiom, see Deut. 8:17, 18; Ruth 4:11; cf. *BDB*, p. 298.

[4] *Contra*, Noth, *Numbers*, p. 170; cf. R. S. V. , N. E. B. , J. B., L B.

complete victory gained by the Coming One, Anyone who happens to escape or survive the initial onslaught is to be destroyed. The word "city" in this verse [עִיר] is not defined, but may refer to the (capital) city of Edom (verse 18), Some have taken עִיר to be a proper name. So, the Torah renders, "To wipe out what is left of Ir."[1] A third approach, as given in the R S. V., is cake the word עִיר in a collective sense and render "cities."[2] This last approach seems preferable, as it demonstrates an advance in thought. Not only will the Coming One defeat Moab and have dominion over Edom, but He will effect dominion over the remnants of all cities. This fits well with a Messianic point-of-view. Messiah in His Kingdom will exercise dominion over all peoples, The theme of this oracle has been seen to be: Israel's Ultimate Blessing Centers in Her Deliverer from All Her Enemies.

The Fifth Oracle (Numbers 24:20)

Oracles five through seven come quite abruptly as extensions and outgrowths of the fourth oracle. They may be viewed as part of that oracle in this sense. Yet, since they each have an introductory formula, it seems best to regard them as separate, though brief, oracles. As outgrowths of the fourth oracle, these oracles develop the promise of the victory of Israel over her enemies. These oracles may, in fact, be regarded as "curse oracles,"

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[1] J. B. reads "Ar," as does N. E. B.
[2] So Keil, *The Pentateuch*, III, 195.

indeed--these may have been the very type of oracle that Balak desired from Balaam regarding Israel. But Israel was given the blessing and her enemies ttae curse. The fifth oracle reads:

וַיַּרְא אֶת־עֲמָלֵק
וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר
רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עֲמָלֵק
וְאַחֲרִיתוֹ עֲדֵי אֹבֵד:

And he saw Amalek,
And he took up his oracle and said:
    First among the nations was Amalek,
    But its end will be destruction.

Numbers 24:20 has two lines of bicola. The first line has a 2:3 meter in formal parallelism, a b // c d e. Balaam the seer turns from Israel to several of Israel's enemies, the first of which is Amalek. The second line of bicola has a 3:3 meter and is in antithetical parallelism, a b c // a' d.

Amalek is termed "first among the nations," not that it was the most powerful, the pre-eminent, or the first "created; " but because it was the first to attack Israel (see Exodus 17:8-16). The aggravated assault of Amalek upon Israel was never forgotten by Israel. It resulted in an over-whelming defeat of Amalek by Israel at the time of the occasion, as well as a thorough-going curse on Amalek by Yahweh:

And Yahweh said to Moses, write this in the book as a memorial, and place it in the ears of Joshua: For I will utterly blot out the

memory of Amalek under the heavens. So Moses built an altar, and he named it, "Yahweh Is My Banner. " And he said,

> For a hand is on the throne of Yah:
>
> A war of Yahweh against Amalek
>
> for all generations. [Exod. 17:14-16] .

The Amalekites were defeated by Saul (I Sam. 14:48; but see 15:1-35) and David (I Sam. 30:18; II Sam. 8:12). 1 These defeats may be fogarded as part of the fulfillment of the passage at hand. Yet, there may be seen a reference to Israel's enemies in the latter days in the reference to Amalek, just as may be seen in the references to Moab and Edom. Such is not "spiritual" interpretation; any more so than seeing implements of modern (and future) warfare in those prophecies describing warfare with spears and swords. There has to be a correspondence of reality on a literal level. The nation Amalek met its defeat through Israel, and as a prototype for the enemies of Israel in the future, Amalek also serves a purpose. .

The Sixth Oracle (Numbers 24:21-22).

The spotlight of judgment turns from Amalek to the Kenites:

וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַקֵּינִי
וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר

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[1] D. Kunstlinger argued unsuccessfully, that אבד in Numbers 24:20 has nothing to do with "destruction," but is to be compared with Arabic XXXXX meaning "to be everlasting." *OL*, XXXIV (1931), 609-12 [summary in *ZAW*, XLIX (1931), 305].

אֵיתָן מוֹשָׁבֶ֑ךָ
וְשִׂים בַּסֶּ֖לַע קִנֶּֽךָ׃
כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶ֣ה לְבָ֣עֵר קָ֑יִן
עַד־מָ֖ה אַשּׁ֥וּר תִּשְׁבֶּֽךָ׃

> And he saw the Kenite,
> And he took up his oracle and said:
>> Your dwelling place is enduring,
>> And your nest is set in the cliff;
>> Nevertheless, Kain shall be consumed,
>> How long? Assur will take you captive.

Verses 21-22 form a brief oracle that remains somewhat obscure. Verse 21 begins with an introductory line of bicola patterned after that of verse 20. The vision of Balaam is now focused on the Kenites. The second line of bicola has the meter 2:3, in synonymous parallelism, a b // a' c b'

Greenstone observes that there may be a qualitative difference in the oracles against the Kenites and the Amalekites. Whereas the Amalekites are Israel's first enemies, the Kenites were often quite friendly to Israel. He writes:

> In all the biblical records there is no mention of any hostility against Israel on the part of the Kenites. This brief prophecy is therefore couched not in the vengeful spirit of the prophecies against Moab, Edom and Amalek, but rather in a sympathetic form.[1]

Yet the prophecy is remarkable, in that Assur, the nation whose rise to inter-

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[1] Julius H. Greens tone, *The Holy Scriptures: Numbers, With Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5708/ 1948), p. 272.

national power was still long off—is cited as the ultimate foe of the Kenites.

The adjective אֵיתָן "permanent" is used with irony in this verse. The Kenites who thought they were secure lived under an ominous curse. The word קֵן "nest," appears to be a play on the word "Kenite" [קֵינִי]. The Kenites regarded their position as unassailable. This word "nest" is used in other places as a figure of security Ger. 49:16; Obad. v. 4; flab. 2:9), which prove to be insecure after all.

Such is expressed in the twenty-second verse: the Kenites will be destroyed. The use of כִּי plus the pleonastic אִם[1] serves to stress the unexpected end of the "secure" Kenites. "Nevertheless"--i. e., despite her seeming security--the Kenite would be exterminated. The verb בָּעַר in the Piel means "to burn," "to consume," "to be destroyed."[2] There may be a play on words in the use of the verb for "burning. " The noun קַיִן is related to the word for "smith."[3] The meaning seems to be, "one who works with heat will be burned."[4]

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[1] See Williams, *WHS*, p. 74; *BDB*, p. 475,

[2] *BDB*, p. 129.

[3] See Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, p. 41; Moriarty, "Numbers," *JBC*, I, 96. Cf. , Nelson Gleuck, "Transjordan, " *Archaeology and 0lcl Testament Study: Jubilee Volume of the Society for Old Testament Study, 1917-1967*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 434.

[4] This play on words is suggested by Albright, "Oracles," p. 222, n. 102.

The second colon of verse 22 begins with aposiopesis, or
sudden intrusion, in the question "How long?"[1] Assur is then said to be the
means by which the Kenites will be taken captive. Assur is often used as the
symbol of an invading army and world power (Hos. 12:2 [Eng. v. 1] ; 14:4
[Eng, v. 3]; Isa. 10:5; 14:25; 23:13). Its use in the Balaam oracles has
occasioned great debate. Many critics have dated the last oracles late due
to such words as "Algur, "[2] Others have attempted to emend the text to avoid
the difficulty. Moriarty, for example, renders the word as a verb from the
root שׁוּר. He translates, "even as I watch."[3] Snaith says respecting the
word Augur that "no one is happy about this reference."[4] And Rowley remarked
that he is doubtful if the original meaning has yet been penetrated.[5]

Assur was known even in Abraham's time as a powerful people,
however, so that the mention of Assur should not be dismissed too quickly by

[1] See *BDB*, p, 554.

[2] See above, chapter III.

[3] Moriarty, *Numbers, Part 2*, p. 35. In this he is following
Albright, "Oracles," p. 222, n. 104.

[4] Snaith, *Numbers*, p. 301.

[5] H. H. Rowley, "Moses and the Decalogue," *Men of God:
Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy* (London: Thomas Nelson and
and Sons, Ltd. , 1963 [First published in the *BJRL*, XXXIV (1951-1952), 81-
118]), pp. 30-31, n. 3. In this note, Rowley observes Albright's recon-
struction with some approval (see note 3, above).

the reader.1 If this is indeed prophetic prophecy, as it purports to be, there should be no great wonder that a contemporary nation to Balaam be singled out as Yahweh's future instrument of judgment. The predictions of the fourth oracle are more marvelous than those of the sixth.

Seventh Oracle (Numbers 24:23-24).

With the mention of Assur, Balaam is led to give his last oracle:

וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמַר
אוֹי מִי יִחְיֶה מִשֻּׂמוֹ אֵל:
וְצִים מִיַּד כִּתִּים
וְעִנּוּ אַשּׁוּר וְעִנּוּ־עֵבֶר
וְגַם־הוּא עֲדֵי אֹבֵד:

And he took up his oracle and said:
> Woe! Who can live except God establish him?
> For ships will come from the direction of Kittim,
> And they will afflict Assur and they will afflict Eber,
> And he also will come to destruction.

The first verse has one line of bicola in formal parallelism, with 3:5 meter. This oracle begins a bit more abruptly than the preceding two. Perhaps this is because of the wide range of the oracle as well as its climactic nature. The first colon is the now well-familiar introductory formula.

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[1] Oswald T. Allis makes this observation in his book, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972), p. 413, n. 43.

The second colon is a summary of the theology of the nations in providence of God. "Alas: Who is able to live except God has established him!" For the believer, the providence of God occasions joy. But for one not related to Him, the proper response is indeed "Alas!" Balaam speaks for himself and for the nations in uttering this word. God is in control of the nations. This is the lesson that is taught throughout the oracle corpus. Balak and Balaam attempted to control history by means of mantic powers and acts of magic. Such is useless. God is in control. As Daniel wrote centuries later:

> And it is he who changes the times and the seasons,
>
> He removes kings and he establishes kings.
>
> [Dan. 2:21 a, b].

None is able to live, except God establishes it. In his "Alas;" Balaam realizes the ultimate futility of his vocation. God is in control.

Verse 24 has occasioned a gaggle of guesses. As the text stands, however, there is one line of tricola. The mention of Assur leads to this verse, as Assur and the afflictors of Assur are said to meet their respective dooms. And in all this there is the absolute: God is in control.

The first colon states that ships will come from Kittim. The word "ships" [צִים] is a rare term in the Hebrew Bible, used elsewhere in Isaiah 33:21 and Ezekiel 30:9. The expression מִיַּד is renderd "from the direction of."[1]

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[1] See *BDB*, p. 390.

The identification of "Kittim" [כִּתָּים] is problematic, but seems to refer to Cyprus in the Balaam oracles. Ultimately the reference is to Rome, as in the Qumran materials,[1] and in Daniel.[2]

Whereas the debate concerning this verse will continue, we prefer to take it as a magnificent panorama of history. The ships from Kittim speak of Western powers which will afflict Eastern powers (Assur and Eber). Then the Western powers too will finally be destroyed. If this is the correct interpretation of the verse, then there should be no surprise that it is a debated verse. For this would mean that Balaam was given a glimpse of the scope of history of the nations that is truly remarkable.[3]

Although difficulties abound, this prophecy appears to be a fitting climax to the oracle corpus. This is indeed an expression of what this people will do to your people in the latter days" (Num. 24:14). More

[1] See above, chapter II, pp. 27-37.

[2] Cf., Dan. 11:30. Compare the comments on this verse by John F. Walvoord, Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation: A Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), and Leon Wood, A Commentary on Daniel (Grind Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973). F. F. Bruce, Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls (2d ed.; London: The Paternoster Press, 1961), p. 40, relates Daniel 11:30 and Numbers 24:24.

[3] For reconstructions along other lines, see Albright, "Oracles, " pp. 222-23; *idem*, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan,* p. 16, n. 40; Snaith, *Numbers*, p. 301; Moriarty, *Numbers, Part 2*, p. 35; Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh,* p. 326. For older suggestions, see Eberhard Nestle, and Samuel in den Spruchen des Bileam, " *ZAW*, XXVIII (1908), 227-28; Felix Perles, "Zu Numeri 24 23, " *ZAW*, XXIX (1909), 73.

over, as Unger suggests, these several nations "portray the latter-day Gentile world powers" that will be judged (Matt. 25:31-46) before Israel's Kingdom is set up.[1]

Conclusion

This chapter began with the affirmation that biblical theology Must have its starting point in the exegesis of the text. The present writer is well aware that the approach he has taken in exegetical methodology will pot commend him in some circles. For many, the attempt to exegete the text "as it stands" is regarded as simplistic, an exercise in naivete, Yet it would appear that this naive approach is far more objective a goal than to attempt to exegete the text as it "might have been." This latter practice would allow for the demonstration of ingenuity, but it gives little basis for theology.

If exegesis is the starting point for biblical theology, as Hermann Schultz maintained,[2] then one may also point to the truism: sound exogesis is the starting point for sound biblical theology. There was thus little attempt to be novel or innovative in the exegesis given above. The desire was rather to "lead-out" from the text that which is inherent in it.

In his chapter we have surveyed the role of the curse in the ancient Near East as well as the concept of the *masal*. We then moved to

[1] Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 131,
[2] See p. 235, above.

a study of the structure and unity of the oracle corpus, More will be given in this regard in terms of the role of the various designations for deity. But the present chapter contains material arguing for the unity of the corpus on the basis of the text we have before us. The unity is not static, nor do we believe that the unity is the result of editing in the sense of the literary-critical school. Rather, we believe the unity to be original with the writing of the documents at hand. The unity is progressive and dynamic, exhibiting structure, dramatic flow, climax--yes, and art.

Within the narrative and the oracles there are moments of high tension and other times of sad irony. There are levels of outstanding poetry and magnificent prophecy. The figures of speech employed are bold and graphic. There is an economy of language at times; at other times there is the familiar Semitic device of, repetition.

Certainly in the Balaam story we are concerned with the art of man coupled to the word of God--the dual-natured Scriptures. And the thing that is so hard to conceive of in this instance is that the man involved was less than a Yahwist; he was a fraud--an imposter whom Yahweh used to His own glory. As recorded by one infinitely more genuine than Balaam, but whose words were no more inspired--Yahweh says:

> For my own sake, for my own sake I act;
> For how may [My Name] be profaned?
> For my glory to another I do not give!
> [Isa. 48:11]

CHAPTER VI

A THEOLOGICAL STUDY:

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BALAAM PERICOPE

Introduction

Ronald M. Hals begins his monograph, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth,* by facing the problem of a credibility factor head-on: "The first reaction to the title, "The Theology of the Book of Ruth" is quite likely a doubt as to the importance, or even the existence, of any such theology."[1] An initial response to the title of the present chapter might be similar to that imagined by Hals regarding his theme: Is there in fact an important role in theology for Balaam? Or does he play a role in the theology of the Old Testament at all?

As was noted in the introductory chapter to this present paper, however, there are Old Testament scholars of high repute who have found these several chapters of the Book of Numbers to be intensely theological. In fact, some have indicated that Numbers 22-24 contain the quintessence

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[1] Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth,* Facet Books, Biblical Series--23, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 1.

of the revelation to Moses. Note again the evaluation of Frederick L. Moriarty: "few sections in the Pentateuch are more important theologically than this remarkable narrative. In a real sense the Balaarn story may be said to summarize the revelation of God's purpose as it was communicated to Moses."[1]

In a similar fashion, Gerhard von Rad, in his book, Moses, exclaims: In a wonderful way, this story sums up the whole of the revelation of God given through Moses."[2] There is also the estimation of our account by Soulek who writes, "The Balaam pericope is a weighty component of the message concerning the salvation work of Yahweh."[3]

But before exploring our account for its theological implications, and thus evaluating these ebullient remarks, it will be well to review the issue of the basis for sound theology. Hence, the first section of this chapter will be concerned with necessary general issues.

The Basis for Sound Theology

The present writer gives strong assent to the estimations of the

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[1] Frederick L. Moriarty, "Numbers," *JBC*, I, 95.

[2] Gerhard von Rad, *Moses,* World Christian Books, No. 32, second series (New York: Association Press, 1960), p. 76.

[3] His words are: "Die Bileam-Perikope is ein wichtiger Bestanciteil der Botschaft uber das Heilswerk Jahwes." Zdenek Sousek, "Bi1eam and seine Eselin: Exegetisch theologische Bemerkungun zu Num. 22," *CV*, X (1967), 185.

theological importance of the Balaam pericope as stated by Moriarity, von Rad and Sousek, yet he does so from a different set of presuppositions. It is because of the crucial importance of one's presuppositions in theological pursuits, that the writer now delimits those elements of overriding importance.

The Existence of God

For there to be a "theology" there must be a "Theos." Such a truism needs to be stated in our day in which men are "doing theology," while retaining "an open mind" concerning the "God question." This is no overstatement. Witness Dr. Thomas J. Altizer, the pop-theologian of the "Death-of-God" movement. Recently, in a panel discussion, he displayed his theological and philosophical bankruptcy in recounting that he did not think that he had heard or read a "theological statement" in weeks, or even in months. When he was questioned by an incredulous panel member, Altizer admitted that he really did not know what a theological statement is.[1]

A sound method in theology must begin with the axiom: God is! Paul D. Feinberg writes, "The emphasis of the Pentateuch is centered on God. Yet it never occurred to the writer of the Pentateuch to prove or

[1] Panel discussion in a seminar meeting, "Theology and Culture," International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1972.

the existence of God. To have done so would have seemed a super-

dairy."[1] Then Feinberg turns to a quotation from Davidson, which is given

hero a bit more fully:

> Its position here again is far in front of such an argument. How
> should men think of arguing that God could be known, when they
> were persuaded they knew Him, when they knew they were in fellow-
> ship with Him, when their consciousness and whole mind were
> filled and aglo with the thought of Him, and when through His
> Spirit He moved them, and guided their whole history?[2]
> Further, C. R. North has insisted that the knowledge of God in

the Old Testament period was not a vague, amorphous, shadowy conception

the world of thought and theory. "Certainly it was not abstract in origin,

product of the abstract intellect. The Old Testament doctrine of God was

the Hebrews' response to God's confronting of them in the crises, the de-

liverances, and disasters of their national life during a thousand years of

history."[3]

God is! And on this glorious fact all theology, properly so-

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[1] Paul David Feinberg, "The Doctrine of God in the Pentateuch"
(unpublished doctor's dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 13.

[2] A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. S. D. F.
Salmond (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 13. This is also the empha-
sis of Cornelius Van Til. In the latest expression of his apologetical
position he says, "The self-attesting Christ of Scripture has always been
my starting point for everything I have said. " And further, "God *is* God"
[his emphasis]. "My Credo, "*Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on
the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phila-
delphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 4, 9.

[3] Christopher R. North, *The Thought of the Old Testament:*

called, must rest. The fact of the dynamic existence of God is absolutely geremane to the Balaam pericope.

The Revelation of God

A second necessary postulate is that the God who is has re-Vo,iiud Himself. This is intrinsic to sound theology. It is further necessary and intrinsic to sound theology that God has revealed Himself in His word, All attempts to approach the Bible as the product of Israel's crea--tive genius for religion are doomed to fail on methodological grounds. The clear testimony of the Old Testament record argues strongly in another direction altogether. The faith of the Old Testament Jewish people was not a product of the natural Hebrew "genius for religion. " Archer states the matter correctly: "for the Scripture record witnesses rather to the natural Hebrew genius for irreligion and apostasy."[1]

It would appear that the witness of the Balaam pericope to this issue is paramount. Even if one were to argue for the creative genius of Israel in religious matters, one may hardly speak of the same for Balaam. In both instances, that of the nation Israel and that of the prophet Balaam, there is the necessary postulate that God has revealed Himself.

Three Lectures (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), p. 24.

[1] Gleason L. Archer, Jr. , *A Survey of Old Testament Intro-duction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 135.

No theological presentation will be successful unless these two postulates are accepted as axiomatic: God is, and God has revealed Himself in His word.

Next, something must be said concerning the nature of the revelation God has given. The proper view is that it is a propositional revelation. William Brew writes, "Revelation is the activity of God in communicating to man propositional truth which man otherwise would and could not know, truth concerning Himself, His work in creation and His will and purpose for creation."[1] Again, the same writer says, "Thus revelation is something which man has not gotten by his own volition, but rather something which has come to him from God through no effort which he could put forth himself. Involved in this revelation is the impartation of knowledge or information in the form of propositions."[2]

One must begin with a view of the factual nature of revelation to having come from Yahweh Himself. It is noteworthy that Eichrodt holds this to be correct.

> First of all it must be noted that the establishment of a covenant through the work of Moses especially emphasizes one basic element in the whole Israelite experience of God, namely *the factual nature of the divine revelation*. God's disclosure of himself is not

[1] William Thomas Brew, "A study of the Process of Revelation in the Pentateuch, " (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1963), p. 6.
[2] Ibid., p. 5.

grasped speculatively, not e--pounded in the form of a lesson; it is as he breaks in on the life of his people in his dealings with them and grants them knowledge of his being. [Emphasis in original.[1]

The relevance of this issue to the story of Balaam is para-mount. Throughout the account there is repeated emphasis on the fact that Yahweh "breaks in" on the life of Balaam and speaks through him. Balaam is an unwilling mediator of the very words of God. Before he leaves his homeland he was instructed, "rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you .shall you do" (Num. 22:20). The message was reasserted by the Angel of Yahweh who confronted him on his journey: "Go with the men, but only the word which I speak to you are you to speak" (Num. 22:35).

On meeting Balak, Balaam asserts that he can speak only that which God puts in his mouth (Num. 22:38; cf. 23:12, 26; 24:13). Moreover, the text affirms unequivocally that Yahweh did speak indeed through Balaam (Num. 23:4-5, 16; 24:2). Yahweh "put a word in Balaam's mouth. " God

[1] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. by J. A. Baker, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (2 vols.; London: SCM Press, Ltd. , 1961, 1967), I, 37. Although profess-ing to give strong assent to the "factual nature of the divine revelation, Professor Eichrodt does not accord a high degree of reliability to the early history of Israel, though he is to the right of the German school of Alt and Noth.

revealed Himself of His own pleasure and for His own ends. The nature of His revelation was factual and providential. The act of His revelation way gracious.

An especially fine treatment of the nature of revelation as a gracious act of a loving God is given by J. I. Packer. He emphasizes initiative of grace in revealing Himself to man. Packer also shows that the very nature of revelation is a necessity if we are to know anything aright about God.

> The nature of revelation as an act of God is now clear. Revelation is our personal Creator and Upholder addressing us in order to make friends with us. We do not find him; rather, He finds us. He sees us as rebels against Him, with our minds blinded and our characters twisted by sin, actively dishonouring Him by stifling His truth and serving false gods. But His Word addressed to us in Christ, though it begins as bad news, with a disclosure to us of the judgement under which we stand, is essentially good news; for.it is a word of pardon and peace, a message of reconciliation by the death of Jesus and of "a way back to God from the dark paths of sin."
>
> From this it appears that our study of God's revelation should be controlled by a recognition of two basic truths. The first is that what we are dealing with is a work of grace to sinners, a work, that is, of free undeserved favour towards persons who have forfeited all claims to favour. The Word that God has spoken in His Son concerns a costly and unmerited salvation that God has provided on our behalf. To speak such a word of grace is in itself an act of grace, and only those who see revelation as grace can understand it aright.[1]

Having spoken so warmly of the nature of revelation as an act

[1] J. I. Packer. *God Speaks to Man: Revelation and the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 41.

of loving grace, Packer then turns to the question of the source for such revelation. This is central to our thesis.

> The second truth to recognize is that knowledge of special revelation can only be drawn from special. revelation itself. Only in the light of revelation--God's light, shining into our darkness-can we sin-blinded creatures see light on any spiritual matter. And if we cannot know the truth about God save by revelation, it is surely evident that we cannot know the truth about revelation save by revelation. This means, as we shall see, that the truth about revelation must be learned from the Bible, just as the truth about God's character must be learned from the Bible.[1]

But, we might ask, what if we do not like what we find in the Bible? While one might grant the necessity of "the factual nature of the divine revelation," as Eichrodt does; what about the specific areas in which we have special difficulties? Is the maxim stated by Eichrodt to be taken as a general principle in a vague sense, or is it to be taken with a more specific connotation? On these questions, Packer now dwells.

