

# Numbers 23:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

## Analysis

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Balaam's instruction to Balak—"Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams"—establishes elaborate ritual preparation before attempting prophecy. The number seven signifies completeness in Hebrew thought. Balaam sought to create favorable conditions for receiving an oracle, mixing pagan divination techniques with Yahweh worship. This reveals his fundamental misunderstanding: God cannot be manipulated through ritual correctness. True prophecy comes from divine initiative, not human technique. The altars and sacrifices could not force God to curse His blessed people.

## Historical Context

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The seven altars, oxen, and rams would have been extraordinarily expensive, demonstrating Balak's desperation. Balaam's ritual parallels Mesopotamian divination practices where elaborate preparations preceded seeking omens. However, biblical prophecy never operates through manipulation of divine powers. The prophets received revelation sovereignly given by God, not conjured through ritual technique. Balaam's approach exposed his pagan syncretism.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

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

## Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes try to manipulate God through religious ritual or correct technique?
2. What distinguishes genuine prayer from attempts to manipulate God into responding as we wish?
3. How does God's sovereignty over revelation challenge human attempts to control spiritual outcomes?

## Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	וְלֹא בְּלֹעֵם	בְּלֹקֶל	בְּלֹבֶל	בְּנֵה	לִי בְּנֵה	בְּזִבְחַת	וְשְׁבַע הַבְּזִבְחָת
<b>said</b> H559	<b>And Balaam</b> H1109	H413	<b>unto Balak</b> H1111	<b>Build</b> H1129	H0	H2088	<b>and seven</b> H7651
אֱלֹהִים: מִזְבֵּחַ תִּזְבְּחֶלֶת   וְלֹא יְמִימָה	<b>and prepare</b> H3559	H0	H2088	<b>and seven</b> H7651	<b>oxen</b> H6499	<b>and seven</b> H7651	<b>rams</b> H352

## Additional Cross-References

**Numbers 23:29** (Sacrifice): And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

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