

# Numbers 22:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him.

## Analysis

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**And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him**—Balak's sacrificial offerings (**זָבֵךְ** zavach, to slaughter for sacrifice) attempted to curry divine favor for the cursing mission, treating Israel's God as manageable through ritual manipulation. The phrase **sent to Balaam** (**שָׁלַח** **לְבִלְעָם** shalach le-Bil'am) indicates portions were delivered as honor-gifts, binding the prophet through hospitality obligations.

This verse illustrates pagan misunderstanding of Yahweh—Balak assumed Israel's God operated like territorial deities who could be bribed or manipulated through sacrifices. The biblical response throughout Balaam's oracles consistently demonstrates that God cannot be bought, controlled, or turned against His covenant people. Paganism offers sacrifices to control gods; biblical faith offers sacrifices in submission to God's sovereign will.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern religion treated deities as negotiable powers manipulable through proper rituals and payments. Kings routinely hired prophets and diviners (like Balaam) to pronounce blessings or curses, viewing spiritual power as purchasable commodity. Israel's God consistently defied these assumptions.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How do contemporary Christians sometimes treat God like Balak did—attempting to manipulate blessing through religious performance?
2. What does Balak's assumption that sacrifices could buy God's cooperation teach about pagan versus biblical worship?
3. How can you examine your prayers and giving to ensure they reflect submission to God's will rather than attempts to control outcomes?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיְשַׁלֵּח בְּלָע מִלְשָׁרִים לְבָלָע וְלְאַשְׁר יְמִינֵי בְּלָע  
offered And Balak oxen and sheep and sent to Balaam and to the princes  
H2076 H1111 H1241 H6629 H7971 H1109 H8269

אֲשֶׁר אֶתְתָּךְ  
H834 H854

## Additional Cross-References

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**Numbers 23:14** (Parallel theme): And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

**Proverbs 1:16** (Parallel theme): For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

