

Nehemiah 13:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

Analysis

Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

This verse within Nehemiah 13 addresses themes of reform, confronting compromise, vigilance, finishing well. Nehemiah's return from Persia reveals backsliding, requiring renewed reforms in areas previously addressed—showing constant vigilance's necessity. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah's final reforms address recurring covenant violations, demonstrating the ongoing challenge of maintaining spiritual commitment across generations. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the

people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does regular engagement with Scripture transform understanding of God and His will for your life?
2. What specific commitments do you need to make (or renew) regarding Bible reading, worship, and obedience?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	לֹא	קָדַם וְ	אֶת	בְּנֵי י	יִשְׂרָאֵל	בֶּלֶם
H3588	H3808	Because they met	H853	not the children	of Israel	with bread
		H6923		H1121	H3478	H3899
וּבְמַיִם	וַיִּשְׂכֹּר	עַל יוֹ	אֶת	בְּלָעָם		
and with water	but hired	H5921	H853	Balaam		
H4325	H7936			H1109		
		לְקַלֵּל וְ	וַהֲפֹךְ	אֶלֶּה יִנּוּ	הַקְּלָלָה	
		against them that he should curse	turned	them howbeit our God	the curse	
		H7043	H2015	H430	H7045	
		לְבִרְכָּהּ:				
		into a blessing				
		H1293				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:5 (Sin): Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.

Psalms 109:28 (Blessing): Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.

Matthew 25:40 (Parallel theme): And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Micah 6:5 (Parallel theme): O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Numbers 23:18 (Parallel theme): And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

