

Numbers 22:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

Analysis

Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave—Balaam initially obeyed God's prohibition (v. 12). The Hebrew יָנָן (*mē'ēn*, "refuseth") is emphatic: Yahweh absolutely denied permission. Yet Balaam's wording is telling: he told Balak's princes "the LORD refuseth," not "I refuse" or "God forbids this sin." His passive construction reveals divided loyalty—technically obedient while leaving the door open for negotiation.

Ancient Near Eastern prophets were often hired for divination or curses, making Balaam's profession lucrative but spiritually compromised. His reluctance to definitively reject Balak foreshadows his eventual capitulation when the offer increases.

Historical Context

In the 13th century BC, professional diviners like Balaam were common throughout Mesopotamia and the Levant. Kings regularly employed them for blessing armies or cursing enemies. Balaam's international reputation (he lived in Pethor near the Euphrates, ~400 miles from Moab) indicates he was considered exceptionally powerful.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. When you technically obey God while leaving room for future compromise, what does that reveal about your heart?
2. How does framing God's clear "no" as merely His current position (rather than absolute truth) open you to temptation?
3. What professional or financial opportunities tempt you to negotiate with God's clear commands?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּקָם	בַּלְעָם	בַּבֹּקֶר	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵל	שָׁרֵי	בְּלִי קַ
rose up	And Balaam	in the morning	and said	H413	unto the princes	of Balak
H6965	H1109	H1242	H559		H8269	H1111
לָהֵלֵךְ	אֵל	אֶרְצְךָ	כִּי	יִמָּאֵן	יְהוָה	לִתְּתִי
to go	H413	you into your land	H3588	refuseth	for the LORD	to give me leave
H1980		H776	H3985	H3068		H5414
לָהֵלֵךְ	עִמָּכֶם:					
to go	H5973					
H1980						

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