> We must not be surprised if we find the Bible contradicting our own ideas; nor must we hesitate to recognize that if we depart from the biblical account of revelation, we go wrong. Many Protestant writers today err here, accepting the witness of revelation to other truths yet sitting loose to its witness to itself. Notions such as that revelation took the form of a progress from faulty thoughts of God to more exact ones, or that it took place by divine deed and not by divine word, or that the divine inspiration of statements does not guarantee their truth, or that the scriptural record of revelation is not itself revelation, get coped from book to book without regard for the fact that they contradict revelations own account of itself. Even 'neo-orthodox' theologians, who rightly stress that revelation is known to us only by its own light, and that the Bible is integral to God's revelatory action, corrupt
>
> [1] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

their understanding of revelation by importing into it rationalistic, non-biblical axioms, such as the allegedly non-propositional character of personal revelation (Brunner) or the alleged paradox that God speaks His infallible word to us through fallacious words of men (Barth). We must be on our guard against such lapses. We only truly honour the God who has spoken in His Son to us blind sinners by listening, humbly, teachable, and without interrupting, to what He has to say, and by believing on His authority, all that He is pleased to tell us--about revelation, no less than any other subject.[1]

These are not simply pleas for a high view of Scripture for its own sake, though that would be warrant in itself. Packer is dealing with the stuff from which sound theology is made. It is precisely at the point that one puts his own reason above biblical data, that he ceases to be a biblical theologian.[2] Packer is concerned that his readers understand that the position he is advocating is not just the view of one scholar, but that this is in fact the viewpoint of the New Testament as a whole. He cites examples from the Book of Hebrews witnessing to the verbal character of revelation in the Old Testament. He concludes, that to the writer of the Book of Hebrews (and that writer is in agreement with the writers of the rest of the New Testament),

> the sentences and sentiments of the Old Testament are so many units of divine instruction, true testimonies to God's will, works, and ways, proceeding, in the last analysis, from His own mouth. The epistle to the Hebrews thus impressively illustrates what it

[1] Ibid., p. 42.

[2] The present writer does not intend by the words, "a biblical theologian, " a reference to the so-called "Biblical Theology" movement. For such, consult, e.g., Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

means to believe that "all scripture is inspired by God and (there-
fore) profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for in-
struction in righteousness" (II Tin.. 3:16, R. S. V.). The writer's
position is that not only the words of the prophets, but the entire
Old Testament, first to last, is "God's Word written"--that is,
verbal revelation.[1]

This is thus the basis for sound theology. We concur with
Roland K. Harrison who writes in his definitive Introduction to the Old
Testament: "Surely a genuine Old Testament theology can only be possible
when the ancient Hebrew Scriptures are recognized as constituting nothing
loss than the oracles of God."[2]

Thus far, we have seen that there are two basic postulates for
the doing of Old Testament theology: (1) God is, and (2) He has revealed
Himself in His Word. Concerning this revelation, we have seen that a
sound methodology does not give just passing assent to "factual nature,"
but rather insists on propositional truth given in an inerrant manner as an
act of grace of a loving God to an undeserving recipient. The only proper
response is faith coupled to and expressed by action becoming one who has
received this grace gift from Yahweh. In far too many treatments of Old
Testament theology, Lehman notes, the claims of the Bible are not taken
seriously. "The problem, " he avers, "centers in an over-emphasis of the

[1] Packer, God Speaks to Man, p. 48

[2] Roland Kenneth Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament
(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969),
p. 437.

human side of the origin and nature of the Scriptures to a corresponding
neglect or rejection of the divine aspects of these matters."[1]

Contrast with the Ancient Near East:

Walther Eichrodt begins his monumental two-volume opus on
Old Testament theology with the following words:

> No presentation of OT theology can properly be made without constant reference to its connections with the whole world of Near Eastern religion. Indeed it is in its commanding such a wide panorama of the rich domain of man's religious activity that many will prefer to see the special significance of the faith of the OT. [Emphasis in the original.][2]

But such a stress on ancient Near Eastern context may be
taken wrongly, and indeed often has been used improperly. It is for this
reason that Paul van Imschoot in his theological treatise (which is sprinkled with an incredible number of biblical citations'), raises a word of caution concerning the use of historical and cultural factors in the doing of
Old Testament theology:

> It is important, nevertheless, that in our effort to discover the human factors, the influences of the ethnic milieu, the neighboring civilizations and religions which influences the religion of Israel, we do not forget or neglect its own special and constantly affirmed character of a revealed religion.[3]

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[1] Chester K. Lehman, *Biblical Theology*, Vol. 1. *Old Testament* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1971), p. 27.

[2] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 25-26.

[3] Paul van Inzschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. I. God,

An even stronger warning comes from the pen of the former "dean" of American conservative Old Testament scholars, the late Oswald T. Allis. Writing in what appears to be his magnum opus, Allis reacts strongly to the appeal that Eichrodt makes for the comparative approach which we have just quoted. Allis cites a number of Scripture passages, of Which the following are representative:

Psalm 147:20

> He has not dealt thus with any nation;
> And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.
> [N. A. S. B.]

Isaiah 8:19-20

> And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the wizards who whisper and mutter, " should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living.

> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.
> [N. A. S. B.]

Jeremiah 10:12-16

> It is He who made the earth by His power,
> Who established the world by His wisdom;
> And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

> When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the
>   heavens,

trans. by Kathryn Sullivan and Fidelis -Buck (New York: Desclee.Company, 1965), p. 2. For a thorough evaluation of this work, see the review by David A. Hubbard in Robert B. Laurin, Contemporary Old Testament Theologians (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1970), pp. 191-215.

And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain.
And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge;
Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols;
For his molten images are deceitful,
And there is no breath in them.

They are worthless, a work of mockery;
In the time of their punishment they will perish.

The Portion of Jacob is not like these;
For the Maker of all is He,
And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance;
Yahweh of hosts is His name.

<div align="center">[N. A. S. B.]</div>

Having referred to a number of passages such as these, Allis

then develops his opposition to the comparative approach as it is often used.

> Such passages as these state clearly the attitude of Moses and
> the other inspired leaders of Israel toward the religions of their
> neighbors. Yet Eichrodt, speaking for many others and using
> italics for emphasis, tells us: "No presentation of OT theology
> can properly be made without constant reference to its connection
> with the whole world of Near Eastern religion."
> The best answer and the sufficient answer to this claim is this:
> one can search through the whole Bible only to find that there is
> no warrant for it in scripture, that on the contrary it runs counter
> to the clearest teachings of the Old Testament, as the above pass-
> ages quoted from it are sufficient to prove. The teaching of the
> Bible from Genesis to Malachi is that Israel is to shun, to have
> no dealings with her heathen neighbors, particularly and especi-
> ally in matters of religious worship, lest she be corrupted by
> them. An acceptance of or linkage with these "abominations," by
> which name the idolatry of these nations is described, is a sin
> against the Lord. And again and again, where it occurs it is
> visited with severe and sudden punishment. The Old Testament
> emphasizes the utter difference between the religion of Israel and
> all the ethnic faiths, while the aim of many comparative religion-

ists is to relate and link them by emphasizing and stressing super-ficial resemblances and minimizing or ignoring fundamental and essential differences. Eichrodt has himself given the needed re-buke to his own zeal for the study of comparative religion, when he tells his readers: "We cannot help being aware that the fact that Jesus and the whole New Testament make almost exclusive use of the Old Testament canon and thereby accord it a special significance for all their thinking is no superficial coincidence. The plain fact of the matter is that without these limits is to be found the major and most valuable part of those thoughts and ideals which gave the faith of Israel its character" [quoting Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 35].[1]

The religion of Israel is unique. This is because it is re-vealed religion. And the One who revealed it is none other than Yahweh, the God Who Is and Who Is not silent.[2] Hence, the two postulates men-tioned above come into even stronger importance. God is! God has re-vealed Himself in His word! These postulates are true for the Balaam pericope as well as for the Bible as a whole. An element of strong empha-sis within the oracle corpus is the fact that Israel is distinct from the nations (Num. 23:9). Israel is distinct not because of something inherent within the people, but because of the activity of God on its behalf (Num.

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[1] Oswald T. Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Comiany, 1972), p. 370. Allis has long been an implacable foe of higher riticism, and this most recent book appears to be his definitive state-vent of such opposition. The writer has just learned of Dr. Allis' death February, 1973).

[2] Compare the many titles of Francis A. Schaeffer on this heme. Most recently, "He Is There and He Is Not Silent: Part I: Philosophy's Metaphysical Problem as Answered in the Existence of the Infinite-Personal Triune God," *BS*, CXXVIII (April, 1971), p. 108.

23:23). Of Israel, and of Israel alone, it may be said, "Yahweh his God is with him" (Num. 23:21). The contrast between Israel and the nations is not just relative, it is absolute.

The viewpoint that has been stressed in the present chapter up to this point might elicit the objection, "But such is loaded with presuppogitions." But of course. And it is to that question we now turn.

The Role of Presuppositions

The simple fact of the matter, as Van Til insists so resolutely, is. that we all have presuppositions. The problem is that occasionally we are unaware of them or we try to ignore them.[1] In reviewing a commentary on the Book of Numbers by the Jewish scholar J. Greenstone, who is conservative respecting the text, the late E. J. Young moved into the area of the necessity of a proper presuppositionalism.

> From the point of view of orthodox Christianity it is not sufficient merely to adopt a conservative attitude toward the questions of biblical criticism; rightly to understand the Bible, one must acknowledge the Bible's God. One cannot, however, acknowledge the Bible's God unless one also acknowledge Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. Hence, the conservative Jew and the devout Christian, although they may use somewhat similar terminology

[1] A representative passage from Van Til is the following: "A truly Protestant apologetic must therefore make its beginning from the presupposition that the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, speaks to him with absolute authority in Scripture." Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), p. 179. Chapter IX of this book is titled, "Argument by Presupposition," (pp. 179-208).

when speaking of God, are in reality poles apart in their thought concerning Him.[1]

More recently, Dewey M. Beegle, in his latest book, candidly points to the problem of presuppositions. This is an important statement, since it comes from one who is considerably to the left of Young respecting presuppositional stance. Beegle writes concerning the problem of the Bible student who confronts the manifold diversity of approach to a given biblical passage. He concludes that these several approaches are to be explained along two lines: (1) the complexity of the text itself, and (2) the presuppositions of the several interpreters.

> There are two basic reasons why the same biblical narrative has been interpreted in so many ways: (1) the text is very complex and ambiguous at times; and (2) *every student of the Bible, brings some presuppositions to the task of interpretation*. As a result all interpretations are to some extent subjective. Some have declared the situation hopeless because they claim there is no way of ascertaining the truth of the matter. In fact, however, some interpreters (exegetes) are far more objective than others, and it is possible to come closer to the reality of the issue. In order to check on the accuracy of the various interpretations *it is necessary to know some of the basic theories and criteria by which the interpreters make their judgment.* [Emphasis added.][2]

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[1] E. J. Young, "Review of Julius H. Greenstone, *Numbers, With Commentary*, " *WTJ*, II (November, 1939), 40. The full data on the book under review: *The Holy Scriptures: Numbers, with Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5708/1948),pp. xxviii+373. This is a revised edition from that reviewed by Young in 1939.

[2] Dewey M. Beegle, Moses, *The Servant of Yahweh* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 16. Beegle, it will be remembered., is the author of the controversial book, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), in which

To the point also is the following statement from a scholar of yet a different theological perspective than either Young or Beegle. R. A. F. MacKenzie states that one must begin the task of interpreting Scripture with the commitment of faith.

> Coldly scientific--in the sense of rationalistic--objectivity is quite incapable of even perceiving, let alone exploiting, the religious values of Scripture. There must first be the commitment, the recognition by faith of the divine origin and authority of the book, then the believer can properly and profitably apply all the most conscientious techniques of the subordinate sciences, without in the least infringing on their due autonomy or being disloyal to the scientific ideal.[1]

"Coldly scientific objectivity," as MacKenzie suggests, is an impossibility respecting theological matters. The things of God cannot be understood by man without the teaching ministry of the Spirit in the one who is regenerate (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-16). Not only is such a detached objectivity beyond reach, it is in fact undesirable. This latter point has been emphasized by Bruce K. Waltke in this way:

> The objective of writing a scientific, autonomous history is not only impossible, but it is also undesirable. The whole attempt "to control" or "to prove" what happened in Israel's history by reason and knowledge is contrary to faith. If a fact can be proved "beyond reasonable doubt" it is removed from the realm of faith. The Bible, however, calls for faith, for without faith it is im-

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he attacked the concept of the inerrancy of Scripture.

[1] R. A. F. MacKenzie, "The Concept of Biblical Theology," *TT*, IV (1956), p. 134. Cited by Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 14, N. 14.

possible to please God (Heb. 1:6). Therefore, such an objective militates against the biblical imperative for faith in the God of Israel's history.

Not only does a rational, autonomous approach militate against the biblical demand for faith, but it is also in opposition to the biblical imperative that men ought to commit their lives as a sacrifice to the God of Israel. Because the methods of literary criticism and form criticism ultimately rest on human reason and knowledge, its conclusions are always heuristic and tentative. Lacking final certainty with regard to Israel's God by human reason which is only ascertainable through faith--few men who appeal to reason as their final authority are willing to commit their lives as a sacrifice to Him. Many men may be willing to die for the right to entertain a muddle in their minds, but most men are not willing to die for the muddle itself. Therefore, this approach militates against the biblical imperative for commitment to the God of Israel's history.[1]

It is for sound reasons--reasons born of faith rather than speculation--that Waltke concludes that a theological bias is necessary. "Finally, we conclude that one must approach the biblical material with biological bias. We do not approach it with the theology based on the wisdom of men, but with theology based on convictions of the Spirit of God."[2]

Summary

Sound theology begins with two axioms. The first of these is that "God is. " The second is that "God has revealed Himself through His

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[1] Bruce K. Waltke, "History of Israel" (unpublished class notes, O. T. 254, Dallas Theological Seminary, I n. di), pp. 11-12.
[2] Ibid., p. 12.

Word." When attention is drawn to comparative material from the ancient Near Eastern setting of Israel, it must be done with caution, ever keeping mind that the religion of Israel is *sui generus*, it is totally unique. There are points of contact between Israel and her neighbors, to be sure. But the biblical emphasis must always be on the distinctions, and those distinctions are due to the reality of the Person of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Finally, that we operate on presuppositions is granted. Our most important presupposition is faith in Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the Father of our Lord'. Jesus Christ. One may be a professor of religion and remain somewhat emotionally unattached to one's subject, religion-- much, one supposes, as a microbiologist might be an expert in his field without having an "emotional attachment" to the minute organisms that form the basis of his study. But one may not remain aloof from a relationship with God and call oneself a "biblical theologian, " in the strict sense. We do have a bias; it is the bias_ of the convinced biblicist, and this bias is a bias born of the Spirit of God.

The Mitte of Theology Is God

In his new book on the problems of Old Testament theology, Gerhard F. Hasel begins on this disquieting note:

> Old Testament theology today is undeniably in crisis. Recent monographs and articles by European and American scholars show that the fundamental issues and crucial questions are presently undecided and matters of intense debate. Though it is

centuries old, OT theology is now uncertain of its true identity.[1]

In his third chapter[2] he speaks of one of the crucial issues, that of the problem of establishing aa center (German, *Mitte*) for Old Testament theology. Surveying the attempts given at solutions by other writers, Hasel gives his own suggestion as to the proper center in these words:

> It seems to be a given fact that whereas the NT is clearly *Christo*centric the OT is correspondingly *Theo*centric. This means that the center of the OT which qualifies most adequately with respect tothe foregoing discussion cannot be anything other than God. The *theo*centric nature of the OT testimony is abundantly testified to in theophanies and epiphanies as well as in the testimonies of God's actions in history. God as the center of the OT is affirmed among others more recently by F. Baumgartel, H. Graf Reventlow, and E. Jacob.[3]

Although this is a keenly debated issue, we would concur with Hasel in laying that the proper center of Old Testament theology seems to be God.

God is the center of the Old Testament as a Whole

At the beginning of this chapter reference was made to the question of the existence of a "theology" of the Book of Ruth. Hals con-

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[1] Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 7.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 49-63.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 63. Citations are given in notes 72-75 on the same page as to the literature in view. For other comparative viewpoints, see Laurin, *Contemporary Old Testament Theologians*. Space does not allow for a full (and fair!) presentation of the large number of alternatives.

vincingly demonstrates that Ruth is to be sure a book of theology, and that

the theme of the story is seen in the providence of God.[1] Regarding the

Book of Ruth, Leon Morris agrees:

> It is better to see it as a tale told because it is true and because
> it shows something of the relationship between God and man. .
> the implication throughout is that God is watching over His people,
> and that He brings to pass what is good. The book is a book about
> God. He rules over all and brings blessing to those who trust
> Him. [Emphasis added.][2]

The estimation, "the book is a book about God," is true of the

Book of Ruth, and it is also true regarding the Bible as a whole. Allis

writes, "In the first place we observe that the Old Testament is a book

about God and from God" [his emphasis].[3] In an article written in 1931,

W. B. Riley said much the same. "First of all," he stated, "the end of

the Bible must be to reveal God."[4] Note the insistence on this concept in

the writings of George A. F. Knight:

> The Old Testament is a book about God. Prima facie, on the
> first reading, the Old Testament seems to be the history of an-
> cient Israel. Much of the history of ancient Israel is undoubtedly
> to be found in it. But the book is not a history of Israel. The
> Old Testament is a book about God. Nor is it a series of bio-

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[1] Hals, *Theology of the Book of Ruth,* p. 6.
[2] Leon Morris, *Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary* (Chic-
ago: Intervarsity Press, 1968), p. 2,42.
[3] Allis, *Old Testament: Claims and Critics*, p. 7.
[4] W. B. Riley, "Is the Bible a Human or a Divine Book?" *CF*,
5 (December, 1931), 217.

graphics of great, believing characters, such as Moses, David, Amos and Nehemiah. Their stories are indeed to be found there. But the Old Testament is not about them; it is about God. The archaeologist turns to the Old Testament with interest, as do the anthropologist and the folklorist, and as does even the botanist. But the Old Testament is not a textbook on any of these areas of knowledge. Rather it is a book about God. The very frequency of the appearance of the name of the Lord should alert us to this fact. Indeed, the several divine names together form the most commonly occurring words in the Old Testament as we may observe from a perusal of any biblical concordance.[1]

The centrality of God in the Old Testament is stressed by van Imschoot in these words: "God's personal character is evident on every page of the Old Testament: it is strongly stressed by the numberless anthropomorphisms that are to be found in texts of every epoch."[2] Further, in his very satisfying study of the incomparable nature of Yahweh, C. J. Labuschagne cites J. Lindblom who says that an understanding of the distinctive idea of God is essential for an understanding of the nature of Old Testament religion: "Wenn man das Eigenartige im alttestamentlichen Gottesbegriff verstanden had, so hat man auch das Eigenartige in der alttestamentlichen Religion uberhaupt verstanden."[3]

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[1] George A. F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (2d ed. ; London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1964), p. 17.

[2] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 28.

[3] J. Lindblom, "Zur Frage der Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion," *Werden and Wesen des A. T., Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom Alten and Neuen Testament*, LXVI (1936), p. 131; cited by C.J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, Pretoria Oriental Serves, ed. A. Van Selms, V (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. l.

Finally, we may cite the premise of Labuschagne in support of the position that Yahweh is the true *Mitte* for Old Testament theology. He states: "Indeed the idea of God undoubtedly is basically the most important factor for the understanding of Old Testament religion, whether we approach it from the view-point of 'Hebrew religion' or from the view-point of 'Old Testament Theology.'"[1]

God is the center of the Balaam Narrative

That which. is true of the Book of Ruth and which seems to be! true for the Bible as a whole, is also true of the Balaam narrative. Moses is not the protagonist; in fact, he is not even mentioned. Balak is but a by-stander. The donkey may be remembered by children, and the donkey does serve a role in bringing some comic relief in a grim setting; but the center of the narrative is hardly the donkey--no more than the fish is the center of the Jonah story. Not even Balaam may be regarded as the leading protagonist. *God is at work!* He is at work through Balak. He is at work through Balaam. Yes, He was also at work through the donkey story. "The Story of Balaam" is but a chapter title in a larger volume, "The Story of Yahweh."

If the Book of Ruth presents the activity of Yahweh in providence; the Book of Balaam shows the activity of Yahweh in sovereignty.

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[1] *Ibid*. See below, p. 353, n. 3.

In the lovely story of Ruth the careful reader might miss the nuances of
the providences of Yahweh. Only the careful reader is he, who in coming
to chapter 2, and reading the words "and it just so happened" [וַיִּקֶר מִקְרֶהָ]
--has an involuntary smile at the subtle reference to the providence of God.
in the story of Balaam, the hand of Yahweh is not subtle in presentation;
it is blatant with power and authority.

How like God! He takes what otherwise might have been a
minor incident: the futile attempt of a petty pagan to use superstitious
means to impede the progress of the nation Israel--and by His immediate
and unexpected intervention, Yahweh transforms the incident into a pro--
found demonstration of His sovereignty and a magnificent display of His
faithfulness. Truly, this, too, is a book about God.

Such is the conclusion of Moriarty: "His prophesying finished,
Balaam sets out northward to his home, a poorer man, perhaps, but a
wiser one for having participated in *a drama whose principal character was
the One who spoke through the oracles of Balaam*" [emphasis added].[1]
This is also the view of von Rad.

> This whole story of Balaaam is not a tale told without a purpose.
> In the form in which we now have it, it is the expression of cer-
> tain quite definite beliefs, of the central doctrines of the Old Tes-
> tament revelation. God stands by His own to help them. It is not

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[1] Frederick L. Moriarty, The Book of Numbers. Part 2. With
a Commentary, "Pamphlet Bible Series" (New York: Paulist Press
[Paulist Fathers] , 1960), p. 10.

upon men nor upon human power politics that they depend for their protection. Furthermore, even the most sinister purposes of the enemy against the people of God are bound to be transformed in such a way as to benefit them; Balaam comes to curse--but he stays to bless. Thus the story makes visibly plain to us something that otherwise we should be able to grasp only by a daring and adventurous faith. All. history has a secret inner side, which is hidden from the eyes of the natural man. The story of Balaam turns history inside out and makes the miracle plain. Balaam comes desiring to curse; and, we may say, in the very teeth of his desires the curse is turned into a blessing.[1]

Again the same writer says, "This story, too, sets forth in visible form the truth of the New Testament saying that 'in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose' (Rom. 8:28).[2] In the Balaam Oracles, as in the Old Testament elsewhere, true center is Yahweh.3

Balaam's Employment of the Appellatives of God

One of the striking elements of the Balaam narrative is the Montage of designations he uses for deity. Often these have been used as a criterion for source analysis, and for many scholars our text has served a test case for the literary analytical method. More and more scholars, however, are finding the use of the names of deity to be a weak criterion

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[1] Von Rad, *Moses*, p. 79. Some of the implications of this quotation will be discussed below.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 80. The same writer expressed a similar point of view in an article published in 1936: "Die Bileamperikope, 4. Mose 22 bis 24, " *DP*, XL (1936). 1936: 3If Yahweh is the center (the subject), a thematic

[3] If Yahweh is the *center* (the *subject*), a thematic statement might be, "Yahweh is King," a theme not developed in this paper but worthy of research.

in our section for source analysis, as was demonstrated above in our extensive survey of Balaam in the critical literature. In addition to the words Yahweh and Elohim, there are also several other terms used as designations for the person of the God of Israel. The burden of this section of our study is to see what may be learned of Yahweh's grand person in the context of the oracles of a pagan diviner who was sovereignly used to glorify the name of the God of Israel.

YAHWEH [יהוה]

It is beyond dispute that: while we occasionally speak in terms of the "names" of God, there is in fact but one name par excellence, and that Name is Yahweh [יהוה]. The meaning of God's Name is to be seen in relationship to the meaning of names in general in the ancient Near East.[1] Balaam employs the Divine Name three times in his oracles (Num. 23:8, 21; .24:6). 2 Hence, this is our proper starting point. Umberto

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[1] See above for a development of this theme, along with references to literature, pp. 135-37.

[2] The employment of Yahweh in our full pericope (Numbers 22-24) is as follows:

Yahweh [יהוה] is used seventeen times (Num. 22:8, 13, 19, 28, 31; 23:3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 17, 26; 24:1, 6, 11, 13, 13).

Yahweh my God [יהוה אֱלֹהָי] is used one time (Num. 22:18).

Yahweh his God [יהוה אֱלֹהָיו]is used one time (Num. 23:21).

The Angel of Yahweh [מַלְאַךְ יהוה] is used ten times (Num. 22:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34, 35).

