

# Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 16, Balaam, Deuteronomy: Covenant and Land

## Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

### 1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 16, Balaam, Deuteronomy: Covenant and Land, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcription of a lecture on the Old Testament books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. **Dr. Hildebrandt** discusses key themes in Numbers, including **God's faithfulness contrasted with Israel's unfaithfulness, the nature of prayer, and the story of Balaam and his talking donkey**. He then **analyzes Balaam's character**, exploring his shifting morality. Finally, he **examines Deuteronomy as a covenant renewal**, focusing on themes of **promise and possession, space and place**, and the **significance of remembering the past**. He uses the **Hittite treaty format** to argue for the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, contrasting it with later Assyrian treaties.

**2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).**



**Hildebrandt\_OTLit\_  
Session 16.mp3**

### 3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 16, Balaam, Deuteronomy: Covenant and Land

#### Old Testament Study Guide: Balaam, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the distinction between a complaint and a lament in the context of biblical expression?
2. Why did Balak, the king of Moab, seek out Balaam from Mesopotamia instead of using local prophets?
3. In the Book of Numbers, is Balaam portrayed as good or bad, and how does this compare with his portrayal in the New Testament?
4. What is significant about the donkey speaking to Balaam in Numbers?
5. What does Balaam's second oracle reveal about God's nature, and how does it address the question of whether God changes His mind?
6. How does Balaam's prophecy in his third oracle connect to the Messianic prophecies in the Bible?
7. How did Balaam ultimately lead the Israelites to sin, according to Numbers 25 and 31?
8. What is covenant renewal, and how does the book of Deuteronomy function as a covenant renewal?
9. What are the key differences between "space" and "place" as described in relation to the Israelites' journey, and what do these terms represent?
10. Why does Deuteronomy emphasize that the Israelites did not earn the Promised Land, and how is the land presented as a gift?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. A complaint is a movement away from God, expressing discontent and a desire to leave God, while a lament is a movement towards God, wrestling with Him in the midst of suffering and pleading for His intervention. They can use the same words, but the direction of the heart differs.

2. Balak sought out Balaam because Balaam was a prophet from Mesopotamia known to have a powerful connection to Yahweh, the God of Israel, suggesting that other nations recognized Yahweh's power and the efficacy of Balaam's curses/blessings.
3. In Numbers, Balaam is initially portrayed as good, faithfully delivering God's messages, but he is portrayed as a traitor and apostate in the New Testament for leading Israel into sin. He is like Judas, initially a faithful follower, and then one who turned away.
4. The donkey speaks to Balaam to reveal Balaam's spiritual blindness because while he is a seer of God, he is unable to see the angel of the Lord when a donkey could. It highlights that the animal had more spiritual perception than the seer.
5. Balaam's second oracle declares that God does not lie or change His mind, emphasizing God's commitment to His promises and His unchanging character. This addresses God's changing course, suggesting that God is a promise keeper and consistent in his nature.
6. In his third oracle, Balaam speaks of a king whose kingdom will be exalted and who is greater than Agag, the human king, which is interpreted as a messianic reference, and also speaks of the coming of a star, paralleling the star associated with Jesus' birth.
7. Balaam advised the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men into sexual immorality and pagan worship, leading them into sin and bringing God's judgment on the people.
8. A covenant renewal is the reaffirmation of a previous covenant, or agreement, between God and his people, typically passed down through generations. Deuteronomy serves as a covenant renewal as Moses passes the responsibilities to Joshua.
9. Space represents chaos, wandering, hardship, and a lack of belonging, while place represents home, rest, belonging, and stability. The wilderness is space, and the promised land is place.
10. Deuteronomy emphasizes that the Israelites did not earn the land through their righteousness but that it was given as a gift due to God's promise to their ancestors and due to the wickedness of the nations already living there.

## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the portrayal of Balaam in the Book of Numbers with his portrayal in the New Testament. How can these contrasting images be reconciled and what do they reveal about the nature of faith and apostasy?
2. Analyze the significance of the concept of "space" and "place" in the book of Deuteronomy. How does the transition from "space" to "place" shape Israel's identity and relationship with God?
3. Explore the implications of the idea that the Promised Land is a gift and not earned by the Israelites. How does this concept challenge or inform ideas about merit, effort, and God's grace?
4. Discuss the J.E.D.P. theory and its implications for the authorship of the Pentateuch, focusing specifically on Deuteronomy. How do Hittite treaties provide an alternative perspective on the dating and authorship of Deuteronomy?
5. Evaluate the role of memory and remembrance in the book of Deuteronomy. How does Moses encourage the Israelites to remember their past, and what is the importance of these memories for their future?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Complaint:** In a biblical context, it's an expression of discontent and disillusionment with God, indicating a movement away from Him.
- **Lament:** In a biblical context, it's a passionate expression of grief and pain directed toward God, indicating a movement towards Him in the midst of suffering.
- **Oracle:** A prophetic message or declaration given by God through a prophet.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.
- **Apostate:** One who abandons their religious faith or principles.
- **Covenant Renewal:** A formal reaffirmation or reestablishment of a covenant (agreement), often passed down through generations.
- **Space:** In the context of Deuteronomy, it represents chaos, wandering, transient existence, and the absence of a sense of belonging.
- **Place:** In the context of Deuteronomy, it signifies home, rest, permanence, and a sense of belonging and stability.
- **J.E.D.P. Theory:** A theory proposing that the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) were compiled from four different sources, the J, E, D, and P writers.
- **Historical Prologue:** A section in ancient treaties that recounts the past acts of kindness or benevolence done by a king towards a vassal.
- **Stipulations:** The conditions, laws, or requirements laid out in a treaty or covenant that must be followed by the parties involved.
- **Benevolences:** acts of kindness, help, and favor

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt:

### **Briefing Document: Analysis of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's Lecture 16 on Balaam, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**

#### **I. Overview**

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt explores several key topics in the Old Testament, moving from an examination of the figure of Balaam in the Book of Numbers to a broader consideration of the Book of Deuteronomy as a covenant renewal. He emphasizes the complexities of biblical figures, the importance of God's promises, and the significance of the land for the Israelites. The lecture also touches on the JEDP theory of authorship of the Pentateuch and compares biblical covenant structures to Hittite and Assyrian treaties, arguing that the structure of Deuteronomy is best explained by a Mosaic authorship.

#### **II. Key Themes and Ideas**

- **Complaint vs. Lament:**
- Dr. Hildebrandt distinguishes between complaint and lament. Both may use strong words expressing sorrow or frustration, but they differ in their direction.
- **Complaint:** "a movement away from God" expressing a rejection of God.
- **Lament:** "a wrestling with God," a plea for God's presence and help.
- Quote: "Complaint is a movement away from God ... Lament is a movement towards God."
- **Balaam: A Complex Character:**
- Balaam is presented as a prophet from Mesopotamia who knows Yahweh (Jehovah) and initially follows God's commands, but later becomes a traitor.
- He is initially obedient to God, refusing to curse Israel, and even utters several blessings on the nation.
- His tension lies between proclaiming God's word and pursuing wealth.
- Dr. Hildebrandt likens Balaam to Judas, who was initially one of the twelve disciples and was considered good before betraying Jesus.

