

Numbers 22:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me:

Analysis

The angel rebuked Balaam: 'Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me.' God's messenger identified Balaam's path as 'perverse' (Hebrew 'yarat', headlong, reckless), indicating his journey opposed God's will despite having divine permission (v.20). This paradox shows that God sometimes permits paths He doesn't prefer, testing whether we'll pursue technical permission or His true pleasure.

Historical Context

Though God told Balaam 'go with them' (v.20), He also added conditions ('only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak'). Balaam pursued the opportunity while ignoring the limitations, showing how we can obey the letter while violating the spirit of God's word.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. When have you pursued God's permission while ignoring His clear preference and restrictions?
2. How do you discern between what God permits and what He positively desires for you?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵלָיו	מֵלַאךְ הַ	יְהוָה הַ	עַל	מָה הַ
said	H413	And the angel	of the LORD	H5921	H4100
H559		H4397	H3068		
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הֵכָּיִת	אֶתְ	אֶתְ נֶגְ	זֶה	שְׁלֹשׁ	
unto him	Wherefore hast thou smitten	H853	thine ass	H2088	these three
H5221			H860		H7969
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רָגַל יָם	הֵי הַ	אֲנֹכִי	יָצָאתִי	לִשְׁטֹן	כִּי
times	H2009	H595	behold I went out	to withstand	H3588
H7272			H3318	H7854	is perverse
					H3399
<hr/>					
הָדָרְךָ	לִפְנֵיךָ:				
thee because thy way	H5048				
H1870					

Additional Cross-References

Acts 13:10 (References Lord): And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Proverbs 28:18 (Parallel theme): Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

Numbers 22:22 (References Lord): And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

Proverbs 14:2 (References Lord): He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Proverbs 28:6 (Parallel theme): Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

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