In the uses of Yahweh (excluding The Angel of Yahweh):

Balaam is the speaker (in discourse) nine times (22:8, 13, 18

Cassuto has noted that "the name YHWH is a proper noun, the specific name of Israel's God, the God whom the Israelites acknowledged as the Sovereign of the universe and as the Divinity who chose them as His people."[1] Eichrodt begins his treatment of the name of the Covenant God with these forceful words:

> If the saying *nomina sent realia* is valid in any context, it is surely that of the divine name in the ancient world. The question, therefore, of what kind of name the God of Israel bore is no idle one, but can be the means of arriving at an important insight in-to to Israel's religious thought.
>
> The special covenant name of the Israelite national God, the name which he, so to speak, subscribed to the charter of the Sinai covenant, is essentially Yahweh.[2]

That Yahweh is the proper Name of the God of the Bible has been established beyond question by scholars of all persuasions. However, the precise significance of the sublime Name is still a matter of keen debate among scholars. In brief, the two chief views common today among

["Yahweh my God"] , 19; 23:3, 12, 26; 24:13, 13).

      Balaam is the speaker (in oracles) three times (23:8, 21 ["Yahweh his God"]; 24:6).

      Balak is the speaker two times (Num. 23:17; 24:11).

      The narrator is the speaker five times (Num. 22:28, 31; 23:5, 16; 24:1).

   [1] Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1961), p. 18.

   [2] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 178.

Old Testament scholars relate the word יהוה to the Hebrew verb היה

(or its older form הוה), "to be."[1]

      The position of Albright and others is that the name Yahweh is not to be taken as related to the Qal theme of the verb "to be," but rather to the Hiphil theme of the same verb, with the meaning "He causes to be."[2] In one of his last printed works before his death, Albright said, "the strong debate over the original meaning of the name Yahweh shows no sign of abating, and the most incredible etymologies are still advanced by otherwise serious scholars."[3] Restating his position of years'

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[1] An exception among evangelical scholars may be seen in the case of Harrison. He regards the name *Yahweh* to be a substantive from the root היה with a preformative. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 400. Opposition to such a view has been taken by the late Roland de Vaux in his major treatise on Old Testament history: "Mais ce type de substantifs est tres rare et it peut s'expliquer comme un imparfait verbal substantive, et c'est bien. la solution que nous retiendrons pour le nom de Yahve." Roland de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d'Israel: Des origines a l'installation en Canaan* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 'Editeurs, 1971), p. 328.

[2] See, for example, William Foxwell Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process (2d ed. ; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. , 1957), pp. 259-60. Compare, Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands, " Supplement to *Analytical Concordance to the Bible by Robert Young* (New York: Funk and Wagnnalls Company, 1936, 1955), p. 35.

[3] William Foxwell Allbright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 168.

standing, and promising further work (in a book that was not published before his death), the author concluded, "the evidence is now so clear and extensive that it is hard to see how it can be refuted."[1]

David Noel Freedman has also argued persuasively for the causative meaning of the divine name in an article published in the 1960 issue of the Journal of Biblical Literature. He states that he agrees that the name is to be translated, "He causes to be, he brings into existence; he brings to pass, he creates."[2] A more recent advocate of the causative viewpoint is Dewey M. Beegle in his new book, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh.* He points to Amorite inscriptions dating from 1800-1600 B. C. in which there is the personal name *Yahwi-el*. Beegle states, "The first part is a causative form of the verb *hawah* (*hayah*) ('to be'), meaning 'May he cause to be (bring into existence).' Thus the old name probably meant 'May El bring into existence.'"[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 172.

[2] David Noel Freedman, "Tha Name of the God of Moses, " *JBL*, LXXIX (1960), 1.51-56.

[3] Beegle, Moses, *The Servant of Yahweh*, p. 72. However, it should be noted that this same evidence has been challenged by Roland de Vaux in his article, "The Revelation. of the Divine Name YHWH, " *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies*, ed. John I. Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), pp. 48--75. On pages 62-63 he states that the evidence from the several proffered Amorite names is inconclusive. Conversely, Albright used this evidence for his view in his last work, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp. 168-72. For a recent assessment, consult Herbert

It is fair to say that despite Albright's claim, noted above, that it is hard to see how it can be refuted," a majority of Old Testament scholars are in fact left unconvinced. The concensus is that the name of God is to be related to the Qal theme of the verb "to be. " Eichrodt, for instance, terms this by far the most probable.[1] And in this he is joined by a host of other scholars.[2]

Of basal importance to the meaning of the name of God is Exodus 3:14. Although admitting that the interpretation of Exodus 3:14 is a matter of controversy, Crewel insists that this verse is the single explanation of the name Yahweh in the Old Testament: "Jedenfalls ist V. 14 a die einzige Erklarung des Jahwenamens im Alter Testament."[3] Similarly, de Vaux writes, "C'est la seule explication formelie du norn divin

B. Huffmon, "Yahweh and Mari," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 283-89.

[1] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 189.

[2] Compare *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 45-58; J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 147; Eamond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 52; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), I, 10 ff. ; Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 48; Paul van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 1, 15. France notes humourously: "the scholars oscillate from one interpretation to another, and the rest of us resign ourselves to a frustrating ignorance. " R. T. France, *The Living God* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 16.

[3] Hans Crewel, Mosegeschichten, "Handbucherei fur den Reli-

dens la Bible."[1] Hence, it is to this grand passage we now turn.

Moses' question concerning God's name elicits God's gracious response in Exodus 3:14, 15, in which He reveals the Name by which He desires to be known through eternity. God's response appears to involve a play on the meaning of the Hebrew verb f'ri , "to be."

And God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה]

and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM

[אֶהְיֶה] has sent me to you."

[Ex. 3:14, N. A, S. B.]

In this verse God uses the first person Qal Imperfect of the verb n'r "to be." In the following verse we have what appears to be the same verb in the third person (and in the same theme).

And God, furthermore said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to
the sons of Israel, 'Yahweh [יהוה], the God of your fathers,
the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,
has sent me to you. 'This is My name forever, and this is
My memorial-name to all generations."
[Ex. 3:15, N. A. S. B.]

Hence, on the clear authority of the express statement of God, we see that he has one Name and that Name is Yahweh. Lest anyone misunderstand that this might be a "new" deity revealing Himself in Exodus 3, Yahweh clearly identifies Himself to be the God of the patriarchs, Abrahang, Isaac, and Jacob. God has a name. This is His memorial name

gionsunterricht, " IX (Gutersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971), p. 35.
    [1] R. de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d' Israel*, p. 330.

for all time. And the Name is Yahweh!

Cassuto maintains, we think correctly, that the employment of the first person form of the verb in Exodus 3:14 is the first part of God's answer to Moses' question concerning His Name. He writes:

> The sense is: It is I who am with My creatures (compare B. Berakhoth 9b) in their hour of trouble and need--as I have already declared to you: 'But I will be (אֶהְיֶה 'eheye) with you' (v. 12)--to help them and save them. And I am who I am, always, and just as I am with you, so am I with all the children of Israel who are enslaved, and with everyone who is in need of My help, both now and in the future. There is also implicit in this interpretation the thought of implementing the promises: I am who I am alwavs, ever alike, and consequently I am true to My word and fulfil it (compare Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai on Exod. vi 2). When the Israelites realized, after their exodus from Egypt and their deliverance from Pharaoh's host, which pursued after them, that in truth the Lord was with them and kept His promises to them, they proclaimed in the Song of the Sea (xv 3): 'YHWH is His name', that is, He and His name are worthy of each other, His deeds being in accord with His designation.[1]

There was also a second part to God's answer to Moses' question. This is given in verse 15 which was quoted above. Again, we follow the analysis given by Cassuto.

> The second answer, which is introduced by the sentence, *God also said to Moses* (the word *also* indicates that there is an additional utterance here) is worded in an elevated style, in partpoetic. It is headed by the solemn formula, *Say this unto the children of Israel*, which has a broader rhythm than the corresponding clause in the previous verse (אֶל *'el* instead of –לְ l[e]- both prepositions mean 'to', 'unto') and is identical with that which prefaces the poetic verses of Exod. xx 22 ff. Thereafter follow the words that

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[1] U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967), p. 38.

Moses is hidden to tell the Israelites: first, the Specific Name, YHWH, which stands, as it were, alone, before the series of designations separating it from the predicate has sent me. Juxtaposed to it are the following appellations: to begin with, the general title, the God of your fathers, which is succeeded by three that particularize and confirm it, emphasizing the idea of un - broken continuity, namely, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. After the solemn proclamation of the Name and its by-names, the fact of the mission is to be mentioned, has sent me to you. He Himself sent me to you; although we forgat His name, He did not forget us. He remembered His covenant with our ancestors, and has sent me to you to fulfil His covenant. Finally, there is a noble concluding sentence, constructed in true poetic form, according to the style of Eastern poetry of antiquity; this is My name for ever, and this is My remembrance i. e. title throughout all generations.[1] [His emphasis, for quotation.]

In line with the above analysis, we may arrange the elements

of Exodus 3:15 in a mechanical layout in the following way:

And God also said to Moses,
Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel:

Yahweh
    The God of your fathers
        The God of Abraham,
        The God of Isaac,
        and the God of Jacob,
    has sent me to you.
    This is My Name forever,
    And this is My Memorial Designation throughout all
                    generations.

Yahweh is the name by which God revealed Himself. One of the ironies of

biblical history and the post-biblical period is the fact that this "Memorial

Designation throughout all generations" according to the purpose of God ,

[1] *Ibid*., p. 39.

is by-and-large unknown to most believers.

If the name of the God of Israel is related to the Qal theme, most contemporary Old Testament scholars do not understand the prime reference to be "I Am" in a static sense; it is not related by most to the concept of aseity alone.[1] Eichrodt :'insists, and the italics are his, "*The emphasis is not on passive, but on active existence*." He explains:

> When understood in this way, however, this divine name has its particular significance for the historical mission of Moses. What could be of greater importance both for him and for his nation than the conviction of the succouring presence of the God of the Fathers ?... The only thing which could provide the religious basis for a new national entity was the certainty, deeply impressed both on the founder of the religion and on his people, that the deity was demonstrably and immediately present and active.[2]

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[1] Aseity is defined as "underived or independent existence. " Cf. William Little, ed., *The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, rev. and ed. by C. T. Onions (3rd ed. rev. with addenda; 'Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 105. This term is used in a theological sense by W. Robert Cook: "Aseity. God is self-existent. The source of His existence in life is wholly within Himself and is not dependent upon anything external to Himself. He exists by the necessity of His own Being, that is, His existence is *grounded* in His nature." *Systematic Theology in Outline Form,* Vol. I (Portland, Ore.: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1970), p. 55. Certainly the words 1'71K and 7ilil" relate to the concept of aseity, but the use of these words in Exodus 3 seems to be on more than *just* aseity.

[2] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 190. Assent to this statement may be found in most of the writings cited above, p. 363, n. 2; but not all would agree with Eichrodt in his presupposition that the name of God, Yahweh, was not known from the earliest period. The biblical position is that the Name became experienced [ידע] in a new way in the tune of Moses (Ex. 6.2-3). Motyer writes: "The patriarchs called God Yahweh, but knew Him as El Shaddai; their descendants will both call Him and know Him by His name Yahweh. . . These words tell us plainly that

A similar emphasis is given by Fohrer:

> According to the only Israelite explanation, that found in Exod. 3:14, the name means that this God is one of whom haya can be fully predicated. Since this verb in Hebrew refers not merely to static existence, but to dynamic and effectual presence, the name ascribes dynamic, powerful, effectual being to Yahweh. Yahweh's nature, as expressed by his "name, " is a union of being, becoming, and action--an effectual existence that is always becoming and yet remains identical with itself.[1]

A fine summary of the problems concerning the meaning of the name *Yahweh* from an evangelical position may be seen in the dissertation by Paul David Feinberg, "The Doctrine of God in the Pentateuch."[2] He discusses at length the two crucial passages on the revelation of the divine name to Moses, Exodus 3:14-15 and Exodus 6:2-3. He concludes concerning the former passage that the emphasis to be seen in the name of God is in the active presence of God, and that by comparison with the words אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְצִיה the name *Yahweh* is to be taken as relating to the Qal theme of the verb.

It is sometimes alleged that the "revelation of the divine Name"

what Moses was sent to Egypt to declare was not a name but a nature. Pharaoh and the Egyptians, as well as Israel, will 'know that I am Yahweh' but, in point of fact, their knowledge will be, not the name merely, but also the character of Israel's God." J. A. Motyer, The Revelation of the Divine Name (London; The Tyndale Press, 1959), p. 16.

1 Georg Fohrer, History of Israelite Religion, trans. by David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 77.

2 (Unpublished doctor's dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), pp. 76-82.

in Exodus 3 was no revelation at all, but an evasion of Moses' question. Van Imschoot points out correctly that "there is nothing in the context to suggest that the answer is evasive. God shows, in declaring His name, that He has nothing to fear from magic practices and that He transcends the world."[1]

This concept of van Imschoot seems to have a tremendous bearing on the problematic use of the name *Yahweh* by Balaam (and for that matter, by Balak). The use of the name *Yahweh* by Balaam is disturbing, to say the least. The normative approach developed by Cassuto regarding the distribution of the name *Yahweh* as against the generic term *Elohim* in the Pentateuch suggests that the name *Yahweh* is used relative to Israel and the traditions of Israel.[2] The name of the God of Israel on the mouth of the pagan seer Balaam seems very strange indeed. Arguments that Balaam was a believer in Yahweh who later defected, are unproven at best.[3]

In our earlier survey of the critical literature of the Balaam oracles [chapter III it was noted that the use and abuse of the concept of the distribution of the designations for deity, Elohim and Yahweh, relate

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[1] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* I, 15.
[2] Cassuto, *Documentary Hypothesis*, pp. 31-32.
[3] On the character of Balaam, see above, pp. 163-205.

repeatedly to the Balaam materials. There are still authors who use the alternation of divine names in the Balaam saga as a valid criterion for source division. Noth, for instance, maintains that "the Balaam story is obviously not a unified whole. That is clear from the unmotivated change, explicable only on literary critical grounds, in the designation of God ('Yahweh' and 'God'), as well as from the existence of obvious doublets.[1]

Other literary critics have abandoned totally the use of that criterion in the instance of the Balaam narrative, feeling that it is impossible to extricate J from E in Numbers 22:1-22, for instance. Von PLkozdy argues that the alternation of the divine names in the Balaam section plays no role whatever in the question of sources. "Heute ist die Forschung im Allgemeinen daruber einig, dass der Wechsel der Gottesbezeichnung *Jahwah* and *'aelohim* fur die Analyse der Quellen eine untergeordnete, keineswegs eine entscheidende Rolle spielen kann."[2]

As a matter of fact, the use of the designations of God in the Balaam passage has long been a problem to the literary critical school which sought to take the Balaam section as a test case for literary criti-

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[1] Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, trans. by James Martin, "The Old Testament Library," ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al . (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 171.

[2] Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redaktionsarbeit in der Bileam-Perikope (Num 22-24), " *Von Ugarit Nach Qumran*, ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelman, 1958), p. 164.

cism. In these chapters in Numbers there have been considerable problems in the practice of source division on the basis of the divine names. After a comprehensive survey of the usage of the divine names in these chapters, M. H. Segal concluded that the only explanation that is true to the case is the rational of literary variety.

> We may conclude with a great deal of assurance that the use of Elohim in the narrative prose of the Pentateuch, as well as in the narrative prose of the historical books, reflects a popular usage in the contemporary spoken Hebrew. The frequent interchange between the appellative common name *Elohim* and the proper nown YHWH is practised by the narrator for the purpose of variety in expression which is a standing feature in all Hebrew narrative style, and particularly in the designation of names and persons. Compare for example the interchange between "Jethro" and "the father --in-law" in Exodus xvii, between "David" and "the king" in II Samuel xvi, and many more such cases in the biblical narrative.[1]

In a similar fashion, but two generations ago, William Henry Green, a colleague of B. B. Warfield at the old Princeton Theological Seminary, used the alternation of the names of deity as an attack on the critical position. This he did on the basis of the interchange of the designations in our very narrative.

> For the striking significance of the divine names in the history of Balaam (Num. xxii. -xxiv.) the critics have no appreciation, but seek to resolve all by their mechanical rule of blended documents. The occurrence of Elohim four times in xxii. 2-21 is urged as de-

[1] M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Its Authorship, and Other Biblical Studies* (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967), pp. 13-14. The author was professor of Bible at the Hebrew University from 1926-49. He died in 1968 at the age of 91.

termining it to belong to E; but Jehovah also occurs four times, where it is assumed that the word was originally Elohim, but it has been changed by R. Jehovah predominates in vs. 22-35 J, but Elohim is found in ver. 22, for which R is again held responsible. The next two chapters are divided between the same documents, bu t with some uncertainty to which each should belong. Wellhausen assigns ch. xxiii. to J, and ch. xxiv. to E; Dillmann reverses it, giving ch. xxiii. to E, and ch. xxiv. to J. But however they dispose of them, the divine names will not suit, and R must be supposed to have manipulated them here again.[1]

Green then proposes an explanation that accords with the text as it stands, to which we will return later in this study.[2] He shows, however, ever, that there is a fitting and proper distribution of the designations of deity that shows a uniform outlook. "The partition hypothesis," he adds, "obliterates this nice discrimination entirely, and sees nothing but the unmeaning usage of different writers coupled with R's arbitrary disturbance of the text for no imaginable reason."[3] Hence, though often assumed to the contrary, the distribution (if the designations for deity in these chapters actually form an embarrassment to critical theories.

But to return to the theological problem, How is it that a pagan diviner is found using the Name of the God of Israel? Perhaps the answer

[1] William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp. 96-97.
[2] See below, p. 385, n. 1.
[3] Green, *The Higher Criticism*, p. 98. Although quite old, the treatise by Green does not appear to be cited by critical scholars; it is rather ignored.

may be seen to lie in two directions. The first explanation would lie in the extensive knowledge of the Exodus among the contemporaries of Moses in the ancient Near East. This, in fact, was one of the purposes of the events surrounding the Exodus as stated in Exodus 9:15-16.

[Yahweh's message to Pharaoh]

> For by now I could have stretched for my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth; but it is for this purpose that I have caused you to remain, to show you my strength, and to declare my name throughout all the earth.

> Hence, one of Yahweh's purposes in the Exodus was to have

His Name published throughout the earth. Moreover, this purpose of Yahweh was realized in history. This is indicated by the triumphal song of Exodus 15:14-16.

> The peoples have heard, they tremble;
> > pangs have seized on the inhabitants of Philistia.
> Now the chiefs of Edom are dismayed;
> > as for the leaders of Moab- -trembling seizes them;
> > all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
> Terror and dread fall upon them;
> > because of the greatness of your arm, they are as a stone,
> > till your people, 0 Yahweh, pass by,
> > till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

Such also is indicated by the words of Rahab the harlot in Joshua 2:9-10:

> And she said to the men [the spies]
> "I know that Yahweh has given to you the land,
> and that the fear of you has fallen on us,
> and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you;
> for we have heard that. Yahweh dried the water of the Reed Sea be-
> > fore you when you came out of Egypt. . . .

Then, note her climactic words in verse 11:

> For Yahweh your God: He is God in the heavens above and on the earth below!

Hence, one of the fundamental purposes Yahweh had in the deliverance of His people from Egypt was to cause His name to be known throughout the ancient Near East. This is seen in the purpose stated by Yahweh in Exodus 9, in the triumphal victory song in Exodus 15, and in the statement of faith of a foreigner in Joshua 2. Yahweh's purposes in the Exodus were multiple; one element was the proclamation of His Name.

Since this is the case in the biblical account itself, it is not surprising that Balaam, one interested in the gods of the world in which he lived, should have known the name of the God of Israel. His contacts with the Midianite traders are suggested in chapter 22 of Numbers. His own international reputation demanded that he know of the gods of the peoples with whom he had to do. Further, we know from Numbers 21 that Balak knew the name of the God of Israel because of the havoc that Israel, f'G under that God, had done to the peoples to the north of him. His ambassadors could have told Balaam the name Yahweh, if indeed Balaam had not yet heard. It is thus an unnecessary expedient for the reader to assume that the tradition of the name Yahweh had persisted in the corrupt worship systems of the Mesopotamia area from primeval times. The intent of the Purpose expressed in Exodus 9 seems to argue to another conclusion: God's

name was not known, but He was going to publish it abroad.

So the surprising element in our passage is not so much that Balaam knew the name of the God of Israel, as that he is recorded using it. In fact, at one point he says, "Yahweh my God" (Num. 22:18). The second direction of the explanation for the use of the name of Yahweh by Balaam seems to lie in an understanding of his character as a pagan diviner. He seems to attempt to use Yahweh by his use of the name Yahweh. In this way he may be compared to another practitioner of magic who tried to use the true God, Simon the Magician of Acts 8.

As is commonly known the use of a name in the ancient Near East occasionally had mantic associations. If one knew the name of another, particularly the name of a deity, then he had some hold, some claim, some relationship to him. [1] In fact the names of some deities were kept secret from those outside the cult, lest others gain a claim on them by the knowledge and use of the name of that deity.[2]

Balaam seems to have assumed that Yahweh was just another deity or demon or spirit whom he could call upon with his mantic arts and

[1] "Among primitive peoples, and throughout the ancient East, the name denotes the essence of a thing; to name it is to know it and consequently to have power over it." Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (reprint ed., 2 vols., continuous pagination; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), p. 43.

[2] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* I, 15, n. 50.

coerce to his own bidding. Hence, his genuine surprise when he finds that Yahweh is different from other gods; Yahweh controls *him*! Instead of the mantic having a hold on the god; Yahweh has a hold on him.

In this perspective one may see a tacit polemical thrust in the fact that our text allows Balaam to mouth God's name. As van Imschoot has said, "God shows, in declaring His name, that He has nothing to fear from magic practices and that He transcends the world."[1] Whereas the names of some deities were kept hidden, Yahweh announces to Pharaoh His intention to have His name published throughout the world! This is a different kind of name, for this is a different kind of God.

In this light we see the importance of Numbers 23:8. Balaam exclaims that it is utterly impossible to curse one whom Yahweh has not cursed. He has *no* claim on Yahweh, no power over Him at all. Again, in Numbers 23:21 he exclaims that the unique feature of Israel is that "Yahweh his God is with him!" Because Yahweh is in the midst of Israel, Israel is unique. In his last oracle, the lackluster mantic makes use of the image of Yahweh planting trees (24:6), something reminiscent of Yahweh's fashioning the garden in Genesis 2:8. Yahweh is unique, and His very uniqueness is indicated by His Name. His Name relates Him to His people, and His Name is to be published throughout the world.

[1] *Ibid*., p. 15

Truly it may be said:

יהוה מִי כָמוֹךָ:

In fact, the use of the Name may be one of the major contributions of the Balaam oracles to the theology of the Old Testament. The Name of Yahweh is not a name like the names of other supposed deities; hence He has nothing to fear from the forces of magic and mantic arts. Yahweh transcends the world. He is! He is in an active and effective sense. He has brought about the existence of His people. Truly, the Name Yahweh brings to mind the concept of the living, the awe-inspiring, the present, the transcendant, the covenant, the loyal, the faithful, the ready, the incomparable God. Such is His Name![1]

זֶה־שְּׁמִי לְעֹלָם
וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דֹּר:

This is My Name for ever!
And this is My Memorial Designation in perpetuity!

[1] That Yahweh had nothing to fear (!) from the use of His Name in mantic arts is patent. Nevertheless He did not want people to abuse His Name. This seems to be the intent for Israel respecting the third commandment, "You shall never take the Name of Yahweh your God emptily" (Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יהוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַשָּׁוְא

It was one thing for a heathen mantic to"try too use the Name of God and have God turn that around into blessing. But for an Israelite who was related to Him by that Name to then abuse that Name, was a sin that Yahweh declares He will not let go unpunished.

It was perhaps in part because of this commandment that Jewish people decided not to pronounce the Name of Yahweh at all, excepting only in certain sacral acts. By this strange, and superstitious

Elohim [אֱלֹהִים]

One form of the word Ellohim occurs in the Balaam oracles.[1]

This is in Numbers 23:21 in the expression, "Yahweh his God is with him"

twist of one of the basic stipulations of the covenant code, the correct pro-
nunciation of the name of the God of Israel began to he forgotten, and in
fact became unknown to most people. Since Yahweh had declared that His
Name was to be a Remembrance for all time (Exod. 3:15), we may regard
the superstition surrounding the avoidance of His Name not as piety, but
rather as the result of an insidious form of Satanic attack of unbridled pro-
portion. The Name by which God was pleased to reveal Himself to His
people has become encrusted with superstition by Jews, and is deliberately
avoided by some believing Christians (compare, p. ix. in the preface to
the N. A. S. B.). Moreover, to the present writer, the term developed by
Renaissance scholars such as Galatinus in 1520 A. D. (see *BDB*, p. 128)
has little to commend it. The term "'Jehovah" is little improvement over
LORD, for the word "LORD" at least. is a meaningful term; "Jehovah" is
a meaningless hybrid.

For other recent literature on the significance of the Name
Yahweh, consult E. Jenni,'hvhy *Jhwh Jahwe*," *THAT*, I, 702-707. See
also Stephen Glendon Brown, "The Tetragrammation and Modern Scholar-
ship, "(unpublished master's thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Semin-
ary, 1970); Ronald Youngblood, "A New Occurrence of the Divine Name 'I
Am!' " *JETS*, XV (Summer, 1972), 144-52.

