

Numbers 22:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

Analysis

Balaam refuseth to come with us—The princes misrepresented Balaam to Balak. He didn't say "I refuse"; he said "the LORD refuseth." This subtle distortion shows how half-hearted obedience gets misinterpreted. Balaam's ambiguous response—neither burning Balak's bridges nor fully honoring God—created confusion.

The princes' report omitted God entirely, reducing a theological matter to Balaam's personal preference. This secular framing would prompt Balak to try again with greater incentives, exactly what a greedy prophet might hope for. Balaam's failure to clearly witness to Yahweh's sovereignty made him appear merely difficult to persuade, not bound by divine command.

Historical Context

In ancient diplomacy, messengers were expected to report verbatim. The princes' abbreviated message suggests they either didn't understand or deliberately simplified Balaam's response, perhaps assuming Balak could overcome religious scruples with better compensation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. When others misrepresent your obedience to God as personal preference, have you made God's authority clear enough?
2. How does ambiguous witness to God's commands invite others to test your resolve with greater temptations?
3. What would change if you explained God's prohibitions as His sovereign will rather than your reluctance?

Interlinear Text

בְּלִקְרָבְנָא מִזְרָחָה
unto Balak
H1111

וְיָבָא אֶל שְׂרֵךְ
and they went
H935

מִזְרָחָה
of Moab
H4124

וְיָבָא אֶל שְׂרֵךְ
And the princes
H8269

וְיָבָא אֶל שְׂרֵךְ
rose up
H6965

עָמַד בְּלִעְמָד מִאָמָר
to come
H1980

בְּלִעְמָד מִאָמָר
Balaam
H1109

וְיָבָא אֶל שְׂרֵךְ
refuseth
H3985

וְיָבָא אֶל שְׂרֵךְ
and said
H559