

Numbers 22:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

Analysis

The angel explained the donkey 'turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.' The animal's disobedience saved Balaam's life, while his insistence on his own way nearly killed him. This inversion of expected values—faithful animal preserving obstinate prophet—demonstrates how God's protection sometimes comes through what we perceive as obstacles and frustrations.

Historical Context

The three turnings corresponded to three increasing intensities of the angel's opposition, with the final incident cornering Balaam against a wall. God's escalating warnings paralleled Balaam's escalating stubbornness, showing divine patience even with rebellious servants.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How might current frustrations and obstacles actually be God's merciful protection from worse danger?
2. What does it mean when even your means of transportation seems to resist your chosen direction?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּרָא נִי	וְהָאֵת אֵן	נָטַתָּה	מִפָּנַי	זֶה	שְׁלֹשָׁה	רַגְלַיִם
saw	And the ass	me and turned	from me	H2088	these three	times
H7200	H860	H5186	H6440		H7969	H7272
אֲלֵי	נָטַתָּה	מִפָּנַי	כִּי	עַתָּה	גַּם	אֶתְּךָ
unless	me and turned	from me	H3588	H6258	H1571	H853
H194	H5186	H6440				
הֲבֵן גִּתִּי	וְאַתָּה	הִחַיֵּיתִי				
surely now also I had slain	H853	thee and saved her alive				
H2026		H2421				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 14:37 (Parallel theme): Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.