[1] The distribution of the term in the narrative corpus is as
follows:

The word Elohim alone [אֱלֹהִים] occurs six times in the
narrative (Num. 22:9, 12, 20, 22, 38; 23:4).

The word *Elohim with the definite article* [הָאֱלֹהִים] occurs
twice (Num. 22:10; 23:27).

The term *Yahweh my God* [אֱלֹהָי] occurs once (Num.
22:18).

The term *The Spirit of God* [רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים] occurs once (Num. 24:2).

Comments have been made in an earlier section of this present
paper as to the fluxuation in rendering; the designations for deity in the LXX.
For our present study, the tabulations are done on the basis of the MT.

[יהוה אֱלֹהָיו עִמּוֹ] In contrast to the word *Yahweh*, which as yet has only some highly contested contacts in other ancient Near Eastern languages, the word *Elohim* may have contacts or cognates in every Semitic language except Ethiopic, if indeed, *El* and *Elohim* are related etymologically.[1]

Most scholars hold the term *Elohim* to be a plural rather than a singular with mimation.[2] As a plural, it may be explained as a plural of intensity, of majesty, of excellence. Eichrodt gives some credence to this commonly stated position. "Yet," he says, "there is a good deal to be said for the view that *'elohim*, as distinct from *'elim* the

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[1] This is still a hotly contested problem, and with reason. H. Ringgren begins his discussion of the issue by saying, "Auch etymologisch bietet אלהים ein schwieriges Problem. " Helmer Ringgren, " אלהים," TWAT, 1:3, col. 292. The relationships between the three words אֵל, אֱלוֹהַ, and אֱלֹהִים are still not understood. *KBL* lists *Elohim* as the plural of *Elo(a)h*, pp. 50-52. The etymological relationship is explained in this manner: "The original plain Semitic (Hebrew) word for god is אֵל (*ilu*). This remained alive in compounds (n. p. , n. 1.), but as אֵל, *ilu* means chief-god of the pantheon it otherwise had been substituted by its secondary (Aramaic?) formation אֱלוֹהַ p1. אֱלֹהִים. Whereas the sg.

אֱלוֹהַ was used rarely, the plural אֱלֹהִים meaning (several) gods developed to mean a (single) god as the comprehension of divine powers" (p. 52). KBL3, pp. 50-52, retains the same concept, that C'M? is a plural of אֱלוֹהַ. Gordon in UT says that the normal plural for '*il* is '*ilm*, but that it is occasionally '*ilhm* (1.3, 5, 9; 3:12; 173:16), p. 357, item.163. Whitaker, cites sixteen instances, CUL, p. 56.

[2] For a representative expression of the "mimation" view, see above, p. 116.

expected plural for *'el* , was originally used as a so-called 'abstract plural' or 'plural of intensity.'"[1]

    Similarly, van Imschoot states that the plural of the word Elohim is not to be explained as a numerical plural when referring to God, but as an abstract plural, expressing a generic concept, "or better, a plural of intensity, signifying that the individual so designated possesses to a high degree the specific characteristics of the species. The Hebrews called Elohim the God who possesses in Himself alone all the characteristics of divinity."[2]

    1 Eichrodt, Theology of the.Old Testament, I, 185. Compare the plural of Baal [הַבְּעָלִים], Jud. 2:11; 3:7; etc. Instead of meaning "the Baals, " this, too, may be a plural of intensity. Cf. BDB, p. 127, where it is termed an "emphatic plural" and is rendered "the great lord, the sovereign owner. "

    2 Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 13. Knight, however, prefers the term "qualitative plural" and compares the word to the nouns *mayim*, water, and *shamayim*, heavens. Cf. *Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 62-64. A summary of the meaning of Elohim is given by Feinberg, "The Theology of God in the Pentateuch, " pp. 50-58. He terms the word a "plural of majesty" as is common with many conservative theologians.

    The word *Elohim* should not be used as an argument for the Trinity as is occasionally done. The argument is sometimes expressed that since a plural is used as against a singular or a dual, the reference in *Elohim* is to three or more. Since the NT limits us to three, *Elohim* argues for the Trinity. The argument is specious. A sounder approach would be to suggest that the term *Elohim* as a plural of majesty (a demonstrable phenomenon in Hebrew syntax in non-theological words, cf. *WHS*, p. 7) *allows* for later revelation of the Trinity. The general disuse of the dual in Hebrew (except for certain stereotyped expressions) obviates any numerical significance to be made on the basis of a plural as against a dual of our word. Viewed from the point of view of NT theology, one may

As the plural of intensity (or majesty, or excellence[1]) there seems to be the implication that God in His greatness cannot be comprehended by a mere singular generic term, "God. "By the term "Gods! (used as a singular), the Hebrew writers seemed to imply, "God, *par excellence*, beside whom there is none other.

The usage of *Elohim* in the Balaam oracles may now be noted. There is an interchange of Yahweh and Elohim in the first part of chapter 22 that may be simply stylistic. The view of von Pakozdy which was summarized in an earlier chapter of this present study,[2] is within the realm of possibility only with some reconstruction of the text and with the assumption of a rare use of the word *Elohim* to mean demon or spirit being (other than God). This is not indicated clearly in the text, and seems to have escaped the attention of other scholars altogether.

But von Pakozdy does seem to point in the right direction when he suggests that the use of the terms Yahweh, and Elohim is neither an indicator of sources nor a haphazard and random happening. In the early verses of chapter 22, Balaam uses Yahweh, whereas the narrator uses

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say that the word *Elohim* is a "potential plural. " See H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (2 vols. : Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942),, 1, 42.

[1] Jouon, *Grammaire*, terms the word a "*pluriel d' excellence ou de majeste*, " section 136d, p. 416.

[2] See above, pp. 113-125. For bibliographic data, see above, p. 351, n. 1, in the present chapter.

Elohim. This alternation suggests that Balaam is attempting to press a claim on Yahweh, whereas the narrator uses *Elohim* (of the true God!, *con-ira* von Pakozdy) as a subtle way of indicating that Balaam has in fact no claim on Yahweh at all, but that God is rather dealing with him. *Elohim* would be the natural word to use when the God of Israel is dealing with the nations, or with a foreign national. who is not related to Him.[1]

In verse 10 of chapter 22 where the narrator is describing Balaam's address to God, the word *Elohim* is used with the definite article. This may well be the use of the so-called "distinctive article" to express the concept, "the genuine God."[2] If so, we see a hesitance on the part of the narrator at this point to allow himself to use *Yahweh vis-a-vis*, Balaam, even though Balaam has no qualms in using the Name.

In 22:18 Balaam says something that is almost incredible. He speaks of Yahweh as "my God. " Here again, the narrator lets Balaam utter this boastful untruth, for it allows the suspense to develop all the more for the confrontation between Balaam and the Angel of Yahweh on the road. In verses 19-20, there is the same interchange as was observed in verses 8-10. Balaam uses the word *Yahweh*, but the narrator uses *Elo-*

[1] Compare the treatment of Cassuto, *Documentary Hypothesis*, pp. 31-32

[2] See Williams, *WHS*, p. 20.

him, In verse 22 of chapter 22, the narrator uses Elohim when he expresses the concept of the anger of God. That is, the God whom Balaam had been claiming by Name is now angry because of his disobedience, and the very use of the word Elohim stresses the distance of relationship involved. Yahweh, it will be remembered is the term used relative to God's dealing with His people.[1]

In the donkey episode there is the repeated use of the expression the *Angel of Yahweh*. Further, it is in this section that the narrator uses Yahweh for the first time (verses 28, 31). Rather than attribute these features to the putative Yahwist, we may see how fitting it is that in this section when Yahweh is revealing Himself to the pagan soothsayer, the Name on which the prophet had called in the past, now finally is used. Further, *Yahweh* is used in the sense of immediate contact with His creatures in these two verses. In verse 28, it is Yahweh who opens the mouth of the donkey. In verse 31 it is Yahweh who opens the eyes of the seer. Hence, in these instances, the dicta of Cassuto come into play very nicely. God is being described in lucid terms in these verses (theophany!), and He is seen in direct relationship to people and nature.[2]

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[1] See above, p. 369.

[2] These are dicta #3 and #5 in the list of seven, Cassuto Documentary Hypothesis, pp. 31-32. Beegel is too hasty in his dismissal of the importance of Gassuto's position. See Dewey M. Beegle, Moses, The Servant of Yahweh, pp. 20-21. He dismisses Kitchen andAllis with

On Balaam's first encounter with Balak, he uses the word
(Num. 22:33). In chapter 23:3 he looks for *Yahweh*, and *Elohim*
is said by ',he narrator to appear to him. *Yahweh* puts the revelatory word
in Balaam's mouth in 23:5. *Elohim* is not used again until the second or-
acle when Balaam expresses his astonishment that it could be said of
Israel, "Yahweh his God is with him. " Here he is giving testimony to the
identity of Yahweh and Elohim, and he is also giving grudging consent that
Yahweh is the Elohim of Israel.

Elohim is used next in 23:27 with the definite article, but in
this instance the speaker is Balak. Here *Elohim* is used to specify the
Yahweh of revelation that Balak had mentioned earlier in verse 17. As a
polytheist, Balak was not using the definite article to indicate the "genuine
God," necessarily; but rather "that God," the one whose name he knew
from the frightful news of His mighty acts in Egypt and among the A:mor-
ites. Balak is to use *Yahweh* one more time, in chapter 24 (verse 11),
where he rightly identifies Yahweh as the active agent in the entire epis-
ode.[1]

Finally, Elohim is used in 24:2 in the phrase, "the Spirit of

equal ease. Note that there are parallels in the Book of Jonah in the use
made therein of Yahweh.

[1] It is of interest, for a later period of history, that the name
Yahweh occurs on a Moabite source, the famous Mesha Stele. See KAI, I,
33, line 18; II, 163-79; *ANET*, pp. 320-21.

Elohim, " a very common expression of the Old Testament for the Spirit of God who is the mediator of prophecy.

Hence, the employment of the terms Elohim and Yahweh may be seen to be purposeful and determined. There may be a desire for literary effect, to some extent. But in chapter 22, at least, there seems to be a purposeful, even polemical, cast to the alternation. So inter-connected are these designations for deity in the early verses of chapter 22, that traditional literary criticism has often had to admit these verses reflect a "muddle" of JE. They are regarded as hopelessly intertwined. The expedient of von Pakozdy is both unnecessary and undesirable.[1]

El [אֵל]

One of the distinguishing features of Balaam's use of the designations for deity is his use of the term El in his oracles. In fact, this seems to be an element that connects one oracle with another and serves to show a tremendous continuity throughout the poetic corpus (contra, e. g., Mowinckel, Eissfeldt, *et al.*).[2] He uses the term eight times in the

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[1] For von Pakozdy's view, see above, pp. 113-125. After working through the uses of Elohim and Yahweh, in the manner displayed above, the writer was gratified to read of a similar approach .(though without polemical thrust) in Green, *The Higher Criticism*, pp. 96-98. The writer may thus claim precedent; von Pafkozdy has none.

[2] For Mowinckel on the Balaam story, see above, pp. 68-95; for Eissfeldt, see above, pp. 125-132; for more positive evidences of unity within the oracle corpus, see above, pp. 248-256.

seven oracles (23:8, 19, 22, 23; 24:4, 8, 16, 23).

The term *El*, as was noted above, is the common Semitic de-
signation for deity. It corresponds semantically to our term "god."
parallels occur in virtually all cognates and at all periods, with the ex-
ception of Ethiopic.[1]

Although we are embarrassed by the riches of cognates we
have for this word, we find ourselves even more in a quandary at the in-
ability of scholars to agree concerning the basal significance of the word. Van
Imschoot summarizes the three leading positions:

> The etymology of the word is uncertain. Among many solu-
> tions proposed, three are most widely supported. [1] Some be-
> lieve that the word is derived from a root meaning "to be strong,"
> *'wl*. To them the idea of power is primitive, the idea that is found
> in the expression *yes le' el yadi* (Gn 31:29; Dt 28:32; etc.) and that
> is translated: "It is the power of my hand, " and in the names; that
> designate mighty sacred trees 'elah, 'elan.
>   [2] Others hold that the root *'wl* originally meant "to be be-
> fore. " To them the idea of primacy is primitive and El means
> "the leader. " This hypothesis is confirmed by the Hebrew and
> Accadian expression "to walk behind a god."

[1] For etymological data, with references to literature, see
KBL[3], p. 47; cf. F. M. Cross, Jr. , "אל" in *TWAT*, 1:3, columns 259-79.
The latter writes: "Das Wort *'el il(u)* scheint in den fruhen Stufen aller
wichtigeren semit. Sprachen die allgemein appellativische Bedeutung
'Gott, Gottheit' gehabt zu haben. " Col. 259. This article is especially
rich in Ugaritic data. For a summary of the view of two generations ago,
see *BDB*, pp. 41-44. The putative root for the three words, *El, Elo(a)l,*
and *Flohim* is אלה but the editors note that the question is intricate, and
that conclusions are dubious. Further, they note as well that there is a
question as to the words *El* and *Elohim* coming from the same root
(p. 41).

[3] Finally, still others derive the word from the preposition *'el*, i. e., "towards. " To them *El* means "he toward whom one goes to pay homage, he from whom protection is sought, he to whom prayer is directed, "or rather" the goal of man's desires and strivings." [Paragraphing and enumeration added.][1]

Eichrodt notes the same positions, but opts for the meaning of "strong" or "powerful" as the more probable. Hence, he says one may translate the word by "Mighty, " if this view is sound.[2] Jacob is also of the opinion that the better reading of.the word is in terms of power. He stresses usage in the Hebrew Bible:

It seems to us that the idea of power, involving also that of preeminence, most adequately expresses the reality designated by El; the mountains of El (Ps. 36.7), the cedars of El (Ps. 80. 11), the stars of El (Is. 14. 13), the army of Elohim (I Chr. 12. 22) and the wind of Elohim (Gen. 1. 2) only express the idea of the divine as subordinate to that of power. What is powerful is divine; one of the most elementary experiences of the divine is that of a power on which, in varying degrees, man feels himself dependent.[3]

In his treatment of the central concepts of Old Testament theology, Ronald Youngblood has related the word *El* to God's sovereignty. He writes of "the great truth that God's name, *E1*, bespeaks His character as the all-powerful, and sovereign Lord of the universe. As His name is, so is He. His name and His attributes demonstrate His sovereignty.[4]

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[1] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 1, 7-8.
[2] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 179.
[3] Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 44.
[4] Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 19.

It would seem that the notion "mighty" best suits the context of our oracles, as will be demonstrated by the following examination. Since the etymological evidence is inconclusive, the evidence from usage is all-important; in fact it should have precedence in any case. The first use of El in our oracles is in the first oracle (Num. 23:8). Here we find that Balaam has used El parallel to Yahweh. This is a significant coupling indeed, and for far more important reasons than the use it may be given to attack literary criticism. For here we see God in two of His perfections as revealed by His name. On the one hand He is the Mighty One, who has not allowed Balaam to curse.. On the other hand, He is the One who is related to His people by His Covenant, for the covenant always impinges on the uses of the name Yahweh. Thus there is more than just a coupling of terms for rhetorical effect; here is splendid theological perception.

The second instance of the use of E1 by Balaam is in the second oracle (Num. 23:19). This is that most pivotal of verses concerning the relationship that God has to His Word. God is unable to change His Word; even He who is the Mighty One finds Himself limited by His own excellencies. He who is eternal, cannot die. And He who is truth, cannot lie. No one is more powerful than the Mighty One, but even He is limited--He is limited by His own excellencies. This is thus the choice word for the present passage.

The third instance of the use of El comes in Numbers 23:22, "The Mighty One brings them out from Egypt." It was an act of strength on God's part. Note the several references in the early chapters of Deuteronoiny, in the historical prologue, to the effect that God's redeeming act was an act of "the mighty hand and outstretched arm" (Deut. 4:34) and that it was an accomplishment of "great power" (Deut. 4:37). In the present verse, there is also the association of power with the name, El, the Mighty. The image is that of the horns of the aurochs, a proverbial. image of strength. Cassuto states that in both Hebrew and Ugaritic, the image is that of goring with the horns. A Hebrew example is to be found in Deuteronomy 33:17:

> As the first-born of the ox, majesty is his,
> And his horns are the horns of the aurochs: [וְקַרְנֵי רְאֵם]
> With them he shall gore the peoples, [יְנַגַּח]
> All of them to the ends of the earth.

An example from Ugaritic literature is found in I AB, VI: 17-18:

> *ynghn kr'umm*
> And they [Baal and Mot] gored (each other) like aurochses![1]

Hence, again, we find outstanding poetry and significant theology. God is the Mighty, and He has, as it were, the horns of the goring aurochs, and He uses His power *for His people*. He used His power for His

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[1] See Umberto Cassuto *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of the Patriarchal Age,* trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1971), p. 24.

people in the past, in Egypt, and He is demonstrating His power in the present, in His compelling Balaam to speak only that which He wishes said. These are the goring horns of the Mighty!

Such may not be a figure that is in keeping with out modern tastes, but it is a splendid example of Hebrew vivid style and bold use of figures. Though the comparison is to the animal and not to a man, this may be regarded as an example of anthropomorphism in its broader sense,[1] or perhaps zoomorphism.

R. T. France, in his provocative study of Old Testament theology, raises the question of anthropomorphisms, and explains their purpose. Against possible objections by moderns, he interjects:

> But all this is not crude, semi-idolatrous thinking. It is just the opposite. It is an expression, the only effective expression, of an intense sense of the real presence and dynamic activity of the living God. It was precisely because they knew God not as a. static idol or as a metaphysical theory, but as one to be reckoned with, that they used this forceful imagery. What abstract phraseology could you coin to compare in vivid reality with this?

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[1] Bullinger has a lengthy section on "Anthropopatheia; or, Condecension, The ascribing of Human Attributes, etc. , to God. " E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Reprint of 1898 ed. ; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), pp. B71-97. He lists the ascription of figures of irrational creatures under the broader heading of "anthropopatheia." He also notes that there is a Hebrew expression for this rhetorical device: דֶּרֶךְ בְּנֵי אָדָם "the way of the sons of man, " p. 871. He would classify the image of the horns as an example of metonymy for stength and power, under the larger heading of anthropopatheia. Cf. p. 895. For further comments on the term "aurochs," consult the commentary section of the present study, above, pp. 257-290.

'Smoke went up from his nostrils,

> and devouring fire from his mouth;

> glowing coals flamed forth from him.

He bowed the heavens, and came down;

> thick darkness was under his feet. . . .

He reached from on high, he took me,

> he drew me out of many waters' (Ps. 18:8, 9, 16).[1]

France continues:

Indeed, is it not true that the better we know God, in experience as well as in theory, the more meaningful and precious such language becomes to us still? Is it an accident that we still use such phrases as 'walking with God' to convey a depth of spiritual experience which is far removed from primitive idolatry? To the men [and we may add, to the women!] of the Old Testament God was real. They knew Him. And the clearest way they could express it was in the language of human personality and activity, not in cold metaphysical jargon. All honour to them! If we knew God better, we might find our tidy theological formulations less than adequate. God has a way of breaking loose. [Final emphasis added.][2]

Similarly, though in a slightly different approach, van Imschoot

explains the purpose of anthropomorphisms.

Nevertheless, since the God of the Old Testament is a personal being, totally different from and sovereignly raised above all other beings, and since He is, as we shall see later, eternal, immutable, all-powerful, omnipresent, it is clear that He is neither corporeal nor material. The innumerable anthropomorphisms of the sacred books do not prove the contrary; they are meant to throw light on the personal character of the living God who manifests Himself to men as God the redoubtable, butt also as God the accessible and compassionate.[3]

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[1] France, *The Living God*, pp. 18-19.
[2] Ibid., p. 19.
[3] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 49; cf. pp. 27-28.

"God has a way of breaking loose!" Tie is the Mighty!

The fourth use of *El* in these oracles is in Numbers 23:23. In this instance the word *El* is the subject of the exclamation, "What God has done!" Since the act in view is one of might, of power, of strength, the use of E1 is altogether fitting. "Look!" Balaam says, "Look! at what the Mighty has accomplished!" And this is the whole point of the Balaam incident, after all. The Balaam episode does not center on Moses, for he is unaware of the events as they transpire. It may be said to center on the donkey only in the minds of little children. Balak is an observer, and Balaam is only a mouthpiece. The story in a word: Look at what the Mighty has done for His own!

The fifth use of *El* in our corpus is in the third oracle (Num. 24:3). Here the word *El* is in parallel construction with the word *Shaddai* (on which see below); and both are used to describe the source of Balaam's revelation. The element of power, might, and majesty all have their proper role.

The sixth use of *El* in our passages is in Numbers 24:8, which is a restatement of 23:22, but with development. In this verse, there is the description of the ferocity of the animal. It is to be observed in both this and the former passage, the use of the horns (= strength) is *for* the people. That is, the strength and power that is theirs is in their Mighty One.

The seventh use of El is in the fourth oracle (Num. 24:16). This is very similar to the fifth, except that another element is added: El yon (on which, see below). The final use of El is in the seventh oracle (Num. 24:23). The question is asked, Who can live except the Mighty One ordain it? The Mighty One is sovereign! This is the climax of the oracles. This is the meaning of this grand designation of the sovereign God. It is in Him that we live and. move and have our very being. He is the Mighty One. The distribution of the word El throughout the oracle corpus serves to show the unity of the oracles corpus as well as to demonstrate the theological concern encased therein: Israel's God is the Mighty One.

Shaddai [שַׁדַּי]

The precise meaning of the word ,Shaddai perhaps is settled only in the mind of Jacob who writes, "the explanation of Shadday as "the mountain one' can be regarded as established."[1] For many scholars this word is so debated that they transliterate rather than attempt to translate it. Good, for instance, admits, "I am not sufficiently satisfied with. any meaning ascribed to it to attempt an English equivalent."[2]

For the commonly proffered etymological associations, one

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[1] Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 46.
[2] Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 201, n. 5.

relay consult the standard lexica. The Koehler-Baumgartner Lexicon or-
ganizes the suggestions as follows:[1]

> (1) That the word is cognate with Akkadian *sadu*, "mountain,"
>   and thus would mean "mountain deity."
>
> (2) That the word is related to the Hebrew word שַׁד, "breast "
>   and would have meant (in the early period?) "maternal mother
>   goddess of many breasts."
>
> (3) That the word is related to the Hebrew word VT , "to de-
>   vastate, to despoil, to deal violently, " and would mean "the
>   violent."
>
> (4) That the word may be taken in the meaning given by the Rabbis:
>   ‬שַׁ plus דַּי, and meaning "self-sufficient."
>
> (5) That the word may be taken a s in the LXX, "*pantokrator*," and
>   compared with Arabic XXXXX.
>
> Finally, the conclusion is given in the lexicon that "no explanation
> is satisfactory."[2]
>
> Albright has strongly advocated the association of Shaddai

with the Akkadian word for "mountain. " An early statement to this effect
is as follows:

> The older name, Shaddai, has recently been identified with a
> North-Accadian word for "mountaineer," in the sense of "the One
> of the Mountains" The name may have been brought with them to
> Palestine by the ancestors of the Israelites, many centuries be-
> fore. Since YHWH is always closely associated with the mountains,
> especially in poetic theophanies, this interpretation (which is phon-

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[1] *KBL*, p. 950.
[2] *Ibid*., Compare the treatment in BDB, pp. 994-5.

etically perfect) is reasonable.[1]

Recently, George E. Mendenhall has advanced the theory that the word *Shaddai* is in fact a topographical designation, and hence the full expression *El-Shaddai* would mean "the *El* of Shaddai," much as *El-Bethel* means "the *El* of Bethel."[2]

If a decision were to be made on the basis of present evidence, the association with "mountain" seems to be the most compelling. This has been adopted by Jacob and Albright, as noted above, and by Beegle.[3] Eichrodt seems to be of the same opinion, though he is more cautious.[4] Cassuto does not advance an etymology for the word, but relates it to the concept of fruitfulness in passages such as Genesis 17:1, 2, and Exodus 6:3.[5]

[1] Albright, "Recent Discoveries," p. 35. See also by the same writer, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: An Historical Survey;* Harper Torchbooks, The Cloister Library.(New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 13; *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 188-89.

[2] George E. Mendenhall, "The Abrahamic Narratives," (unpublished paper presented in seminar session at the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California, September 4, 1972. John Van Setters of the University of Toronto, one of the respondents to the paper, took Mendenhall to task for advancing this theory without presenting his evidence more fully. Fohrer suggests the meaning, "El of the plain," *History of Israelite Religion*, p. 64.

[3] Beegle, *Moses, The Servant of Yahweh*, pp. 24, 67.