- Quote: "Balaam is the Judas of the Old Testament ... He is portrayed as both a saint and as a sinner."
- Balaam's name means "destroyer" and an inscription with his name was found in Deir Alla, Jordan, dating from 800 BC confirming him as a "divine seer."
- Balaam's downfall involved his advice to the Moabites to seduce Israelite men, leading to idolatry and a plague.
- Quote: "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord's people."
- The speaker suggests that the story initially has a positive spin on Balaam to provide a contrast to the negative actions of the Israelites.
- **The Power of God and Blessings:**
- Dr. Hildebrandt argues that God has the power to curse, not Balaam.
- When Balak wants Balaam to curse Israel, God forces Balaam to bless them instead.
- Quote: "Who can curse but Yahweh? Jehovah is the only one who can curse. I can't curse."
- **God's Character and Promises:**
- God is a promise keeper; His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be fulfilled, even after centuries.
- God's character, including his righteousness, justice, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, and wrath, does not change.
- While God can express Himself in different ways, he always keeps his promises.
- There are conditional statements with God, such that the future is not all pre-determined and depends on people's reactions.
- Quote: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"
- The speaker believes it is OK to disagree about free will and predestination.

- Balaam's third oracle mentions a king greater than Agag. He is contrasting God as king with a human king. In the fourth oracle he connects a star coming from Jacob and a scepter rising from Israel with the king (Jesus) at Jesus's birth
- **Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal:**
  - Deuteronomy is presented as a covenant renewal between God and the Israelites, with Moses passing the leadership baton to Joshua.
  - The book is a generational passing, where Moses reviews the covenant before the Israelites enter the Promised Land, which was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
  - The transition is also a shift from promise to possession, where the Israelites will finally take ownership of the land promised to their ancestors.
- **Space vs. Place:**
  - **Space:** is associated with chaos, hardship, transientness, and the wilderness; a place where one does not belong
  - **Place:** signifies home, belonging, rest, and permanence; associated with the promised land
  - The wilderness represents "space," while the Promised Land is "place," a concept drawn from Walter Brueggemann's work.
- **Significance of "Where":**
  - The "where" question shapes how people act and feel. The places one grows up in and dwells in can shape a person.
  - The speaker shares an anecdote about a student who struggled in his study of the Bible after witnessing a shooting in Chicago.
  - The "where" of a person's life shapes who they are, and that history must be integrated rather than rejected or forgotten.
  - Quote: "Where you are shapes how you act."
- **The Land as a Gift:**
  - The land is not earned but is a gift from God, given due to the wickedness of the Canaanite nations, not Israel's righteousness.



- It is a land filled with cities, houses, wells, vineyards, and olive groves that the Israelites did not build or plant, given by God as a gift.
- The Israelites are warned against forgetting the Lord who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. They need to remember their roots.
- The descendants get the land as a gift, and may not appreciate it as much as their parents did in waiting for it. The land is an inter-generational thing.
- Quote: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers... a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build...then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord..."
- **God's Chosen Place:**
  - God will choose a specific place in Israel to put his name, which eventually becomes Jerusalem.
  - The people are to remember where they came from, and not forget their identity as people redeemed from slavery in Egypt.
  - Remembrance is a basis for praise.
- **Authorship of Deuteronomy and the JEDP Theory:**
  - The lecture addresses the JEDP theory, which posits that the Pentateuch was written by multiple authors over time and not just Moses.
  - The "D" document is posited by the theory to have been written by Josiah in 620 BC and presented to be a document written by Moses in 1200-1400 BC. The speaker calls this a "Pious Fraud."
  - However, Dr. Hildebrandt argues against this theory by comparing the structure of Deuteronomy to Hittite treaties from 1200 BC (the time of Moses), and contrasting that to Assyrian treaties from 700 BC (the time of Josiah).
  - Hittite treaties included a preamble, a historical prologue (telling of the king's benevolence), stipulations, witnesses, blessings and curses.
  - Assyrian treaties included a preamble, stipulations, witnesses, and curses, but no historical prologue or blessings.
  - The speaker demonstrates that Deuteronomy fits the structure of the Hittite treaties and, therefore, that it could have been written by Moses in 1200 BC.

- Quote: "There is a really pretty strong argument for Deuteronomy being from the time of Moses."

