

Numbers 24:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

Analysis

Balak's anger erupting—'Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together'—shows rage at unmet expectations. The gesture of striking hands expressed fury and contempt (Job 27:23). Balak had paid for curses and received blessings instead. His accusation 'I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times' reveals the complete reversal of his plans. This demonstrates that God's purposes cannot be thwarted regardless of human schemes, payments, or rituals. What man purposes for evil, God transforms to blessing.

Historical Context

Balak's three attempts to curse Israel (chapters 22-24) show escalating desperation and expense. Each failure increased his fury. His hand-smiting gesture was a cultural expression of extreme frustration and contempt, similar to modern gestures of exasperation. The public nature of Balaam's blessings meant Balak's political humiliation—he had gathered his princes to witness Israel's cursing but instead displayed their invulnerability.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How should we respond when elaborate plans fail because of God's intervention?
2. What does Balak's fury teach about human pride confronting divine sovereignty?
3. How does God's transformation of intended curses into blessings encourage His people?

Interlinear Text

וַחֲרָה	אֵף	בָּלָק קַ	אֵל	בְּלֹעַם	וַיִּסֹּף קַ	אֶת
was kindled	anger	And Balak's	H413	against Balaam	and he smote	H853
H2734	H639	H1111		H1109	H5606	
כַּף יוֹ	וַיֹּאמֶר	בָּלָק קַ	אֵל	בְּלֹעַם	לְקַלֵּב	
his hands	said	And Balak's	H413	against Balaam	thee to curse	
H3709	H559	H1111		H1109	H6895	
אֹיְבֵי	קָרָאתִי יְהוָה	וְהִנֵּה	בְּרַךְ הוּא			
mine enemies	I called	H2009	and behold thou hast altogether			
H341	H7121		H1288			
בְּרַךְ הוּא	זֵה הֵם	שְׁלֹשָׁה	פְּעָמִים:			
and behold thou hast altogether	H2088	them these three	times			
H1288		H7969	H6471			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 21:14 (Parallel theme): Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers.

Numbers 23:11 (Blessing): And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

Job 27:23 (Parallel theme): Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

Nehemiah 13:2 (Blessing): Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

Ezekiel 22:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

Ezekiel 21:17 (Parallel theme): I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it.

Numbers 22:17 (Curse): For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

Numbers 22:6 (Blessing): Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

Numbers 22:11 (Curse): Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.