[4] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 81.

[5] Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, pp. 78-79.

Van Imschoot lists the possibilities for etymology, but does not commit himself.[1]

In the light of the considerable disquiet concerning the meaning of this designation for deity, it may be prudent simply to transliterate the term, than attempt to translate it. Motyer summarizes the use of Shaddai in Genesis in a very helpful manner:

> Fourteen years at least had elapsed Gen. 16:16-17:1 between the original promise of descendants to Abram and the time when next God spoke to him about the matter. The passing of the years, and the manifest failure of man-made alternatives to God's declared plan [Gen. 16:5, 12; 17:18], had the effect of underlining human powerlessness. It is in this context that El Shaddai reveals Himself, and this same characteristic--ability to transform situations of human helplessness- -is found in other passages also. Thus, when Jacob sends his sons back to Egypt, committing them to the capricious power of the ruler of the land before whom they are helpless, he commends them to El Shaddai [Gen. 43:14]. In the same spirit, later, Jacob identifies El Bethel with El Shaddai IGen. 48:3] , for what could be more hopeless than the situation of Jacob as a homeless wanderer and outcast. And again, in the blessing, the dying patriarch invokes blessing of Joseph [Gen. 49:25] in the name of Shaddai, for of all the brothers he had gone lowest into human despair and weakness, and was the outstanding illustration of El Shaddai's transforming power. El Shaddai, then, is, first of all, the God who takes over human incapacity and transforms it. But also there is a consistency of suggestion as to the method of His working. The three patriarchs are either named or renamed by El Shaddai [Gen. 17:5, 15, 19; 35:10, 11]. El Shaddai, therefore, performs His wonders on the basis of a miracle worked on the individuals primarily concerned; the transformed human situation is

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[1] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 10. Respecting the association of the word with Akkadian *sadu*, he says: "According to the last hypothesis *sadday* would mean the lofty God, the Most High, or the Lord, or perhaps the "God mountain" that is to say, the secure refuge, just as He also is the rock [Dt 32:4; Ps 18:32].

a by-product of a transformed human nature. The third consistent feature of the revelation of El Shaddai is that He covenants to the patriarchs boundless posterity and inheritance of the land of promise [Gen. 17:5-8, 19, 21; 28:3, 4, 13 (cf. 48:3); 35:9-13; 47:15-19] . This is in accord with the previous two points: it was the claim of El Shaddai to be powerful where man was weakest, and lie exerts this claim supremely by promising to an obscure and numerically tiny family that they should one day possess and populate a land which, in their day, was inhabited and owned by people immeasurably their superiors in number and power.[1]

It would appear that the observations of Motyer have relevance to the use of *Shaddai* in. our oracles. This is particularly true in terms of)ds first observation, that *Shaddai* is the God who takes over human incapacity and transforms it. Certainly the use of *Shaddai* by Balaam is sitting when the pagan diviner says he is one who now "sees the vision of Shaddai"--when Balaarn, the spiritual degenerate, is given visions and vistas of the working of Yahweh for His own. In our passages the word is used twice in a similar fashion. *Shaddai* it, used as part of the introduction of both the third and fourth oracles (Num. 24:4, 16). The first of these has *Shaddai* used, in parallel construction with *El*, and the second has it parallel with both *El* and *Elyon*.

It will be remembered that the word *Shaddai* is the term contrasted to Yahweh. in the passage in which the latter word was given its new significance to Moses (Exod. 6:3). *Shaddai* is there stated to be a term particularly fitting for the kind of knowledge the Patriarchs had of

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[1] Motyer, *The Revelation of the Divine Name*, pp. 29-30.

God. Perhaps the taditional rendering "Almighty" may not be too far afield. If the proper reference is to tadu, the term Shaddai may have meant "strong like a mountain," or "high like a mountain."[1]

Elyon [עֶלְיוֹן]

Elyon is used by Balaam one time, in the introduction to the fourth oracle (Num. 24:16). In this passage it is parallel with E1 and Shaddai. There is a suggestion that Philo of Byblos knew the term Elyon. This is made on the basis of a citation in Eusebius in which Philo is said to have known the term *Elioun kaloumenos upsistos,*[2] a term of wide diffusion, but perhaps not always used of the same god. Jacob suggests that we are not to equate this god mentioned by Eusebius with the *El Elyon* of the biblical passages. Some have argued for the use of Elyon as an appellation of Baal,[3] but the word Elyon does not seem to.be listed in the standard Ugaritic lexica. One might wish to equate the Hebrew word *Elyon* with the Ugaritic term *Alyon*, but the two words come from entirley

[1] The term is used six times in Genesis, thirty-one times in Job, and forty-eight times in the entire Old Testament. Cf. Lisowsky, *KHAT*, p. 1406.

[2] *Praep. Evang*., i, 10, cited by Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 45, n. 7.

[3] E. G. , Albright, *Biblical Period,* p. 18; compare also John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament*, SVT, V (Rev. ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 157-58.

different roots.[1]

The term עֶלְיוֹן is used some twenty-one times with the "upper." It is also used some thirty-one times as a designation (or deity, meaning "Most High." The majority of the latter (twenty-one) are to be found in the Psalms. The term is used with the meaning "Most High" four times in Genesis 14, when Abraham and Melchizedek meet. The usage in Numbers 24:16 is unique to the book, but the word is used also in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:8), which is contemporary to the Balaam oracles.[2] In addition to these usages in the Hebrew Old Testament, we may cite the use of the word four times in the Aramaic section of Daniel (Dan. 7:18, 22, 25, 27).

Following a suggestion made by Bruce K. Waltke, we may observe that the term עֶלְיוֹן is used frequently in connection with Yahweh's sovereignty over all the nations, and is hence preeminently fitting when used in the introduction to the last oracle in which Israel's relationship to the nations is detailed.[3] Some examples of the usage of this term may be cited for a demonstration of this factor.

[1] Allis makes a major emphasis of this false equation as given by some writers. Allis, *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics,* pp. 258, 304-305. The Ugaritic word *Alyon* comes from the root *1'y*, "to prevail;" the Hebrew root עלה "to go up" is the root for the term עֶלְיוֹן For the latter, cf. *BDB*, p. 751.

[2] This statement is made on biblical, not comparative, grounds.

[3] Personal correspondence with the author, January 12, 1973.

Daniel 7:27:

> Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the
> kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of
> the saints of the Highest One [i' 31 'lY] His kingdom will be an.
> everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey
> Him.   [N. A. S. B]

Psalm 47:2-5 [Eng. vv. 1-4];

> O clap your hands, all peoples;
> Shout to God with the voice of joy.
> For Yahweh Most High [עֶלְיוֹן] is to be feared,
> A great King over all the earth.
> He subdues peoples under us,
> And nations under our feet.
> He chooses our inheritance for us,
> The glory of Jacob whom He loves.   [N.A. S. B.]

Psalm 83:3, 14-19 [Eng. vv. 2, 13-18]:

> For, behold, Thine enemies make an uproar;
> And those who hate Thee have exalted themselves.
> O my God, make them like the whirling dust;
> Like chaff before the wind.
> Like fire that burns the forest,
> And like a flame that sets the mountains on fire,
> So pursue them with Thy tempest,
> And terrify them with Thy storm.
> Fill their faces with dishonor,
> That they may seek Thy name, 0 Yahweh.
> Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever;
> And let them be humiliated and perish,
> That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is Yahweh,
> Art the Most High [עֶלְיוֹן] over all the earth.
>   [N. A. S. B.]

The word עֶלְיוֹן bespeaks the sovereignty of Yahweh over the

nations. He is the עֶלְיוֹן of Israel; indeed He is the עֶלְיוֹן of all the

earth. This was the one who revealed His word through the pagan diviner

Balaam.

Melek [מֶלֶךְ]

The use of the phrase "the shout of a king"[וּתְרוּעַת מֶמֶלךְ]

in Numbers 23:21 is a "first" in Pentateuchal theology. For this is the
first clear occurrence of the descriptive title "King" to Yahweh. That it
is to be regarded as applying to God in our passage is evident from the
parallel: "Yahweh his God is with him."

Feinberg writes:

> The term king מלך is not a personal name for God, but is
> rather a general title applied to God. Its attribution to God as a
> name is common to all Semitic languages, as is the idea of His
> [sic] authority over man. It is first ascribed to God during the
> Mosaic period (Ex. 15:18; Num. 23:21; 24:7, 8; Deut. 33:5.). . .
> Exodus 15:18 speaks of God "reigning, " although Numbers 23:21
> (cf. Deuti 33:5) is the first time this title is attributed to God.[1]

Now how very striking this is! Here is the first application
of the term King to Yahweh, and it comes from the mouth of a pagan out-
sider, one who was not in the "kingdom" but was still under the power of
the King, the King of Glory. The concept of the king relates us at once to
the covenant, which Meredith G. Kline aptly has titled, "The Treaty of
the Great King."[2] It relates us as well to the coming Kingdom which will
be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of God's reign on the

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[1] Feinberg, "The Doctrine of God," p. 102.
2 See above, p. 333, n. 2.

earth. The first clear expression of Yahweh as King comes from Balaam. This is then echoed by Moses, the servant of Yahweh, in Deuteronomy 33.5: "And He was king in Jeshurun."

Summary

This extensive survey of Balaam's employment of the appelltives of God has been necessary because of the critical attention given the subject by past and recent authorities. It has been demonstrated that the employment of the terms Yahweh and Elohim may not be used as a criterion for source analysis in the present passage. The ever-enigmatic Balaam has used the name of God, Yahweh, and several appellatives of God in a very purposeful manner to display clearly grand concepts concerning the greatness of the person of the God of Israel.

We may now turn to the concept of Heilsgeschichte in general, and then to the specific Heilsgeschichte of the Balaam oracles.

The Role of Heilsgeschichte

Arnold M. Goldberg, in his recent commentary on the Book of Numbers, writes, "Fur den christlichen Leser enthalt dieses Buch erst einmal eine Epoche der Heilsgeschichte, eine Epoch der Geschichte, die von Adam, dem gefallen Menschen, auf Jesus hinfuhrt" I emphasis added.[1]

[1] Arnold M. Goldberg, *Das Buch Numeri*, "Die Welt der Bibel, " (Dusseldorf: Patmos-Verlag GmbH. , 1970), p. 136.

And of course, he is correct. The Christian reader *must* read a book such as Numbers as being something more than a catalogue of events in the lives of a remote people of antiquity. The Book of Numbers is another element in the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Old Testament, and the Balaam materials are best understood in that perspective.[1]

Yet the mere mention of the word *Heilsgeschichte* raises innumgable problems to the orthodox theist, the biblicist. The spectre of the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* raises its serpentine head. Questions of epistemology, history, and faith--are all involved.

The German word *Heilsgeschichte* means "holy history, " or "salvation history." A presentation of its use, particularly in its more negative aspects, is given by Ramm in his *Handbook.*

> (1) Heilsgeschichte is first of all a reaction against the old Protestant orthodoxy that made Scripture the ultimate datum of the Christian religion. According to this view, the ultimate datum is holy history, and the significance of Scripture is that it is the record of that more ultimate datum. Scripture is the witness to the datum, not the reality itself.
> (2) To those who hold the idea of Heilsgeschichte, a measure of critical treatment of the Scripture is allowable. The antithesis between criticism and theology is false. The Scriptures may be subjected to a measure of criticism but never to the destruction of the essential fabric of holy history.

[1] Compare the statement of Kenneth E. Jones: "The emphasis in Numbers is not in listing the events, but in giving their spiritual meaning. Here we see not merely a group of people struggling toward independence, but God working with them to bring them to the point where He wants them to be." *The Book of Numbers: A Study Manuel*, "Shield Bible Study Series" (Grand Rapids. Taker Book House, 1972), p. 11.

(3) Theologians of Heilsgeschichte treat Scripture as fundamen-

tally the document of holy history. This means that there is a :limit
to scientific historiography. God acts in history and therefore holy
history will have elements that are indigestable to the scientific his-
torian. But this is the character of holy history--to be historical
event and act of God at the same time. Furthermore, the chunks or
pieces of biblical history are to be interpreted in view of their place
in the total scope of holy history. The interpreter is to find out: how
each book of each section within a book, serves the purposes of holy
history..

(4) An interpreter knows the inside of this history only as he
identifies with it. This he does by faith in Christ, by which he parti-
cipates in regeneration. Thus the external principle of hermeneutics
is holy history and the internal principle is the interpreter's identifi-
cation with this history through faith in Christ.[1]

Ramm then distinguishes between a wide sense of the term and

a narrow sense.

Heilsgeschichte is used in a wide sense and in a narrow sense.

In the narrow sense it means a particular scheme of interpretation
of holy history, as in Cullmann's *Christ and Time*. In a wide sense
it means the priority of the historical event over the Scriptures as
the primary datum of the biblical faith. In the latter sense the notion
of Heilsgeschichte has been widely accepted by Old and New Testament
scholars.[2]

In its more extreme forms, this child of J. C. K. von Hofmann

of Erlingen (in lectures dating from the year 1860),is used by theologians

with a thrust that Whitney says seems to be in the direction of evaporation

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[1] Bernard Ramm, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology* (Grand
Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 55-56.
[2] Ibid., p. 56. Allis, *Old Testament: Claims and Critics*,
speaks on the theme in rather negative fashion, cf. pp. 250-51.

of history altogether.[1] His evaluation is stated in a polemical manner, but there is some substance to his claim.

We have seen already how Old Testament exegetes who developed their concepts in terms of *Heilsgeschichte* have devalued, or even caused to "evaporate, " the historicity of the Balaam narrative. For purposes of emphasis, we may review some examples. Coppens writes:

> L'historiographie ancienne, qui par endroits telescope les evenements, ne craint pas ailleurs de projeter dans le passe 1'announce de certains evenements, a savoir quand a ses yeux ceux-ci etaient virtueilement impliques dan les faits et les donees dune epoque plus ancienne. Ce serait le cas ici. Aux yeux de l'hagiographe, les hauts faits de Saul et de David etaient inclus dans l'avenir glorieux que le devin entrevit et annonca a Balaq. Des lors, la prediction de ces faits pouvait lui etre attribuee sans faire entorse a la verite historique.[2]

Thus, for Coppens it is of no major consequence that the writer of our account has telescoped events, used *vaticinia ex eventu*, and otherwise reshaped the history; for in all these changes, there was not, in the view of the ancient writer, a problem of twisting historical truth. Rather he used truth to his own ends.

Similarly, von Pakozdy suggests that the importance of the narrative is not so much what happened in history, but what the redactor

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[1] Harold Whitney, *The New "Myth"-ology: An Exposure of Popular Theological Myths* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 103.

[2] J. Coppens, "Les oracles de Bileam: leur origine litteraire et leur portee prophetique," *Melanges Eugene Tisserant, Vol. I. 'Ecriture Sainte-Ancien Orient*, "Studi e Testi," 231 (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Ahustolica Vaticanna, 1964), pp. 71-72.

of the old materials wished to preac) [*was wollte er "verkundigen?*"].[1]
Again, Eissfeldt speaks of "something that was vast and meaningful, " but
avers that what we have in the text is not to be considered as an accurate
reflection of historical events: "So, wie wir sie haben, konnen sie also
keinesfalls als Wiedergaben wircklichen Geschens gelten."[2]

For Mowinckel, Balaam is certainly not an historical figure in
our sense, but a figure of fairy-tale and legend: "Bil'am eine historische
Person im strengen Sinne des Wortes nicht ist. Man kann sich entweder
denken, dass der bekannte seher ursprunglich eine anonyme Sagengestallt
war, ein marchenhafter Vertreter des althebraisch-nordarabischen Seher-
(*kahin*- and hakim -) Typus uberhaupt."[3]

The representation of Balaam by the leading Dutch commentator
A. H. Edelkoort is quite negative respecting historical matters. He treaty
the narrative in the standard literary-analytical manner, speaking of the
present story as being "three threads promiscuously twisted" [Deze drei.-
voudige inleiding doet veronderstellen, datt er in de Bileam-geschiedenis

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[1] Ladislas Martin von Pakozdy, "Theologische Redaktionsarbeit
in der Bileam-Perikope (Nurn 22-24)," *Von Ugarit Nach Qumran*, ed. Otto
Eissfeldt (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1958), p. 162.

[2] Otto Eissfeldt, "Sinai -Erzahlung and Bileam-Spruche," *HUCA*,
XXXII (1961), p. 190.

[3] Sigmund Mowinckel, "Der Ursprung der Biltamsage, " *ZAW*,
XLVIII (1930), 237.

drie draden dooreen gestrengeld zijr].[1] Further, it is his impression that the present redaction comes after the time of II Isaiah (hence after 500 B. C.). [Dat de thans voor ons liggende redactie van de spreuken van Bil-earn vrij jong is, en wel uit den tijd van, of na den tweeden Jesaja (dus na 500 voor Chr.), ...].[2] Hence, little may be regarded as historical in the strict sense.

Martin Noth in his commentary on the Book of Numbers also displays a very low regard for the historicity of the events of our material. "From the point of view of subject-matter, the Balaam story presents a series of questions which are difficult to answer. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the conquest tradition. ... It is probable that behind Balaam, too, there stands a figure who is, in the last resort, historical."[3]

Perhaps the most important representative of the *Heilsgeschichte* approach (in its negative stance) is Gerhard von Rad. He comments at some length as to his view of the relationship of history and theology *vis-a-vis*

[1] A. H. Edelkoort, *Numeri*, "Tekst en Eitleg: Praktische Bi.jbel-verklaring, " ed. F. M. T. Bohl and A. van Veldhuizen (Groningen: Bij. J. B. Wolters' Uitgervers-Maatschappij, 1930), p. 170. 14

[2] *Ibid*., p. 21.

[3] Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary,* trans. by James ! Martin, "The Old Testament Library, " ed. G. Ernest Wright, *et al.* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 172. These examples from more recent works could be multiplied extensively by citing examples from the older critical commentaries, e.g., Dillmann, Holzinger, Baentzsch, Gray, et al.

the Salaam material, among other blocks. He writes:

> In particular, events bearing a saving character retained for all pos-
> terity; and in that posterity's eyes, a contemporaneousness which it
> is hard for us to appreciate. The upshot is that, in what they present,
> the later story-tellers blatantly make capital of experiences which,
> although they are invariably brought in on the basis of the ancient
> event in question, still reach forward into the story-teller's own day.
> It is only from this standpoint that the story of Jacob's struggle (Gen.
> xxxii. 22f.), or the story of Balaam (Num. xxii-xxiv), or the thrice-
> repeated story of the endangering of the ancestress of the race (Gen.
> xii. 10ff., xx. iff. , xxvi. 5ff.) can be interpreted as they should.
> What is historical here? Certainly some definite but elusive particu-
> lar event which stands at the primal obscure origin of the tradition
> in question--but what is also historical is the experience that Jahweh
> turns the enemy's curse into blessing, and that he safeguards the
> promise in spite of all failure on the part of its recipient, etc. [I.e.,
> Heilsgeschichte .1 Israel did not dream up this confidence, but came
> to it on the basis of rich and wide experience of her history in fact;
> and symbolising it in a person, she illustrated it in a story. This of
> course occasions another and rather severe clash with our critical
> way of thinking about history. Did the historical Balaam actually
> curse, or did his mouth really utter blessings? We may assume that
> it was only in the story that that which was given to Israel's faith be-
> came presented as a visible miracle. The process of glorification is
> quite clear in many of the stories about the Conquest--the events are
> depicted with a splendour and a strong element of the miraculous which
> are impossible to square with older strands in the report. The later
> story tellers are so zealous for Yahweh and his saving work that they
> over step the limits of exact historiography and depict the event in a
> magnificence far transcending what it was in reality. These are texts
> which contain an implicit eschatological element, since they anticipate
> a Gloria of God's saving action not yet granted to men. [Emphasis
> added, except for the last word.][1]

> Hasel is quite correct in his comment that "von Rad is very

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[1] Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I, 110-11. In a note on page
110, von Rad takes exception to the concept that "the conception of history
itself hardly plays any noticeable part for Israel," (a statement of L. Kohler
in his volume, *Hebrew Man*). Von Rad states, "These words are incompre-
hensible in face of the fact that Israel's faith gave itself sanction in a series

emphatic to point out that the OT is not a book that gives an account of historical facts as they 'really happened.'"[1] Hence, when we read in von Rad's *Moses* concerning the theological importance he finds the story of Balaam to have, we must understand that the theological importance he finds in the story is something altogether distinct from the historical events "as they really happened."

Two extracts of the citation from his book on Moses respecting the story of Balaam may now be given, extracts from the longer quote made at the beginning of the present chapter. Von Rad begins: "This whole story of Balaam is not a tale told without a purpose. In the form in which we now have it, it is the expression of certain quite definite beliefs, of the central doctrines of the Old Testament revelation."[2] Then at the end of the section quoted above, we read:

> All history has a secret inner side, which is hidden from the eyes of the natural man. The story of Balaam turns history inside out and makes the miracle plain. Balaam comes desiring to curse; and, we may say, in the very teeth of his desires the curse is turned into a blessing.[3]

In his expressing the words, "in the form in which we now have von Rad indicates his estimation of the extant Hebrew text. He is in

of ever vaster theological sketches of her history" (p. 110, n. 7).

[1] Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 57.
[2] Von Rad, Moses, p. 79.
[3] Ibid.

fact a form critic who wishes to "get behind" the text, as it were, to find the kernel of historical truth from which the accretions of tradition had their origin. But the more telling expression for our present discussion, the role of *Heilsgeschichte*, is his line, "All history has a secret inner side." It is the "secret inner side" of history that interests von Rad as a theologian, not the (supposed) events themselves.[1] As Norman K. Gottwald has stated, von Rad (along with Alt and Noth) "regards it as impossible to treat Moses as anything more than a legendary construct."[2]

Gottwald feels that Walther Eichrodt is not nearly so skeptical of the traditions of the Pentateuch as is von Rad. But he, too, holds an ambiguous relationship between faith and history. Gottwald points out this "Achilles' heel" in Eichrodt's work [and in form-critical *Heilsgeschichte* in general] in a devastating manner.

> How could this unsatisfactory consequence follow from so brill-
> iant and exhaustive an enterprise? This shortcoming has nothing to
> do with personal inadequacies of the author. The ambiguity in his
> attitude toward faith and history is no idiosyncrasy. In this regard

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[1] Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 57, states: "Von Rad proceeds from a kind of secret center, which reveals itself in his basic thesis, namely that the establishment of God's self-revelation takes place in his acts in history." An extensive review of von Rad's *Theology of the Old Testament* is to be found in *Contemporary Old Testament Theologians*, ed. Robert B. Laurin, pp. 63-89. In this review G. Henton Davies deals with von Rad's concept of faith and history on pp. 73-77 [in what may be a somewhat more favorable manner than is prudent] .

[2] Norman K. Gottwald, "W. Eichrodt: *Theology of the Old Testament,"* *Contemporary Old Testament Theologians*, ed. Laurin, p. 47.

Eichrodt epitomizes an entire theological milieu both in his brilliant evocativeness and in his ambiguous impressionism. The Achilles' heel of his work is well articulated in a remark he makes by way of summarizing his treatment of the names of God:

> We are dealing not with the symmetrical. growth of a unified basic plan., but with a wealth of tensions, compelling an ever fresh and unique delineation of the knowledge of God. For the divine reality to which this refers is ultimately beyond reason and therefore only to be expressed in contradictory formulations [Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 205].

The divine reality beyond reason is Eichrodt's *deus ex machina* which proves useless, for how can there be either a history or a theology of a God who is unknowable? The cross section to which he has committed himself as a tool of inquiry must remain schizophrenically stretched between a historical summary and a theological pointer. In terms of neo-orthodox theology, in which Eichrodt is broadly at home, there can be no resolution of the tension of faith and history but only an exhilarating zest and incohesiveness which teases and baffles both the historian and the believer.[1]

It is thus due to these more or lest negative viewsof the essen-

tial historicity of the Old Testament, and the expedient of searching for

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[1] Ibid., p. 55. The "*deus ex machina*" of "the divine reality beyond reason" in fact may be seen to be the Achilles' heel of all treatments of Old Testament *Heilsgeschichte*, when there is a divorce of *Heilsgeschichte* from "what really happened." Goldingay avers, "Because Israel's faith, the perspectival images she offers, is so bound up with history, this feature of the Old Testament viewpoint cannot be treated as a husk that can be discarded without affecting the kernel. And even if it were legitimate to seek to separate kernel from husk in this way, the possibility of doing so is questionable; 'it hangs the passion of faith on the slenderest of threads.'" John Goldingay "'That You May Know That Yahweh Is God': A Study in the Relationship Between Theology and Historical Truth in the Old Testament, " *TB*, XXIII (1972), p. 87. The quotation he uses is from V. A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 193-94. Goldingay later states that if one attempts to distinguish *Historie* and *Geschichte*, "the string between the kite of interpretation and the ground of events is cut, not so that the kite can fly free, but so that it can get lost, " pp. 88-89.

theological truth in some kind of a "secret center"; that the entire concept of licilsc;eschichte calls for great caution. George Ernest Wright comments f on the extremes of the Heilsgeschichte school in which "the theological confession of God's activity is so wrenched apart from history as to leave it almost completely a cultic myth, divorced radically from the concrete reality, the significance of which the confession claims to be expounding."[1] Further, he adds, "the 'history of salvation' becomes non-historical, and resort is made to a type of existentialism in order to make it relevant. In short, this type of biblical theology uses history to get rid of history."[2]

R. K. Harrison also calls for caution in the use of the word because of its more negative connotations. "The manner in which the term *Heilsgeschichte* has been employed by certain neo-orthodox writers calls for some caution in its use."[3] Nevertheless, the same writer goes on to state that there may well be a genuine use of the term in which history is not divorced from theology. "As 'holy history, 'the history of salvation,' or 'saving history,' the word would appear to describe an accredited Biblical situation with a certain accuracy."[4] It is the use to which the scholar

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[1] George Ernest Wright, "Biblical Archaeology Today," *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), p. 164.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 165.

