

## ISRAEL ALL ALONE!

Tucked away in the Old Testament is a unique prophecy in Numbers 23:9 that says Israel is destined to be ALONE.

### **Numbers 23:9 (NKJV)**

**9** For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

Israel has always been the most unique nation in the world. God says to them, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). They alone are the God-chosen nation. In the Old Testament God referred to Israel as His “chosen” people (Deuteronomy 7:6); His “special treasure” (Psalm 135:4), and the “apple of His eye” (Zechariah 2:8). No other people ever heard God speak to them collectively as they did (cf. Deut. 4:33; 5:26). Israel uniquely received the “oracles” (utterances) of God (Rom. 3:2). Israel uniquely was in covenant relationship with God (Ex. 19-24) and uniquely will yet see the fulfillment of all the promises God made in the Abrahamic covenant – including the land promises (Gen. 12:1-7).

In a very real way, it has always been Israel versus the world. In blessing Israel dominated the Gentiles around them, but then when Israel sinfully transgressed the covenant God allowed the Gentiles to abuse and dominate Israel. Jesus said that Jerusalem would be “trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Lk. 21:24).

One of the strangest prophets in the world was a false prophet named Balaam. We read about him in Numbers 22-24.

In reality Balaam according to Josh. 13:22 was a soothsayer. He was a false prophet who was in it for money. In reality he dabbled in what we would call the occult – the dark side of the spirit world. He trafficked with all kinds of demons in the spirit world and claimed to be able to predict the future as well as bless and curse. He was called a “seer” which is one who supposedly can see the future or make predictions, supposedly having special powers of divination (cf. a psychic, crystal gazer, or palm reader).

In Numbers king Balak called Balaam to come and curse Israel for him. God told Balaam not to go and that the people Israel are blessed and not to be cursed. Balaam still wanted to go and after a dramatic encounter with the

Angel of the LORD, God told him that he could only say the word that God gave him to say.

It seems to me that this is the ONE-point Balaam really took to heart. His life was on the line if he didn't say exactly what God told him.

But foolish as he was, he thought he could still manipulate his way around that boundary and went forward to try and curse Israel anyway.

On first glance it might appear that Balaam actually knew the Lord, for he uses the name YHWH. However, an inductive study seems to show he was into all kinds of "gods". In this case he was seeking to divine the God of Israel to the end he might curse Israel. He was really trying to use Israel's God against Israel, but in fact it will be the God of Israel who uses him contrary to himself. Amazingly, God gave us some profound prophecies through this false prophet in spite of himself.

There are times in the Bible when God revealed Himself to unbelieving Gentile leaders. For example, God revealed himself to Abimelech in Abraham's time (Gen. 20:6-7); to Pharaoh in dreams (Gen. 41:25); and to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and visions (cf. Dan. 4:1-18). God is sovereign over all and He can sovereignly work even through unbelievers if He so chooses to do so.

As Balak was expecting Balaam to curse Israel God caused Balaam to prophetically say...

### **Numbers 23:8 (NKJV)**

**8** "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?"

Balaam was forced to admit that it is impossible to curse or denounce Israel because God has not done so. They are a blessed people who cannot be cursed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17-18). Furthermore, he also prophesied....

### **Numbers 23:9 (NKJV)**

**9** For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations.

Balaam prophetically saw Israel to be people set apart – distinct from all the other nations of the world. Their relationship with God is unique setting them off from all the other nations of the world.

In many respects it has always been Israel against the world and that reality continues to this very day. Israel is completely unique among all the nations of the world. They are a “people dwelling alone”. Israel doesn’t want to be alone, but they continually end up in that position.

And try as hard as they may Israel continues to be a people, “Not reckoning itself among the nations.” They just don’t fit in!

Balaam then prophesied...

### **Numbers 23:10 (NKJV)**

**10** “Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!”

Wow! Here is a guy who had tried his hardest to curse Israel and now he wishes he could have part in their destiny. This by the way is a wish that was not granted. In chapter 31:8 we find that Israel killed Balaam with the sword.

Balaam in this oracle was essentially forced to say 3 things.

1. Israel can’t be cursed because God has not cursed them.
2. Israel is uniquely blessed and set apart from all the nations of the world.
3. Israel’s destiny is so great that Balaam wished he could share in it.

Try as hard as he could, Balaam could not find a way to curse Israel. In the end the great explanation for Israel is YHWH – the covenant God of Israel! Try as hard as they might the entire world rallied against Israel (which is where it ultimately goes) cannot do away with Israel. It is impossible to curse a God-blessed people.

Israel is ALONE among the nations, but YHWH God preserves them in spite of themselves and in spite of what the world throws at them. NOTHING can prevent or stop what God has ordained for Israel – the most unique God-blessed nation in the world. In this Israel STANDS ALONE and STANDS singularly because of YHWH – the covenant God of ISRAEL.

Balaam learned the hard way – Israel’s story is really a GOD-STORY and nothing can stop what God has preordained.

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