### **III. Conclusion**

Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture is a detailed analysis of key themes and figures in the Old Testament. He emphasizes the complexities of biblical characters such as Balaam, stresses the importance of God's promises and character, and highlights the significance of the land to the Israelites. Additionally, he provides a compelling argument for Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy based on a comparison of biblical texts with ancient treaty forms. The lecture encourages students to reflect on their own "where," to integrate their past, and to remember God's faithfulness.

Let me know if you need more information on a specific aspect of the lecture.

## 5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 16, Balaam, Deuteronomy: Covenant and Land, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted using markdown:

### FAQ

1. **What is the key distinction between a complaint and a lament in the context of biblical texts?**
  - While both complaints and laments may use similar strong language expressing distress or questioning God (like, "My God, why have you forsaken me?"), a complaint signifies a movement *away* from God, a rejection. In contrast, a lament is a wrestling *towards* God, an appeal for His intervention, indicating a desire to remain in relationship with Him.
1. **Who was Balaam, and why was he significant?**
  - Balaam was a foreign prophet from Mesopotamia, known for his ability to curse and bless people. He was called upon by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, who were approaching Moab. Although he was a pagan prophet, he is portrayed as knowing and acknowledging the God of Israel, Yahweh. He is significant because he ultimately is more faithful to God's directives than Israel is, and is portrayed initially as good, then as a traitor.
1. **How does the book of Numbers portray Balaam's character, and how does that differ from his portrayal in the New Testament?**
  - In Numbers, Balaam initially appears faithful to God, refusing to curse Israel and even delivering four prophetic oracles that bless them. However, in the New Testament, specifically in Jude and Revelation, Balaam is portrayed as a traitor, an apostate, akin to Judas Iscariot. He is ultimately responsible for leading the Israelites into sin through the Moabite women. This dual portrayal highlights a transformation from perceived faithfulness to ultimate betrayal.

**1. What is the significance of the red heifer in Jewish tradition, and how does it relate to the idea of cleansing?**

- The red heifer, as described in Numbers 19, is crucial for purification rituals. Its ashes, mixed with water, are used to cleanse both objects and people. The presence of a red heifer in modern-day Israel is considered significant, particularly in anticipation of the construction of the Third Temple. Cleansing is very important in the bible and is done by both blood and water.

**1. What is the central theme of the book of Deuteronomy, and what is "covenant renewal?"**

- Deuteronomy serves as a covenant renewal. It involves Moses passing on the leadership to Joshua and reminding the Israelites of their responsibilities under the covenant God made with them. The idea of covenant renewal refers to the reaffirmation and continuation of the promises and obligations of the covenant from one generation to the next. The book addresses the shift from God's promise to their actual possession of the promised land.

**1. How does the lecture explain the concepts of "space" and "place" in relation to the Israelite experience?**

- "Space" is characterized by chaos, transience, and wandering, exemplified by the Israelites' time in the wilderness. It's a state where they don't belong. In contrast, "place" represents home, belonging, and permanence, which is the Promised Land, a location where they can find rest. The transition from space to place is a major theme.

**1. Why does the lecture emphasize that the land is a gift, not deserved by the Israelites?**

- The lecture stresses that the Promised Land is not given to the Israelites because of their own righteousness but because of the wickedness of the nations they are displacing. It was a gift given to them based on the promises God made to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Israelites didn't build the cities or cultivate the land, which emphasizes the land as an unearned gift. The purpose was to have the Israelites remember their former slavery and how God delivered them.

1. **How does the lecture use the Hittite and Assyrian treaty forms to support the authorship of Deuteronomy?**
  - The lecture uses a comparison of Hittite and Assyrian treaty forms to argue that Deuteronomy's structure aligns more closely with the Hittite treaties of 1200 BC, the time of Moses, than the Assyrian treaties from the time of Josiah. Hittite treaties include a preamble, a historical prologue of benevolence, stipulations, witnesses, and both blessings and curses. Assyrian treaties lack a historical prologue and blessings and focus mainly on threats of curses. Deuteronomy's structure aligns with the Hittite format, suggesting it was written much earlier than the JEDP theory suggests.