[3] Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 449.

[4] *Ibid*.

puts Heilsgeschichte that determines its validity. The same writer concludes in saying:

> Quite obviously a purely historical kind of investigation can scarcely do justice to a situation that is basically theological in nature, as neo-orthodox scholars have recognized. Thus any accredited "salvation history" must have the topics of sin and redemption firmly established as central themes in the history of the Hebrew, people. Through them it must relate these concepts to human history as a whole. In this way a basic concern of the Old Testament will be paramount, and will not ultimately be subsumed under what may be considered to be a more urgent task, namely that of reconstructing structing and rewriting the historical material according to some specific analytical scheme, as von Rad and others have done. While method is of great importance in any constructive endeavor, especially in the field of Old Testament theology, it must always remain the servant of the scholar, and not his master.[1]

John Bright, the eminent Old Testament theologian and historian of Union, Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, also points to the role of *Heilsgeschichte*. He terms the meaning of the word, "a history of God's redemptive purpose."[2] And then he presents the proper approach of *Heilsgeschichte* as related to real history.

> The Old Testament offers a theological interpretation of history. A concern with the meaning of history, and of specific events within theological concern" [emphasis added].[3]

It is the opinion of this writer that Bright's *A History of Israel* [4]

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 449 -50.
[2] John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 137.
[3] *Ibid*.
[4] Now in its second edition with some expansion and revision;

is found to be most successful when that author follows his dictum that the old Testament "records a real history, and it interprets every detail of that history in the light of Yahweh's sovereign purpose and righteous will. " There are occasional lapses, however, in Bright's *History*, where he, too, attempts a "reconstruction job," particularly in the sections concerning the early history of Israel. But his work stands in bold relief and remarkable contrast to the history of the people of Israel written by his European coun- terpart, Martin Noth.[1] This latter scholar, and many in his tradition, uses *Heilsgeschichte* as an escape from history and form criticism as an escape from textual data.

Bruce K. Waltke has warned of the abuses of form critical scholars who use *Heilsgeschichte* as an escape from history. The funda- mental error in these approaches, he states, is one of a philosophical and theological bias against the supernaturalistic and theistic faith of the! Old Testament writers.

> Their theological bias can be seen in their analysis of the first two
> declarative statements concerning Israel's history. The first state-

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see John Bright, A History of Israel (2d ed. ; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972). The first edition of this classic treatment was published in 1959.

[1] Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, trans. by P. R. Ackroyd (2d ed. ; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960). See also two recent works on the history of Israel by European scholars: Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, trans. by David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972); Roland de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d'Israel: des origines a l'installation en Canaan*, "Etudes Bibliques, " (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1971).

ment is "And Yahweh said untc Abram, 'Get thee out . . . !" and the second statement is "so Abram departed . . . " The biblical prophet presents both statements as facts of history: in the first instance Abram responded to this revelation. To the form critic, however, only the second statement is an historical fact, whereas the first statement reflects Israel's later interpretation of this historical fact-- and apart from factual history. The difference is theological.: the form critic describes Israel's history from a humanistic, rationalistic viewpoint whereas the biblical prophets present Israel's history from a theistic, supernaturalistic viewpoint.[1]

But the evident abuses of form criticism by those who have theological bias against the supernatural element in the Old Testament, should not deter the believer in the biblical testimony to use the discipline of form criticism in a constructive manner, and as a tool. A splendid example of this is to be seen in the writings of Meredith Kline.[2] Similarly, despite the abuses of the Heilsgeschichte method by those with demonstrable bias against the supernatural, the method may still be employed by one who has a high regard for the revealed, supernatural faith of the Old Testament.

And example of this may be seen in the same document by Waltke in which he was critical of the form critics who use Heilsgeschichte in a negative sense. In his own approach to the history of Israel this same

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[1] Waltke, "History of Israel," p. 10.

[2] Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963). This book is now out of print, but the first two chapters which constitute the thesis have been reprinted as an appendix to the new book by the same author, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972). See also Herbert NT. Wolf, "Implications of Form Criticism for Old Testament Studies," *BS*, CXXVII (October, 1970), 299-307.

writer speaks of the Heilsgeschichte of the call of Abraham.[1] But in doing so, he does not pit *Geschichte* (or *Heilsgeschichte*) against *Historie*; rather he builds his *Heilsgeschichte* on the foundations of a rigidly historical app- roach, accepting the supernatural and theistic premises of the text at face value. This is the sound method, for it gives proper place to the actuality of the events as well as to a valid theological interpretation of them. As Goldingay states, "we cannot accept-interpretation when the events behind it have been falsified--the events as they actually happened are the *Heils- geschichte*."[2]

We may draw this section of the present paper to a conclusion by referring again to the outstanding survey of the problems of Old Testa- ment theology by Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate.* In his last chapter,[3] he suggests a list of dicta for the doing of Old Testament theology. The first two (of the seven he lists) seem to relate directly to our discussion of the problem of Heilsgeschichte. In the first place, he suggests, "Biblical theology must be understood to be a historical-theological discipline." By this Hasel means that the task is "both to discover and describe what the text meant and also to explicate what it means for toddy."[4]

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[1] Waltke, "History of Israel," p. 19.
[2] Goldingay, "'That You May Know, '" p. 90.
[3] Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 81-95.   [4] *Ibid*., p. 81.

The second dictum he lists follows from the first. "If Biblical theology is understood to be a historical-theological discipline, it follows that its proper method must be both historical and theological from the starting point." This means that exegesis and theology must be interrelated. "A theology of the OT presupposes exegesis based upon sound principles and procedures. Exegesis, in turn, is in need of OT theology."[1]

As to the problematic relationship of the two Testaments and history-*Heilsgeschichte*, the same writer states that the best approach is a *multiplex approach:*

> In view of these considerations, it would seem that the only adequate way to come to grips with the multiplex nature of the relationship between the Testaments is to opt for a multiplex approach, which makes a guarded and circumspect use of typology, employs the idea of promise-fulfillment, and also uses in a careful way the approach of *Heilsgeschichte.* Such a multiplex approach leaves room for indicating the variety of connections between the Testaments and avoids, at the same time, the temptation to explain the manifold testimonies in every detail by one single point of view or approach and so to impose a single structure upon testimonies that witness to something else. A multiplex approach will lead to a recognition of similarity and dissimilarity, old and new, continuity and discontinuity, etc., without in the least distorting the original historical witness and literal sense nor falling short in the larger kerygmatic intention and context to which the OT itself testifies.[2]

This will be the approach of the present writer. When the term Heilsgeschichte is used, it is not used in contrast to historical reality, but it is used to indicate the relationship of that historical reality to the ongoing

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 83.   [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

development of the history of God's redemptive purpose. Hence, if a theological point is made concerning the donkey episode in the Balaam narrative, the theological point is based on, and grows out of, the historical reality and its literal interpretation.

Moreover, this appears to the writer to be the biblical approach itself. Witness, for instance, Paul's use of the Old Testament as illustrated in Romans 5:12-21. In this passage Paul builds a major theological construct on the pattern of the life and death of Adam. And yet the entire argument, comparing the relationship of Christ to Adam, presupposes, indeed demands, that Adam's fall is an historical event in the fullest sense of the word. This is the multiplex approach that is used in a valid historical-theological discipline--and approach which honors the Word of God on every level.

The building of great theological truths on legendary or quasi-historical happenings (*a la* von Rad) leads to inconclusive results and subjective evaluations. Conversely, there have been scholars of a fundamental and evangelical stance, holding to the historical reliability of the text, who have built on that text accretions of excessive flights into fanciful typology (sometimes termed the "devotional level"). On methodological grounds these latter believers are no more firmly based in their conclusions than are von Rad et al.

Summary

Many contemporary Old Testament theologians have seen in the Balaam narrative and oracles what might be termed the quintessence of the theology of the Pentateuch. The present writer tends to agree with this enthusiasm concerning this magnificent corpus, even with all of its bristling problems. Such ebullient remarks, however, must be evaluated on the basis of sound methodology in theological discipline. The present writer would agree that the Balaam materials present great and lofty theological truths, but he would insist that these theological truths must be based on real events viewed in a rigidly historical approach. When the term *Heilsgeschichte* is used by the biblicist, it may not be used to develop truth apart from historical reality, but rather to give expression to the truth being taught within that historical reality. This is the stuff of which sound theology (and preaching) is made.

The Heilsgeschichte of the Balaam Oracles

The Blessing of Yahweh

The specific contribution of the Balaam incident to Old 'Testament theology appears to be its graphic development of the concept of the blessing of Israel by Yahweh. The story is an unexpected and surprising event. It appears to be an extended excursus on the theme of blessing, but an excursus acted out in the arena of human history. The setting,

the personae, the conflicts and the v ry subject matter all contribute to one of the most eloquent expositions of Yahweh's deep and abiding relationship with His people Israel.

That these events are recorded at such length in the Book of Numbers is remarkable indeed, and not only for the reasons of the question of authorship, as developed above.[1] The Book of Numbers does not present the people of Israel in a very favorable light. In many respects the Book of Numbers is a tragic account of rebellion and unbelief on the part of Israel in living up to God's expectations for her.

The murmuring motif which begins in chapter 11 develops as the action progresses until the entire population is affected. Time after time the people of God showed themselves disloyal and discontent to His suzerainty. Time after time the grumbling and. sinning people provoked 'Yahweh to anger against them. The record of the places in which Israel camped is a grim recital of the judgments of God on those who rebelled against His rule. Some of these names include: (1) Taberah ("a burning"), Numbers 11:3; (2) Kibroth-hattaavah ("the graves of greediness"), Numbers 11:34; and Kadesh-Barnea, the scene of unbelief that cost a generation its promise of the land of Canaan, Numbers 13-14.

The thirty-eight years of Israel's existence that are chronicled

[1] See above, pp. 225-33.

in this book are, for the most part, years of silence. These are years of silence occasioned by the sheer monotony of wandering in a forbidding wilderness and waiting for a generation to die. These were years of burials--one dreadful burial after another. For the most part, the only relief from the mond.-my of wandering and waiting is the record of a new sin and its consequence. Sins of impatience,. of jealousy, of murmuring and apostasy--such constitute the action of the book. The rebellion of Korah (Num. 16), the jealousy of Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12), and even the failure of Moses (Num. 20) are recorded.

Hence, when the reader comes to Numbers 22:1 and reads that Israel has finally reached the shores of the Jordan River and is encamped across from the land of promise, the questions might well arise, Is this indeed the people of promise? Does this nation really have a unique relationship to the God of the universe? Is Israel really the chosen people?

The answers to these questions come in a most unexpected manner. The reader is taken to the enemy camp and he is given an inside view of the machinations of Israel's foes in their attempts to destroy the nation. The threat of Israel is felt to be so great to Moab that this latter nation turns to a superstitious and supernatural means to attempt to ward off the enemy. The resort to which Moab turns is the curse. And then God breaks in! Yahweh, the God of Israel, confronts an internationally-known pagan diviner in his homeland, far removed from the people of Israel. Yahweh,

the God who spoke to Moses, now speaks to a heathen mantic prophet. Yahweh, the God of the patriarchs, breaks into the dealings of a power-play on the part of unbelievers in the realm of the occult. And God says, "you shall not curse the people; for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12).

The fact of Israel's blessing by Yahweh is the major theme in the *Heilsgeschichte* of this pericope. Israel is blessed by Yahweh from of old. Balaam, the pagan bars attempts to reverse the curse to earn his mantic fee, but is frustrated at every turn. The blessing of Yahweh on His people is irrevocable. Demonic powers have no sway, supernatural means are ineffective, pagan acts are useless in the face of the objective reality of the blessing of Israel.

The institution of Israel's blessing is to be found in Yahweh's choice of the primal patriarch, Abraham, as described in Genesis 12. At the very beginning God's intent for this new people was made quite clear. To Abraham He said, "I will bless you" (Gen. 12:2). The Balaam incident may be regarded as a frontal attack by Satan on the foundational blessing of God's people--a frontal attack that: was countered and defeated by the inter-vention of Yahweh Himself.

As Mowinckel observed[1] the theme of the oracles may be stated in a nuce: "Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone

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[1] See the discussion of Mowinckel's treatment of the Balaam pericope, above, pp. 68-95.

who curses you" (Num. 24:9). This is a striking reminder of the original words of the Abrahamic covenant: "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 shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). The history of the Jewish people is replete with examples of attempts to curse and destroy this nation. But the Balaam incident seems to be the test case of the objective reality of the blessing of Israel. As Habel observed respecting the events of Numbers 25, [1] the story of Numbers 22-24 is also a record of no peccadillo. An attempt was made at a direct, studied, and frontal attack-on the blessing of God's people. But those who wished to curse Israel found themselves cursed. Israel's blessing is unique (Num. 23:7-10), it is based on her unique rela- tionship to Yahweh (Num. 23:18-24); it is absolute (Num. 24:3-9); and it has an ultimate fulfillment in her deliverer from all enemies (24:15-19). The enemies of Israel, present and. future, are under the curse they wished had been placed on her (Num. 24:20-24).[2]

So the major thrust of the Balaam oracles centers on Israel's blessing. Israel's blessing is unique because it is rooted in the character of her unique God. Despite Israel's many failures in the years of wilderness wanderings, God is still faithful to His people. Despite their many rejections

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[1] See above, p. 211.
[2] For a full discussion of the oracles from an exegetical point of view, see above, pp. 257-331.

of His leading and the several denials made of His goodness--He still leads
and He remains good to Israel. God has blessed Israel and God is at work
in Israel (Num. 23:23). Attempts to curse Israel are quite ineffective.

The Attributes of Yahweh

In addition to the emphasis on the blessing of Israel, the *Heils-geschichte* of our pericope concerns the revelation of the attributes of the
person of Yahweh, the source of the blessing. It certainly would be an error
to try to find in the oracles of Balaam a complete catalogue of the attributes
of God. Hence, in this section of the present study, there will not be an
attempt to list all the ramifications of the Balaam oracles to the attributes
of God. Rather it is the purpose of this section to stress those attributes
of the divine being such as seem to be presented in bold relief in our circum-
scribed text. Moreover, there will not be made an attempt to group the
attributes of Yahweh along classical lines (personal as against constitutional,
absolute as against relative, communicable as against incommunicable).
In short, the presentation that follows is not that of the systematizer, with
a view to completion and systemization; the approach is that of the exegete,
with a view to presentation of the major emphasis.

A further limitation is felt by the writer, and this is the problem
one always faces in trying to "define" God. For even when one has said all
that he can say about the sublime Person of Yahweh, he realizes that he has

not said enough. In doing so, the student of the Person of Yahweh finds himself in danger of devaluating or minimizing his Lord. God is beyond all description, in the final analysis. He is greater than our descriptions of Him. He is greater than the sum of the attributes in any of our lists. R. T. France insists respecting our view of God, that we ever remember:

> He is not an academic proposition. The Bible provides us with no definition of the word "God'"--it cannot, because, as Pascal said, "Dieu defini, d'est Dieu fini. " A God who is susceptible to the static delineation of cold philosophy, or even of a rigid dogmatic theology, is not the dynamic God of the Bible. God is known by His words and His acts, not by abstract speculation. To try to tie Him down with human definitions is idolatry; and it is idolatry which draws out some of the most superbly scathing mockery of the Old Testament.[1]

With these limitations in mind we may now turn to the attributes emphasized in our text.

The Incomparability of Yahweh. --A rather sad remark is made in the preface of an important theological treatise. This is found in the introduction that A. van Selms gives to the book by C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament.*

> As far as the present author is aware, Dr. Labuschagne's book is the first monograph to appear on the subject of Yahweh's incomparability in the Old Testament. It is most remarkable, in view of the abundance of Old Testament texts which bear witness of Yahweh's incomparability, that this subject up till now has not been treated in any separate study.[2]

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[1] France, *The Living God*, pp. 20-21.
[2] Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, p. x.

Van Selms proceeds to remark that the reason for the relative neglect of this subject lies in its negative aspect. Against that, however, he avers that "it should be clear from the first that the testimony of this negative quality is the human expression for an all-transcendent positive intensity of being."[1]

Whereas our passage does not contain one of the standard formulae for expressing the incomparability of Yahweh as delineated in the fine treatise by Labuschagne, certainly the theme of His incomparability forms one of the substructural premises from which the whole receives its unified meaning.

As was suggested on the section on the character of Balaam,[2] It is felt by the present writer that Balaam is best seen not in the context of "false versus true prophets," but as outside the realm of biblical prophecy. He is neither a false prophet nor a true prophet in the usual sense of those terms. For these terms are used as value judgments within the cultus of Israel and within the context of revealed religion. Balaam is best understood as a pagan who unwittingly steps into the focus of the drama of the people of Israel and their God, and finds himself totally overwhelmed by what happens to him.

[1] *Ibid*.
[2] See above, pp. 163-205.

And it is in Balaam's reaction to Yahweh's-use of him that the substructural postulate of the incomparability of Yahweh is seen in high relief. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is totally unlike anything or anyone Balaam had ever encountered or ever imagined. Balaam was a trafficker in the spirit world, a craftsman with the supernatural. It would not be reading too much into his character to see him as more than a clairvoyant, but even in the context of idolatry in its demoniac aspects.[1]

Whatever Balaam's experience had been in the past *vis-a-vis* the spirit world, we recognize that he knows that he is up against Someone totally unique when he confronts Yahweh. This is a means of teaching the reader concerning the uniqueness, on the absolute level, of the God of Israel. Be it known, the Balaam Oracles seem to be saying, the uniqueness of the God of Israel is absolute. He is in fact, beyond compare. Truly the psalmist praises Yahweh when lie writes:

> High above the nations is Yahweh!
> Over all the heavens is His glory!
> Who may be compared to Yahweh our God,
> Who is enthroned on high?
> [Psalm 113:4-5]

In the-first oracle we read of Balaam extolling the uniqueness of the people of God (Num. 23:9). They are distinct from all the nations,

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[1] For a strong presentation of the demonic nature of idolatry, see Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1952).

they are utterly unique. How are we to understand this "difference?"
Certainly not in a racist sense![1] Nor does the Bible allow us to regard
this difference in terms of her own self-worth.

This passage in itself, and in the larger context, never allows
even Israel to take center stage. The genuine theological truth presented
in the testimony to the uniqueness of Israel is the fact that Israel was relat-
ed to the Incomparable Yahweh. It is only because Yahweh is beyond com-
pare, that His people become distinct. As Labuschagne states in hiss thesis,
the incomparability of Israel was never to be taken as a "laudatory crip-
tion to an arrogant and self-glorifying nationalism," nor was it "an expres-
sion of religious chauvinism." Rather, he states:

> Our investigation has brought to light that a unique position
> among the nations was given to Israel as a result of her election by
> Yahweh. Within the scope of her election Israel was called to prac-
> tice an *imitatio Dei*, not only by obeying the commandment "You
> shall be holy, for I Yahweh am holy" (Lev. 20:26), but especially
> because, through her very existence in the world, her *imitatio Dei*
> became manifest. As her God was a 'Single One' among the gods,
> so Israel was a 'single one' among the nations; as her God was in-
> comparable among the gods, so Israel was incomparable among the
> nations. Israel owed her incomparability not to herself, but to
> Yahweh, who mercifully elected and entered into communion with
> her--Yahweh the incomparable God, of whom Israel has confessed
> since His intervention in her history and still confesses this very day:

[1] One of the tragedies of history has been the way in which the
uniqueness of Israel has become the instrument of cursing by those who are
in fact different from her. For a brief, but eloquent, account of the suffer-
ing of Israel through the ages, see *O Jerusalem!* by Larry Collins and
Dominique LaPierre (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 17-32.
Cf. Abba Eban, My Country: The Story of Modern Israel (London and

יהוה מי כָמֹוֶך [1]

So that it may be said that one strong emphasis within the Balaam corpus is on the attribute of the incomparability of Yahweh.

The Sovereignty of Yahweh. --Perhaps related to and growing out of the incomparability of Yahweh is the stress in the Balaam Oracles on the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh. Indeed, this is stressed throughout the account. Yahweh's choice of Israel is rooted in His sovereignty. Yahweh's blessing of Israel comes from His sovereignty. Yahweh's use of Balaam, yes and even of the donkey (!)--these are all expressions of His sovereignty. In all His acts there is the patent demonstration of His essence: Yahweh is sovereign.

On this excellence of the divine Person, John Bright writes,

> Equally prominent is Israel's understanding of the sovereign and exclusive lordship of Yahweh over His people, of the demands that He has laid upon them and. the response that He expects of them if they are to continue in His favor: in short, that whole understanding of reality that expressed itself in the concept of covenant. This again was a primitive feature :in Israel's faith.[2]

Van Imschoot speaks on the issue of the sovereignty of Yahweh in this fash-

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Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), pp. 25-45. A recent, full treatment may be found in Werner Keller, Diaspora: *The Post-Biblical History of the Jews*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1971).

[1] Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh*, pp. 152-53.

[2] Bright, *Authority of the Old Testament,* p. 132.

ion:

> Yahweh, without doubt, who chose Israel from all the nations (Ex 19:5; Am 3:2) and concluded an alliance with them and with their ancestors (Ex 24:8; Gn 15:8; 17:1, etc.) bound Himself to protect His people in a very special way, on condition, however, that in exchange they observe the stipulations of the moral and religious order 'which Yahweh had imposed on them (Ex 19:5; 24:3; Dt 11:13-17, 26-32; 26:17-19; 28:1-68). But since the covenant is an act of pure benevolence on God's part (Am 9:7; Os 11:1; Jer 31:3; Ez 16:3-14; Dt 7:7-9; 10:15), E it does not violate the rights of any other people and is not contrary to God's justice; it is uniquely an act of Yahweh's sovereignty, "who shows favor to whom He shows favor" (Ex 33:19), that is to say, He Lugrants favors to those whom He wishes.[1]

Yahweh's sovereignty relative to Israel is seen in His mighty acts on her behalf. But it is also seen in the pithy statement in Numbers 23:21, "the shout of a king is among them." It is in the ascription of this title to Yahweh that His sovereignty is manifest. Further, it is unfortunate that Numbers 24:23b is regarded as hopelessly corrupt as is customarily done. For it would seem that in fact this is a climax to the seven-fold oracle pattern. As translated in the N. A. S. B., this line reads, "Alas, who can live except God has ordained it?" This verse does not need to be reconstructed. It needs to be believed. Yahweh is sovereign. He is sovereign in all His acts. And this verse seems to put into capsule form His sovereignty. Not only is the fortune of Israel in His control, He is sovereign on every level.

The Immutability of Yahweh. --Another basic attribute of Yahweh that is stressed throughout the Balaam Oracles is the immutability of Yahweh.

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[1] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* I, 69.

He changes not. Some have imagined a conflict in chapter 22 that would suggest that God does in fact change. Noth, for example, says that if the connection of the chapter is left as it stands, the anger of Yahweh in 22:22 would be "an act of irresponsible despotism on God's part."[1]

Such a charge, however, is based on faulty presuppositions concerning the text, and a naive approach to the complexities of human nature.[2] Were there not the question of source analysis, it is doubtful whether such a conflict in the activity of God would ever have been imagined. The charge that if the text is allowed to stand, it leaves one with an improper view of God--smacks of the tactics of debate. To keep a pure view -of God, he is suggesting, one has to have a low view of His Word. And yet it is only in His Word that we ever learned a pure and lofty view of God in the first place.

But Noth's charge- also betrays an incredibly naive approach to human nature. He wants to read the story of Balaam as though Balaam were less complex than the figure the text presents. Balaam is no stick figure in

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[1] Noth, *Numbers*, p. 178.

