

and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him (40). In this context the Hebrew word zabah (here translated 'offered') would be better rendered 'killed,' as in Dt. xii.15,21; 1 Sa.xxviii.24; 2 Ch.xviii.2; Ezk,xxxiv.3; or 'slew' as in 1 Ki.i.9,19,25, xix.21; and 2 Ki.xxiii.20. While the word most commonly indicates a sacrifice, it does not always do so. Balak simply gave a feast to celebrate Balaam's coming.

XV. THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM. xxii.41-xxiv.24

Four times Balaam declared the word of God, stating exactly the message that God gave him, even though it wrecked his opportunity to secure the rich rewards which Balak offered for cursing Israel. After each of the first two utterances, Balak took Balaam to a different place, thinking that this might change the spell and make it possible for Balaam to fulfill his desire. Each time Balaam insisted that he could say nothing but the word which the Lord would give him. After the third utterance Balak in disgust told him to desist, and neither bless nor curse Israel; yet Balaam proceeded to deliver a fourth message, this time not merely blessing Israel, but declaring the ultimate doom of Balak's people at Israel's hand. The outline of these eight sections follows, with occasional remarks on special points of interest or difficulty.

a. Introduction to the first utterance (xxii.41-xxiii.6)

This introduction sets the pattern for the next two. Balak takes Balaam to a certain place (xxii.41,xxiii.13-14a,xxiii.27-28). Seven altars are built and appropriate sacrifices offered on them (xxiii.1-2,14b,29-30). Balaam tells Balak to stand by his burnt offering while he goes a distance away (xxiii.3,15). Balaam receives a message from the Lord and returns to Balak (xxiii.5,16), and finds Balak and the princes of Moab standing by the burnt offering (xxiii.6,17). The departure and return are not repeated before the third utterance, as explained in xxiv.1.