

# Numbers 23:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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**And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams**—Balaam's third repetition of the seven-altar ritual (identical to 23:1-2, 23:14) demonstrates either spiritual manipulation (exploiting Balak's superstition for profit) or genuine prophetic protocol (establishing proper conditions for receiving divine word). The sevenfold pattern (שִׁבְעָה shiv'ah, seven) symbolized completeness in Hebrew thought, possibly suggesting comprehensive spiritual preparation.

The repetitive ritual reveals how religious activity can become mere form without transforming heart. Jesus warned against vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7), and Samuel declared 'to obey is better than sacrifice' (1 Samuel 15:22). Balaam's elaborate sacrifices couldn't override God's predetermined blessing on Israel—proper ritual without righteous heart profits nothing.

## Historical Context

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Seven-altar constructions weren't standard Israelite practice but may reflect Balaam's Mesopotamian divination background or attempt to match pagan ritual expectations. The identical repetition at three locations suggests either prescribed prophetic methodology or lucrative exploitation of Balak's desperation—likely both.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How does Balaam's repetitive seven-altar ritual warn against confusing religious activity with actual spiritual power?
2. What 'seven-altar patterns' (repeated religious formulas) might you practice while missing heart transformation?
3. How can you discern when spiritual disciplines serve genuine formation versus becoming manipulative rituals aimed at controlling God?

## Interlinear Text

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|            |             |      |            |           |          |           |           |
|------------|-------------|------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| וַיֹּאמֶר  | בָּלָעָם    | אֵל  | בָּלָק     | בְּנֵה    | לִי      | בֶן־הַ    | שִׁבְעָה  |
| said       | And Balaam  | H413 | unto Balak | Build     | H0       | H2088     | and seven |
| H559       | H1109       |      | H1111      | H1129     |          |           | H7651     |
| מִזְבְּחֹת | וְהִכֵּן    | לִי  | בֶן־הַ     | שִׁבְעָה  | פָּרִים  | שִׁבְעָה  | אֵילָם:   |
| altars     | and prepare | H0   | H2088      | and seven | bullocks | and seven | rams      |
| H4196      | H3559       |      |            | H7651     | H6499    | H7651     | H352      |