[2] Witness the recent (mild) reaction against literary criticism by Sandmel, who argues that modern scholars fail to understand the ancient mind when they approach the text. "A consequence is that all too often, so it seems to me, modern scholarship has so addressed itself in noting divergencies and discrepancies as to forget that there were elastic and intuitive minds behind the writings." Samuel Sandmel, "The Ancient Mind and Ours," *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings,* ed. John Reumann (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), p. 43.

this account. It is in the shifting personality of Balaam that there is the cause for the anger of God. Balaam says one thing with his lips but thinks en other in his heart. The anger of God in chapter 22 is to be found because of the sinful nature of Balaam, not in a low view--of deity. Yahweh's immutability is not affected by this chapter in the slightest.

On the contrary, the immutability of Yahweh is stated with pre-CJsion in Numbers 23:19. Balaam is ,used as a foil for God. Balaam is contantly shifting, prevaricating, equivocating, changing--and he is himself the prime example of the distinction between God and man. One of the effective pedagogical devices found throughout the Word of God is that of contrast and comparison. Witness, for example the contrast and comparison implicit in the linking together of chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Genesis. So it is here. Balaam is the contrast to Yahweh, and Balaam is used by Yahweh to say this very truth: God is utterly distinct from man in that God is unable to lie. He is unable to deviate from His purpose. He is in fact;, immutable. The Mighty One is different from man. That which He has spoken He has bound Himself to fulfill and accomplish.

Van Imschoot writes on this subject, citing other verses which speak of the immutability of Yahweh:

> God is immutable in His being and also in His will: "He does not call back His words" (Is 31:2). He has spoken and has not repented. He has resolved and has not gone back on His word (Jer. 4:28). "The heavens shall vanish like smoke, and the earth shall be worn away like a garment, and the inhabitants thereof shall perish (like

gnats); but My salvation will be forever and My justice shall not fail"
(Is 51:6; cf. 51:8). If Israel was not consumed because of its faults,
it is because "Yahweh does not change" (Mal 3:6). This means that
He is constant in His plans of salvation, because He is "the eternal
rock" of His people.[1]

The problem of the repentance of God in this connection is more
apparent than real. There are, of course, passages that speak of the repen-
tance of God in anthropopathic terms, even as Van Imschoot lists.[2] But the
teaching of Numbers 23:19 is of a different order. For the word "'repent" in
this verse is parallel to the word "lie;, " and in this context is colored in tone
by that very association. While there are times when the Old Testament
writers speak in anthropopathic terms of God "repenting, " the repentance of
God is never tantamount to falsehood on His part. -He is never charged with
a lie. For related to the immutability of Yahweh is the concept of the truth of
Yahweh, as this verse insists.[3]

Since God is truth, He does not lie; in fact He cannot lie. Nor
can He repent, if that repentance would be associated with falsehood.

The Love of Yahweh. --That the love of Yahweh for Israel is part
of the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Balaam pericope is made explicit in the following:

But Yahweh your God was not willing to listen to Balaam,
rather Yahweh your God. turned the curse into a blessing
for you because Yahweh your God loves you.
[Deut. 23:6; Eng. v. 5]

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[1] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament,* I, 55-56.
[2] *Ibid*., I, 56.   [3] *Ibid*., I, 66-67.

The love of Yahweh for I srael is closely alligned with His incomparability as may be seen in Deuteronomy 4:31-40. This latter passage is a significant parallel to the Balaam account because it is roughly contemporaneous with the Balaam episode on. chronological grounds. At the approximate imate time that Balaam and Balak were plotting the cursing of Israel, Moses was instructing the people of God within the camp concerning God's love for them and His incomparable relationship to them. This splendid text reads:

For Yahweh your God is a compassionate God:[1]

> He will never abandon you;
> He will never exterminate you;
> And He will never forget the covenant with your fathers
> which He swore to them.

[1] This verse should be compared with the preceding context. In verse 24 of the same chapter we read, "For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Hence, in this chapter there are in close juxtaposition the two aspects of the person of God which often are bifurcated in the popular imagination and in some liberal thought. The: expression is usually stated: The God of the Old Testament is a God oJ- wrath, but the God of the New Testament is a God of love. Such a subjective misunderstanding is given in the following note from the diary of Tchaikovsky (dated October 2, 1886) in which he compares the music of Beethoven and Mozart.

"To begin with, Beethoven, whom I praise unconditionally, and to whom I bend as to a god. But what is Beethoven to me? I bow down before the grandeur of some of his creations, but I do not love Beethoven. My relationship to him reminds me of that which I felt in my childhood for the God Jehovah. I feel for him--for my sentiments are still unchanged-- great veneration, but also fear. He has created the heaven and the earth, and although I fall down before him, I do not love him. Christ, on the contrary, calls forth exclusively the feeling of love. He is God, but also Man. He has suffered like ourselves. We pity Him and love in Him the ideal side

Indeed, ask, if you will concerning the former days,
> those days which were before you,
> ask. even from the day when God created marn on earth,
> ask. even from one end of heavens to another:

Has anything like this great thing ever happened?

Has anything corresponding to it ever even been heard
> That a people actually heard the voice of a cod,
> speaking from the midst of the fire--even as you
> have heard--and survived?

Or, has a god ever attempted to go to take for himself a nation
from the midst of another nation,
> by means of trials,
> and signs,
> and wonders,
> and war,
>> and by means of a strong hand and an outstretched
>> arm, and with great terrors--

> corresponding to all which Yahweh your God has done
> for you in Egypt, before your eyes ?

You were made to see in order that you might experience
> that Yahweh is the genuine God:
> there is absolutely none besides Him.

From the heavens he made you hear His voice to instruct you,
and on earth He caused you to see His great fire,
and you heard His words from the midst of the fire:

Simply because He loved your fathers,
> and He made His choice in his seed after him;
> and He personally brought you out from Egypt,
> by means of His great strength--

of man's nature. If Beethoven holds an anaolgous place in my heart to the God Jehovah, I love Mozart as the musical Christ. I do not think this comparison is blasphemous. Mozart was as pure as an angel, and his music is full of divine beauty. " Modest Tchaikovsky, *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, trans. and ed. by Rosa Newmarch (London: John Lane Co. , 1906), pp. 517-18.

dispossessing before you nations mightier and vaster
>> than you,
in order to cause you to enter,
and to give to you their land as an inheritance,
>> even today!

So know (experientially!) today,
and bring it to your heart:

>> THAT YAHWEH IS THE GENUINE GOD
>>> in the heavens above,
>>> and on the earth below:
>>> NONE OTHER EXISTS!

So guard His statutes and His commandments which I am
giving to you today,

>> in order that it may go well with you,
>> and for your children after you,
>> and in order that you may stretch out your days
>> on the land which Yahweh your God is about to
>> give to you in perpetuity.

This magnificent text seems to be the commentary from within as to the significance of the Balaam oracles which were from without the camp. In this passage there is an extraordinary emphasis on the love God has for His people and the incomparable nature of His person and His acts on behalf of His own. The uniqueness of Israel which is related by Moses in Deuteronomy 4 and by Balaam in Numbers 23 is not due to something within her, not something inherent in her as a people. It is rather an absolutely unparalleled relationship with Yahweh. One might ask back to the time of the beginning of man's existence whether such a thing has ever been, and one might search the universe from one end to another to find a parallel. Since time began there was nothing to compare with God's relationship to His own.

The reason is stated by Moses. It is based on the love Yahweh has for the patriarchs: "He loved your fathers" (Deut. 4:37). This might even be rendered, "He loves your fathers," for certainly an emotive word in the speech of an eternal God may be translated as a present. Moreover, God's purpose for His people is stated quite emphatically. He desired Israel to know experientially that Yahweh is the genuine God. None other exists. This stress on the incomparability of Yahweh is of tremendous import, and it is linked to God's love for His people.

Moses thus explains a large part of the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Balaam passages when he tells Israel that Yahweh was acting in her behalf out of His great love (Deut. 23:6). Further, God's. love is related to His incomparability (Deut. 4:31-40). Moreover, in this latter passage we are introduced to the mighty acts of,Yahweh for His own--further elements in the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Balaam pericope.

The Righteous Acts of Yahweh

We are indebted to Micah for explaining the Balaam story as a part of the righteous acts of Yahweh:

> My people, remember
> What Balak king of Moat) counselled
> And what Balaam son of Beor answered him;
> From Shittim to Gilgal,
> > In order to know the righteous acts of Yahweh.
> > > [Micah 6:5][1]

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[1] See above, pp. 219-221.

This, too, is a major element in the H-ilsgeschichte of the Balaam per:icope. "The God who acts" is a fitting theme for theological consideration.[1] Occasionally, however, the acts of God are said to be the means of revelation in contrast to the words of God. That is, the acts and the words of God are set in opposition; the acts being revelatory. Such is a false methodology, as is demonstrated amply by the Balaam incident. The God of the Bible is ever presented as the God of history and the God of revelation. The Balaam narrative blends the acts and the words of God into an indivisible unity. One cannot, on sound methodological grounds, extricate one without doing violence to the other.

Others have argued that the acts are not revelatory. Feinberg has criticized Eissfeldt on this point:

> Eissfeldt's view of revelation is seriously defective. He has conveniently overlooked the testimony of both the Old and the New Testaments which maintains that revelation is posited in historical events. If the validity of the historical narrative is denied or depreciated, what proof is there that God did make a revelation?
>
> Therefore, the fact that God can and does act in history on behalf of His people is of great importance to the doctrine of God. [His emphasis.][2]

We may now look briefly at the righteous acts of Yahweh in the Balaam story.

His Acts and the Spoken Word. --The ancient belief in the effectual spoken word has been observed in an earlier section of the p:-esent

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[1] See, e. g., G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology As Recital* (London: SCM Press, 1952).

[2] Feinberg, "The Doctrine of God in the Pentateuch, " p. 173.

paper.[1] As van Imschoot writes,

> For the ancients and the uncivilized the word is riot simply the expression of a thought or of a will; it is something concrete, something existing and active, and is, so to say, charged with the force of the soul of the one who pronounces it. The pronounced word does not only subsist in the conscience of the one who pronounced it and in the one who heard it, it exists in itself and acts just: as such a concrete force would act.[2]

There is thus a cultural background of credibility to the events of chapter 22 of Numbers. Balak did not know for sure if his resort to the supernatural use of the curse would avail We may observe the use of the word "perhaps" in Numbers 22:16. But this was his desperate attempt to try to escape what he thought was impending doom.

Nevertheless, as Kauf:mann states, this pagan view of the efficacy of the spoken word is to be contrasted to the word spoken by Yahweh. The word of Yahweh is efficacious, riot on the level of a magical (or demonic.) sense, but as the expression of His sovereign will

> In pagan thought blessings and curses are a variety of incantations; they are regarded as automatically effective, and--since the gods also use and are affected by them--transcendentally potent. YHWH neither uses nor is affected by incantations. He acts by the word; but that this is no more than an expression of his will is indicated by the fact that he never uses fixed words or formulas, as do Ormazd or Brahma. His utterances simply say what he wills at a given moment: "Let there be light . . . Let there be a firmament."[3]

[1] See above, "The Role of the Curse, " beginning on p. 236.
[2] Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1, 189; cf. Knight, *Christian Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 55-56.
[3] Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 84.

If the attempt to curse Israel had been merely a magic act Israel would have had nothing to fear, of course. If, however, the appeal was to demonic powers (viewed as the gods of the nations), the situation would have been more serious. Yahweh sovereignly moved in His own mysterious way to frustrate the futile attempt of a petty pagan king to vent his fear, as an object lesson for Israel and as a polemic against paganism. It is in this context that the relatively large amount of space given to the Balaam materials in proportion to the period of time covered in the Book of Numbers is justified.

The polemical nature of some sections of the Old Testament is beginning to be realized as of vital importance to the theology of the mighty acts of God. It is on the basis of polemics that Leah Bronner has demonstrated the "credibility," and, more importantly, the purposefulness, of the mighty acts of Yahweh in the stories of Elijah and Elisha.[1]

In Yahweh's intervention in the Balaam story there is an attack on paganism that Israel should have taken to heart. The dynamic presence of Yahweh the God of Israel is of infinitely more worth than the spoken word of the enemies of Israel from without the camp. How could one trust in the

[1] Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha: As Polemics , Against Baal Worship*, "Pretoria Oriental Series," ed. A van Selms, Vol. VI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 190'8). See also, Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 13. For a recent study of the polemics in Genesis 1 see Perry A. Webb, "The Genesis Creation Account as a Polemic" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972).

power of the spoken word of paganism when Yahweh had intervened and over-ruled in the Balaam incident? How could an Israelite place his trust in the. gods of the nations when Yahweh the God of Israel had acted in his behalf?

His Acts and the Donkey Story. --A second area in which the righteous acts of Yahweh are displayed in the Balaam pericope concerns the donkey incident of Numbers 22. There are two major difficulties with the donkey section, as viewed by many scholars. The first difficulty concerns the relationship that this incident has to the pericope as a whole. The second concerns the nature of the miracle (or fable).

Whereas many scholars have dismissed the donkey story as not contributing anything to the story, Mowinckel and von Pakozdy have both noted that the donkey story serves the purpose of functioning a; an action-slowing and tension-developing element.[1] It is incorrect to state that there is no advance made by the use of the story. Comparison may be made with the Joseph story (Gen. 37-50). There is considerable use of the device of repetition in the Joseph chapters that may be compared to the thrice repeated attempt of the Angel of Yahweh to frustrate the advance of Balaam. For ex-ample, there is the repetition in the dreams of Joseph in Genesis 37:5-10 (giving him the derisive sobriquet "that dreamer" in Genesis 35:5-10). There are also repetitions of dreams in Genesis 40-41.

[1] For these statements, see above, pp. 86, 120.

But perhaps the most informative parallel to our account is the so-called "intrusion" of chapter 38 into the midst of the Joseph story. Remarks similar to those made concerning Numbers 22 are applied In this case as well Genesis 37:36 details Joseph being sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Genesis 39:1 begins with a restatement of the same factor. Hence, chapter 38 might be said to "add nothing at all to the story. " There is no advance in our knowledge of Joseph.

Yet for the careful reader, Genesis 38, which does not mention the name "Joseph" once, forms a *vital* element in our understanding of Joseph's character. For it is by contrast with the apostate acts of his older brother, Judah, that the righteousness of Joseph is set in boldest relief. Judah reaches such a spiritual nadir that he is forced to admit that his Canaanite daughter-in-law demonstrated a righteousness higher than his in her incestuous act in the guise of ritual cultic prostitution (Gen. 38:26). This is then, the bold and graphic setting for the acts of Joseph in chapter 39 when *daily* (יוֹם יוֹם) he was confronted with the seductive attempts of his master's wife (Gen. 39:1), yet refused to compromise himself or his God. Further, the contrast is also heightened when one sees Judah as a free agent in the land of promise, whereas Joseph is a slave in the land of curse.

To regard Genesis 38 as an "unnecessary intrusion into the story of Joseph is not the mark of ingenious scholarship; it is rather the patent demonstration of an amazing lack of spiritual, and literary, perspicacity. The

same may be said respecting the story of the donkey and the Angel in Numbers 22. Further, other examples are not lacking in great literature of all ages. One illustration may suffice. Chapter XXXII, "Cetology," of *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville "does not advance the story, " but is an integral and essential element of the whole.

Hence, for the present writer, the claim that verses 21-34 of chapter 22 of Numbers are unnecessary since there is no advance in verse 35 as over against verse 20, is a claim of less than a sophisticated reader. We agree with Goldberg that if one cuts the donkey, story out of the narrative the text would then be deprived of its most beautiful point. He writes:.

> Dieses ganze Stilck ist bei allem Ernst doch voll beissendem Spott: Der blinde Seher wird der sehenden Eselin gegenubergestellt. Selbst deren Mund konnte Gott offnen--nur um etwas zu isagen, bedarf er Bileams nicht. Eben darin erweist sich Bileam als die Verkehrung des Propheten seines Zeitalters, des Moses. Dieser war nicht nur Seher, einer, zu dem Gott von Angesicht zu Angesicht redet, sondern ein Fursprecher seines Volkes. Ihn konnte man nicht mit Geschenken zu irgendeinem Geschaft des Segnens oder des Fluchens izolen, ihm wurde niemals Ehrung angetragen. Vielmehr leitete er sei.n Volk und trug dessen Last trotz all der Unbill, die er erfahren musste.[1]

The narrative is one of studied ridicule. We see the prophet Balaam as a blind seer, seeing less than the dumb animal. In this graphic representation of Balaam pitted against the donkey, we also see a more important contrast, as Goldberg avers: the contrast of Balaam and Moses. As the present writer has argued earlier in this paper, [2] the long shadow of Moses

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[1] Goldberg, *Das Buch Numeri*, p. 106.
[2] See above, pp. 232-33.

falls across the pages of the Balaam story even though Moses is never named once. Certainly a Hebrew reader of the account of the folly of Balaam in the donkey incident would be compelled to contrast the foolish Balaam with the magnificent image of Moses. Moses spoke face to face with God. Balaam was a blind "seer" instructed by the mouth of a dumb beast:

Hence, if the question is asked, What then is the purpose of the donkey incident apart from its function of slowing the drama and increasing the tension?--one may respond that the purpose seems to be polemical. Many have observed the genuine humor in 1:he contrast of the seer and his donkey. It could not be more stunning, more humorous, more devastating. This is the penultimate in polemics against paganism. It is well known that the ass has been depicted from the earliest times as a subject of stupidity and contrariness.[1] Whether this its deserved or not, it is a common enough element in

[1] Kramer lists a number of Sumerian proverbs on the ass, some of which may be cited: "The donkey, as is well known, served as the chief beast of burden and draught animal in ancient Mesopotamia, and the Sumerians good-humoredly represented him as the slow-moving, and frequently foolish, creature that he is in]European-literature of a later date. His main objective in life seems to be to act contrary to the wishes of his masters: for example: . . . The donkey eats its own bedding:. . . Like a runaway donkey, my tongue does not turn around and come back: . . . I will not marry a wife who is only three years old as the donkey does." Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer,* Anchor Books (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. , 1959), pp. 132-33; cf. idem, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 224-25; J. William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 40.

For an example of the proverbial stupidity of the donkey in a

wisdom literature to form the setting for the polemics against the powers of Balaam. Further, in the contrast between Balaam and Moses, there is of course, the contrast between the respective deities. The incident of the donkey of Balaam is thus best regarded as a satirical attack on paganism. It is not to be deleted without the loss of the "best part."

Having spoken of the first issue, the relationship of the incident to the pericope, we may now turn to the second difficulty of the story, the nature of the miracle. We may begin this brief study by quoting the poem C. S. Lewis uses to preface his study on miracles.

> Among the hills a meteorite
> Lies huge; and moss has overgrown,
> And wind and rain with touches light
> Made soft, the contours of the stone.

considerably later period, one may cite the following story attributed to AEsop, "The Ass's Brains."

> The Lion and the Fox went hunting together. The Lion, on the advice of the Fox, sent-a message to the Ass, proposing to make an alliance between their two families. The Ass came to the place of meeting, overjoyed at the prospect of a royal alliance. But when he came there the Lion simply pounced on the Ass, and said :o the Fox: "Here is our dinner for to-day. Watch you here while I go and have a nap. Woe betide you if you touch my prey." The Lion went away and the Fox waited; but finding that his master did not return, ventured to take out the brains of the Ass and ate them up. When the Lion came back he soon noticed the absence of the brains, and asked the Fox in a terrible voice: "What have you done with the brains?" "Brains, your Majesty. it had none, or it would never have fallen into your trap, " WIT HAS ALWAYS AN ANSWER READY.

Charled W. Eliot, ed., *Folk-Lore and Fable: AEsop, Grimm, Anderson*, "The Harvard Classics" (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, Corp., 1909), p. 41.

George Cansdale argues that the donkey has had a "bad press" in folk lore, in his book All the Animals of the Bible Lands (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 73-74. But deserved or not, the metaphore is very ancient.

Thus easily can Earth digest
A cinder of sidereal fire,
And make her translunary guest
The native of an English shire.

Nor is it strange these wanderers
Find in her lap their fitting place,
For every particle that's hers
Came at the first from outer space.

All that is Earth has once been sky;
Down from the sun of old she came,
Or from some star that travelled by
Too close to his entangling flame.

Hence, if belated drops yet fall
From heaven, on these her plastic power
Still works as once it worked on all
The glad rush of the golden shower.[1]

The question of miracle brings immediately to the fore the disjunction between the Naturalist and the Supernaturalist, a discussion ably treated by Lewis in his work on miracles. An important point he makes is that "the difficulties of the unbeliever do not begin with questions about this or that particular miracle; they begin much further back."[2] Nevertheless, even for the Supernaturalist there are some limits on the kinds of miracles that are admitted. Lewis writes, "It by no means follows from Supernaturalism that Miracles of any sort do in fact occur."[3] Some miracles are more difficult for the Supernaturalist to accept than others. Such is the story of the speech of the donkey of Balaam.

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 6.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 69.   [3] *Ibid*., p. 14.

Almost a century ago Samuel Cox wrote, "It is rational to be-

lieve in miracles, but it is not easy to believe in all the miracles recorded

in the old Testament Scriptures" [his emphasis].[1] The same writer con--

tinues:

> It is rational to believe in miracles, then, if we believe in God and in any revelation of his will to men. But to believe in some miracles is not to believe in all miracles; and, obviously, some of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament make a very large and heavy demand on our faith; none of them, perhaps, a larger and heavier demand than this, that "the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet" [II Pet. 2:16].[2]

Since it is only in the realm of fancy and fable that a:zimals

speak in human voices, most moderns regard the speech of the donkey as an

example of the fabulous, the fairy tale.[3] Moriarty avers, "We only deceive

ourselves if we think that the sacred writer really believed that an ass at

one time complained to its owner. "[4] Supposed mythical parallels are found

in classical literature--parallels suggesting the same type of fabulous genre.

One example is the speech of Xanthus to Achilles:

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[1] Samuel Cox, "Balaam's Ass. Numbers xxii, 28-30, " Expos, , 1st series, 1 (1877), 397.

[2] Ibid., p. 398.

[3] So, e. g. , Aage Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament (2 vols.; Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1948), I, 240-41.

[4] Moriarty, *Numbers--Part 2*, p. 7; cf. D. M. Stanley, "Balaam's Ass; or a Problem in New Testament Hermeneutics, " *CBQ*, XX (January, 1958), 50-56.

Then fleet Xanthus answered from under the yoke--for white-armed Hera had endowed him with human speech--and he bowed his head till his mane touched the ground as it hung down from under the yoke-band. "Dread Achilles," said he, "we will indeed save you now, but the day of your death is near, and the blame will not be ours, for it will be heaven. and stern fate that will destroy you. Neither was it through any sloth or slackness on our part that the Trojans stripped Patroclus of his armor. It was the mighty god whom lovely Leto bore that slew him as he fought among the foremost, and vouchsafed a triumph to Hector. We two can fly as swiftly as Zephyrus who they say is fleetest of all winds; nevertheless it is your doom to fall by the hand of a man and of a god."

When he had thus said the Erinyes stayed his speech, and Achilles answered him in great sadness, saying, "Why, O Xanthus, do you thus foretell my death? You need not do so, for I well know that I am to fall here, far from my dear father and mother; none the more, however, shall I stay my, hand till I have given the Trojans their fill of fighting."

So saying, with a loud cry he drove his horses to the front.[1]

Others, not wishing to posit legend, fable or fairy tale in the biblical text, have argued that the miracle was internal and subjective rather than external and objective. Maimonides, for example, suggested that the event was a dream vision which Balaam had at night.[2] There is no indication

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[1] Homer, *The Iliad*, trans, by Samuel Butler, ed. by Louise R Loomis, "The Classics Club" (Roslyn, N.Y.: Walter J. Black, Inc. , 1942), XIX, 404-417 (p. 307). Gordon says, "The speech of Xanthus (IL 19:404-17), the horse of Achilles, is of a piece with the talking of Balaam's ass in the Bible (Numbers 22:28-30). "Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Ancient Near East* (3rd ed.; New York: W. W. Norton &Company, Inc., 1965), p. 110.

[2] See Kenneth E. Jones, *The Book of Numbers: A Study Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 70; cf. William W. Bass, "Theology No Issue: An Evangelical Appraisal of Rosmarin's Jewish-Christian Theological Barriers, " *JETS*, XIV (Winter, 1971), 7.

in the text that the event was a dream vision, however. Perhaps -~he strongest defense of the internal view-point was given by Hengstenberg in his major treatise on Balaam. Hengstenberg was a Supernaturalist, but he argued that the incident of the donkey's speech was a miracle internal to Balaam rather than external (in the donkey).[1] Beek also internalized the story by saying that the speaking of the ass was Balaam's bad conscience.[2]

The proper starting point, however, is the text itself, not in our philosophical difficulties with a concept. And the text quite simply relates the event as an objective, external phenomenon. Noth is clear and to the point on this factor.

The ass's ability to speak, with which may' be compared the speaking of the serpent in Gen. 3. 1ff. , is not an element that is particularly stressed or even necessary; it is, however, an integral part of the narrative and is attributed to a miracle on the part of Yahweh (v. 28a)

[1] E. W. Hengstenberg, *A Dissertation on the History and Prophecies of Balaam*, trans. by J. E. Ryland (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1848), pp. 376-88. For counter arguments, see David Adams Martin, "The Balaam Oracles and Exegesis and Exposition of Numbers 22-24" (unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1950), pp. 33-35. A rather strange view was given by Irenaeus as reported by Beegle. Irenaeus usually eschewed allegorical interpretation, but he regarded Balaam's ass as a type of Christ. See Dewey M.. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 107.

[2] M. A. Beek, *A Journey Through the Old Testament,* trans by Arnold J. Pomerans, "Foreword" by H. H. Rowley (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959), p. 79. In this respect the donkey becomes a sort of Jiminy Cricket to the Pinocchio Balaam. The biblical text speaks often of internal and subjective elements. Warrant for such in our passage, however, appears r to be lacking.

which indicates how directly and unusually Yahweh acted in this affair of blessing or curse for Israel.[1]

The biblical text says, "Yahweh opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam . . . " (Num. 22:28a). The plain wording of this passage seems decisive. If one were to take the ass *cum grano salis*, how would one then regard the Angel of Yahweh who is the more important (!) figure in the story? May He also be dismissed with a laugh as simple naivite on the part of the writer? If the speech of the donkey is regarded as an internal phenomenon, is the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh (theophany!) also to be regarded as internal?

As Unger insists, "the case of the speaking ass is an instance of the omnipotence of God, and is not to be explained away by unbelief."[2] The speaking of the ass is demanded by the wording of the Old Testament passage and is confirmed in explicit terms in the New Testament. Peter writes, "for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet," (II Pet. 2:16). For the biblicist this should be determinative.   .

A rather remarkable phenomenon in terms of New Testament citations of Old Testament passages has been observed by conservative

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[1] Noth, *Numbers*, p. 179. At several points in this paper we have observed that Noth's view of the historicity of the Balaam narrative is quite negative. This citation from him is given, then, not to argue that he believes the miracle "really happened, " but to demonstrate that he regards   fy the text to be relating a miracle.

[2] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), p. 133.

scholars. It seems that some of the most perplexing data of the Old Testament are the very elements seized upon by the New Testament writers and exploited for their contributions to our knowledge of the acts of God. Allis observes:

> It is most instructive and illuminating to study the New Testament use of passages which modern scholars would regard as myth, legend or folklore and seek to "demythologize, " in order to find in them some element of truth which the modern mind can regard as profitable. The appeal to the account of the creation of woman (Gen. 2:21f.) by Paul (I Cor. 11:8; I Tim. 2:13), to a primitive monogamy (Gen. 2:23f.) by Jesus (Matt, .19:5), to the flood by Jesus (Matt. 23: 37f.) and by Peter (I Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5), to the brazen serpent (Num. 21:8) by Jesus (John 3:14), to the speaking ass (Num 22:28) by Peter (2 Peter 2:16), to Jonah in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 2:1) by Jesus (Matt. 12:40), illustrate the striking difference between the two methods of interpretation. What the one treats as difficulties to be gotten rid of, the other appeals to as significant evidences of God's activity in human affairs. [Emphasis added.][1]

The speech of the donkey is thus to be regarded as a genuine element in the righteous acts of Yahweh. Yet we should view this miracle in some perspective and not attempt to make more of it than the text does. In the Numbers account the emphasis should not be placed unduly on the donkey. Theology is ever about God. We must not let the strange zoology take the spotlight away from the central theology. Respecting this issue Vischer avers:

> Assuredly [Israel seems to have forsaken its blessing] --yet nevertheless (and this is the miracle of God's faithfulness, which is incomparably more wonderful than the fact that Balaam's ass opens its mouth to speak), the LORD transforms the curse in the mouth of Balaam into blessing. Despite all Israel's infidelity the blessing of Abraham

[1] Allis, *Old Testament Claims and Critics*, p. 34.

and the blessing of Jacob remain.[1]

We should not, therefore, make more of the speech of the donkey than is made by the text. As miracles go, this is a rather minor item Far too often the incredulous Naturalist sidetracks the pressured believer into a prolonged defense of relatively minor miracles such as the fish of Jonah and the donkey of Balaam. In this way he diverts attention from the issue which is of supreme import: the miracle of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.[2]

If in fact Christ has risen from the dead (I Cor. 15:3-8), then God's use of Balaam's donkey for a moment is of minor significance. Compared with the resurrection of our Lord, the donkey's speech is but a rough common stone beside a lustrous diamond. Conversely, if Christ is not. risen from the grave, the gift of intelligent speech to all the animals of creation could not assuage the despair which would result to the broken believer. For, "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain" (I Cor. 15:14).

The miracle of the donkey must also be seen in the perspective of the power of God. We ever live with too small a view of God. We need to have our minds expanded, not with hallucinagenics or a drug-produced euphoria, We need to have our minds expanded by the liberating Word of

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[1] Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ,* Vol. I, trans. by A. B. Crabtree (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), p. 233.

[2] The miracle of the resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the grand miracle of the incarnation. See Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 112.

God (John 8:32). Job's description of the vast power of God demonstrated in His creation and control of the universe is unparalleled in graphic sweep and majestic impact (Job 26). Yet, in view of all we know of God's mighty acts, Job has to conclude:

> Look! These are just the! fringes of His ways;
> And what faint whisper we! hear of Him!
> But his mighty thunder--who could attend? [Job 26:14]

Surely, he who refuses the possibility of God using a lowly creature in *whatever way* He desires, has a rather petty view of the One whom universes are unable to contain.

The miracle is not only possible (!), it is purposeful. If God wished to use an animal in His dealings with a pagan superstitious mantic, so be it. There is poetic justice in this act. Balaam the *baru* was long used to the practice of seeking vague indications of the will of the gods through the examination of the viscera of animals as well as the movements of the creatures.

Before God revealed Himself to Balaam in the person of the Angel of Yahweh, He first "got his attention" in this dramatic fashion. Balaam the "seer" could not see what even the donkey saw. Balaam had to learn from a donkey before he could learn from God. What a graphic tool for polemics against the superstitions of the East! How wonderfully well it fits the occasion. Balaam's ass is no Xanthus, however. There is no majestic prophecy coming from the animal's mouth. There are but the words an animal might

speak, if given the chance. The prophecies come through the voice of one stranger than a donkey--they come from the pagan mantic Balaam himself And all of these events, the opening of the mouth of the donkey and the opening of the mouth (and eyes) of the mantic---all are part of the righteous acts of Yahweh (Micah 6:5).

His Acts as the Deliverer. --A third major area in which the righteous acts of Yahweh are demonstrated in the Balaam story relates to Yahweh as the Deliverer of His people. Yahweh's mighty acts are seen respecting the spoken word and the donkey incident, as displayed above. But they are a portrayed more excellently within the oracle corpus in terms of the deliverance of His people.

here are three tense spheres in the concept of God's acts of deliverance for His own, each contributing significantly to the *Heilsgeschichte* of our corpus. God's past acts of deliverance center on the Exodus from the land of Egypt. There is a sense in which it may be said that the Exodus is the central event in the history of Israel before the advent of Messiah. It may be seen as corresponding for the Old Testament believer to the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ for the New Testament believer. This was the demonstration of Yahweh's deliverance and redemption of His own. Numbers 23:22 reads:

> God is bringing them out of Egypt,
> He is for him as the horns of the aurochs!

Similarly, Numbers 24:8a reads:

> God is bringing him out of Egypt,
> He is for him as the horns of the aurochs;[1]

God is Israel's Deliverer. It is significant that in these two parallel verses the verbs are participles. Whereas the act of the deliverance from Egypt was in the past, the event of forty years' standing still had not culminated when Salaam uttered these words. The deliverance from Egypt was still being effected in that the people were not yet in the land of promise.

The vivid image of the horns of the aurochs brings to the fore the supernatural acts and mighty displays of Yahweh's power on behalf of Israel in the Exodus event. Lehman writes:

> The Exodus account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt gave special emphasis to the supernatural workings of God. A casual study of these references [Ex. 3:20; 4:2-9, 21; 6:6, 7; 7:3, 9-12; 8:19; 9:15; 14:22, 31; 15:8, 11; 34:10; Ps. 78:42-51] reveals a vocabulary which unequivocally asserts the demonstration of miraculous power. This vocabulary includes such words as *wonders, signs, miracles, mighty acts*, and *powers*. These words most aptly describe the ten plagues, the dividing of the Red Sea, the giving of manna, and the supplying to them water from the rock.[2]

Certainly there can be no question but that the Exodus is central to the right-eous acts of Yahweh.

The second. sphere, anticipated above, is Yahweh's acts of deliverance in the time present to the oracles. The totality of the, Balaam

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[1] For a discussion of these two verses, see above, pp. 283-84, 302-303.

[2] Lehman, *Biblical Theology*, I, 115.

narrative bears witness to this factor, of course. More specifically, within the oracles there is emphasis given to Yahweh's present acts in delivering Israel.

Numbers 23:21b reads:

> Yahweh his God is with him!
> And the battle cry of a king is in him!

The revolutionary fact Balaam confronted was that Yahweh was personally at work in Israel, for Yahweh had settled among His own and became their resident King. This was the grand purpose of the Exodus, as is stated so graphically in Psalm 114:1-2:

> When Israel went forth from Egypt,
> The House of Jacob from a people of incomprehensible speech,
> Judah became His sanctuary,
> Israel His dominion.

God's purpose in the deliverance of Israel was to izave a. people in whom He might dwell and over whom He might have dominion. Balaam and the psalmist. were given similar insights into the intent of the Exodus. He whom God delivers He wishes to indwell, and he whom God indwells, He desires to rule. Amazingly, Balaam is the first to be given the :revelation that Yahweh is the king of His people.[1]

God is at work in Israel. Balaam is led by the Spirit to say:

> Now it must be said for Jacob,
> And for Israel--What God has done!   [Num. 23:23][2]

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[1] See above, pp. 281-83, 401-402.
[2] See above, pp. 284-87.

The third time-sphere of the deliverance of Israel by the right-
eous acts of Yahweh is in the future, from the perspective of the time of the
events in Numbers. Such is found in Numbers 24:8 c-e:

> He will devour the nations, His enemies,
> And their bones He will crush,
> And their arrows He will shatter.

Since Israel is animated by the power of God, all opposition to her must be
futile.

But the most striking prophecy of Balaam is found in his fourth
oracle, as it is here that the *Heilsgeschichte* of the mighty acts of Yahweh
as Deliverer have their climax:

> I see Him, but not now,
> I behold Him, but not near,
> A star shall march out from Jacob,
> And a scepter shall rise from Israel--
> And shall crush the temples of Moab,
> Even tear down all the sons of Sheth [Num. 24:17]1

Israel had experienced Yahweh's deliverance in the pass: and
was experiencing His deliverance in the present. But the grandest expression
relates to the coming of Israel's future Deliverer. He will be like star and
scepter in his royalty, and will bring victory over the enemies of His people.
That this passage refers to the Messiah (as was argued in chapter V) is quite
remarkable. This is one of the grandest prophecies of Messiah in the Penta-
teuch, and it comes from the mouth of a pagan unrelated to the promise.

[1] For discussion, see above, pp. 309-319.

Surely the fact that this prophecy comes from the mouth of one such as Balaam drives one to remember such verses as Isaiah 55:8:

> My thoughts are not your thoughts,
>
> Neither are your ways my ways, says Yahweh!

The remaining oracles [the rest of IV, plus v, VI and VII] detail in broad sweep the future acts of Yahweh in the deliverance of His people. Those who have cursed Israel are themselves cursed in direct fulfillment of : the primal blessing accorded the patriarchs from the time of Abraham. Israel is blessed. This fact was told to Balaam upon the occasion of his first flirtation with the elders of Moab and Midian:

> And God said to Balaam,
> Do not go with them;
> You shall not curse the people;
> For they are blessed [Num. 22:12]

In the concept of the coming Deliverer we have come to the prophecy of the *Heils* of the *Heilsgeschichte*. Certainly the later prophets of Israel, particularly Isaiah, were to be given more detailed and more complete revelation concerning the coming One. But the revelation given to Balaam is significant and stunning.[1]

We must note briefly as well that the Deliverer works deliverance for His own, and hence destruction for His enemies. With the blessing comes

[1] See J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 260, for a grief defense of the Messianic intent of Numbers 24:17.

a curse--a curse on those who are in opposition to the blessing: `

> Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
> And cursed is everyone who curses you. [Num. 24:9]

Summary

We may conclude this major section on the *Heilsgeschichte* of
the Balaam oracles by reviewing the major areas considered. We began with
a consideration of the development of the blessing of Yahweh as being the
specific contribution of the Balaam incident to Old Testament theology. The
blessing vouchsafed to Abraham was under attack in the machinations of Balak
and Balaam. God used the incident to display to Israel and to the nations
His sovereign purpose in conferring His absolute blessing on His people-.

A second major element to the *Heilsgeschichte* of the pericope
concerns those things said and implied concerning the source of blessing,
Israel's God. Properly considered, this concerns God's Name, Yahweh, and
the appellatives as well as His attributes. Those attributes which are given
special attention in the pericope include Yahweh's incomparability, His sov-
ereignty, His immutability, and His love.

The third major element in the *Heilsgeschichte* considered was
the display of the righteous acts of Yahweh. Among those acts given emphasis
are His acts relating to the spoken word, His acts and the donkey story, and
His acts as the Deliverer.

Throughout this section of the paper an attempt was made to

center attention of the Person and Act- of Yahweh, for He is the: true Mitte
of Old Testament theology.

Conclusion

In this lengthy chapter an attempt was made to display the
theology of the Balaam pericope within a framework of sound methodology
based on the exegesis and the historical and critical background of the earlier
chapters of the paper.

We need not say that within the Balaam oracles there is to be
found every element of the theology of the Pentateuch. Creation, for in-
stance, is a notable omission. But we may suggest that the oracles are
indeed a capsulization, even the quintessence, of Yahweh's relationship to
Israel. It is utterly remarkable, therefore, to repeat (again.), that the med-
iator of this revelation was one outside the congregation of Israel, without
the blessing of Israel, and apart from the God of Israel.

Throughout the account we sense polemics. There is a polemic
in Balaam's name, in the donkey episode, and in the events as a whole. Not
only is God teaching something concerning Israel, He is also teaching con-
cerning the ones who are outside of Israel The folly of attempting to come
to the will of God (or the gods;) through mantic means is everywhere demon-
strated in unforgettable terms. The most celebrated diviner of them all is
powerless in the presence of the God of Israel

There is a sense in which we may compare God's use of Salaam and His use of Cyrus. Cyrus was sovereignly ordained as an instrument of Yahweh, and this fact was revealed long before his birth by Isaiah ben Amoz. Cyrus is termed by Yahweh, "my shepherd" (Isa. 44:28), and even "his anointed" (Isa. 45:1), Yahweh's purpose in His use of Cyrus is stated fully:

> In order that you may know that it is I,
> Yahweh the God of Israel who calls you by name.
> For the sake of my servant Jacob,
> And Israel my chosen;
> I have even called you by name,
> I give you a title even though you do not know Me.
> I am Yahweh and there is no other;
> Apart from Me there is no God:
> I will gird you though you have not known Me.
>   [Isa. 45:3b-5]

Yahweh is sovereign. He uses whom He pleases, how He wills, for His own glory. Yahweh is incomparable; none may be compared to Him. Yahweh is irrevocably bound to His people by His own gracious desire. Israel rael is blessed and Yahweh the God of glory guarantees this blessing for all time.

With Balaam, with Cyrus, with Moses, with Isaiah--with all those who know anything aright about our God, we may exclaim:

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

AN APOLOGETIC AND AN APPLICATION

Introduction

At the conclusion of his immense volume on the Reformation,

Will Durant writes in capital letters:

"COURAGE, READER! WE NEAR THE END!"[1]

Durant's plan was to write but one more volume in his *History*. However, his

wife joined him in his labors, and several volumes followed. In, our present

chapter we do wish the reader courage, for we do near the end. Two items of

great importance will be sketched briefly. The brevity is not meant to suggest

unimportance, but it may betray fatigue.

An Apologetic: Balaam and the Word

The subtitle to this dissertation is, "A Pagan Diviner and the

Word of God. " In several instances in this study occasion has been taken to

remark on the fact that God sovereignly used a pagan mantic to communicate

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[1] Will Durant, The Reformation: A History of European Civilization
from Wyclif to Calvin: 1300-1564, "The Story of Civilization, " Vol. VI (New
York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 940.

His Word.

The use of Balaam in this manner has profound implications for the present crisis of the church in the issue of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. The bibliography to this thesis is replete with works touching the issue of inspiration and its corollaries. But the writer is unaware that the role of Balaam has had its proper due respecting this issue.

That the church is still in a crisis over the nature of the Bible is evident at every hand. Not only have Neo-Orthodox scholars reacted agairs t a high view of the written Word of God, but many within Evangelicalism are seeking to break the Warfieldian "shackles, " as they regard inerrancy. The most publicized expression of the crisis at the present writing, denomination ally speaking, is the fracture and power struggle within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.[1]

It is an *a priori* assumption of many that since God used men to record His revelation, His Word (though perfect in its source) was necessarily corrupted in its transmission through fallible men. Perhaps one of the most original and instructive illustrations of this point of view is given by Brunner. J. R, C. Perkin writes:

> Emil Brunner has a brilliant illustration about the Bible in Our Faith. He says it is possible to buy a record with the trade name of

[1] See, recently, E. E. Klug, "The 'Evils' of Orthodoxy," *CT*, XVII (February 2, 1973). The debate between Synod President Preus and (St. Louis) Seminary President Tietjen has been aired widely in the secular and the church press.

"His Master's Voice, " and be told that if you play it you will hear the master, Caruso's, voice. So you will, or at least you will hear a record of it; but there will be other noises as well. The needle may scratch the record, and it is possible to concentrate so fiercely on the scratching that the effect of the master's voice is completely lost on you. Perhaps we may extend the illustration a little to complete the picture. If the needle does scratch slightly, there is not much to worry about, but if the scratching is really bad, there is no point in saying that it is a good record; far better admit that the master's voice can be heard despite the recording.[1]

In our age of high fidelity, stereophonic (and quadraphonic:) sound, the suggestion of a scratchy needle on an old-fashioned 78 RPM recording is quite apt. But it is appropriate as an illustration of the phenomanon of Biblical authority only if Balaam is forgotten.

For in the figure of Balaam we have the absolute negation of Brunner's illustration. If we were to catalogue the men (and women:) used by God in transmitting His revelation, we would not be able to find one less likely than Balaam. He is the least probable of the prophets. His character flaws are so manifest that he was denounced, even excoriated, by three different writers in the New Testament as the paradigm of the false teacher. He was not a part of Israelite prophetism, in the strict sense, nor was he a believer in the God of Israel, in a saving sense. Balaam died as an enemy of Israel in the enemy camp--hostile to the people blessed of God to the end.

Knowing our own weaknesses we may grant the possibility of flaws in the personal lives of the greatest of the prophets (excepting only

[1] J. R C. Perkin, "Inspiration, " *BQ*, XVI (1962), pp. 275-76.

our impeccable Lord!). But in the case of Balaam it is difficult to find any-thing right.

Nevertheless, when Balaam speaks the Word of God---he does just that: *the Word of God*. The corrupted nature of Balaam *leaves no scratch* on the record of the Word of God. Note again the insistence throughout the, narrative on the fact that Balaam could not alter the words God gave him. Numbers 22:20:

"but only the word which I speak to you shall you da"

Numbers 22:39:

"the word that God puts in my mouth, that I will speak."

Numbers 2 3:3

"perhaps Yahweh will come to me, and whatever He shows me
I will tell you."

Numbers 23:5:

Then Yahweh put a word in Balaam's mouth and said,
"Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus."

Numbers 23:12:

"Must I not be careful to speak what Yahweh puts in my mouth?"

Numbers 23:16:

Then Yahweh met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said,
"Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

Numbers 23:17:

And Balak said to him,
"What has Yahweh spoken?"

Numbers 23:26:

"Did I not tell you, whatever Yahweh speaks, that I must do?"

Numbers 24:2:

And the Spirit of God came upon him.

Numbers 24:4:

The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of Shaddai.

Numbers 24:12-13:

"Did I not tell your messengers . . .
I could not do anything contrary to the mouth of Yahweh,
either good or bad, of my own heart.
What Yahweh speaks, that I will speak?"

Numbers 24:16:

The oracle of him who hears the words of God,
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
And sees the vision of Shaddai.

This list of verses within the brief compass of throe chapters
is staggering indeed. An observable phenomenon in Scripture is the employ-
ment of repetition for emphasis. The intent of this passage respecting Balaam's
relationship to the Word of God is stressed so highly, one wonders how it has
been missed by so many. The point is quite clear. Even a very wicked in-
dividual causes no scratch on the record of His Master's voice, when the
Master is using him in a sovereign manner.

Now, this is not a retreat to a supposed dictation theory (if
there ever was such!). The personality of Balaam is evident in word choice,

in parallel synonyms, in meter, in form and structure. But his personality causes *no scratch*. Although he was a polytheist, the oracles are mono-theistic. Even though he was engaging in mantic acts awaiting his revelation, his oracles betray none of the foolishness of the East. Despite his hatred of Israel (manifested in the events of Numbers 25), his oracles could not be more favorable to the descendants of Jacob. There is no scratch. Look where one might within the oracle corpus--the fidelity is the highest, the sound is pure. Listen again to his unwilling testimony:

> *I could not do anything contrary to the mouth of Yahweh,*
> *either good or bad; of my own heart.*   [Num. 24:13]

The inerrant character of the Word of God is not endangered by the corruption of man--it is firmly rooted in the character of God. This too is the testimony of Balaam:

> God is not a man that He is able to. lie,
> Nor a son of man that He is able to repent. [Num. 23:19]

Yahweh has bound His Word to His character. "The master's voice" in this instance is a voice of a Master whose sound will be heard aright. And the story of the ever-enigmatic Balaam, with all its bristling problems, may well be one of the strongest contextual arguments for the inerrancy of God's Word.

An Application: Balaam and the Ministry

A second significant element implied in the subtitle of the

dissertation, "A Pagan Diviner and the Word of God, " concerns the relation-

.hip Balaam bears to the issue of the Christian ministry. It is sometimes

said that God never uses an unclean vessel. Perhaps one might say that:

God rarely uses unclean vessels, but one cannot say that God never does

so--not if one remembers the account of Balaam.

This appears to indicate that our success syndrome is wrongly

directed. A given minister of God's word may have blessing and success

simply because God is honoring His word, and not necessarily because He

is honoring the man.

The fate of a Balaam is beyond comprehension. Perhaps the

" Balaam of the Numbers account will not be the only one who died in an enemy

camp having never been related to the God whose word he communicated to

others.

The story of Balaam tells us a great deal about the nature of

our God. It also puts a mirror beside ourselves.

"Donkey's Delight"

by

C. S. Lewis (d. 1963)

Ten mortal months I courted
     A girl with bright hair,
Unswerving in my service
     As the old lovers were.
Almost she had learned to call me
     Her dear love. But then,
One moment changed the omens,
     She was cold again.
For carelessly, unfairly,
     With one glance of his eyes,
A gay, light-hearted sailor
     Bore away the prize,
Unbought, which I had sought with
     Many gifts and sighs.
In stern disdain I turned to
     The Muses' service then,
To seek how the unspeakable
     Could be fixed by a pen,
Not to flinch though the ink that
     I must use, they said,
Was my dearest blood, nearest
     My heart, the richest red.
I obeyed them, I made them
     Many a costly lay,
Till carelessly, unfairly,
     A boy passed that way
Who set ringing with his singing
     All the fields and lanes;
They gave him their favour,
     Lost, were all my pains.

Then I passed to a Master
      Who is higher in repute,
Trusting to find justice
      At the world's root.
With rigid fast and vigil,
      Silence, and shirt of hair,
The narrow way to Paradise
      I walked with care.
But carelessly, unfairly,
      At the eleventh hour there came,
Reckless and feckless,
      Without a single claim,
A dare--devil, a ne'er-do-well
      Who smelled of shag and gin;
Before me (and far warmer
      Was his welcome) he went in.

I stood still in the chill
      Of the Great Morning,
Aghast, Then at last
      --Oh, I was late learning--
I repented, I entered
      Into the excellent joke,'
The absurdity. My burden
      Rolled off as I brokeI
Into laughter; and soon after
      I had found my own level;
With Balaam's Ass daily
      Out at grass I revel,
Now playing, now braying
      Over the meadows of light,
Our soaring, creaking Gloria,
      Our donkey's delight.[1]

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Poems*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), pp. 29-31.

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