

# Numbers 31:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

## Analysis

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This verse reveals Balaam's wicked strategy: 'These caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor.' Unable to curse what God had blessed, Balaam taught Midian how to cause Israel to curse themselves through idolatry and sexual immorality. This 'doctrine of Balaam' (Rev 2:14) represents compromise with worldliness, teaching God's people to sin so judgment falls. The Hebrew 'ma'al' (trespass/unfaithfulness) indicates covenant violation - spiritual adultery. This passage warns that Satan's greatest weapon isn't external persecution but internal corruption through worldly enticement.

## Historical Context

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The Baal-Peor incident (Num 25) occurred at Shittim as Israel prepared to enter Canaan. Moabite and Midianite women invited Israelite men to sacrificial feasts involving ritual prostitution in Baal worship. This syncretism - attempting to worship both Yahweh and Baal - brought plague killing 24,000. Only when Phinehas executed judgment did the plague stop. This background explains the severity of judgment on Midian - they had deliberately sought Israel's spiritual destruction.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

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

## Study Questions

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1. What seemingly innocent relationships or entertainments are subtly drawing you away from wholehearted devotion to Christ?
2. How do you resist the 'Balaam strategy' - the world's attempts to make you comfortable with compromise?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּלֹשׁ מִדְבָּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתָהָרָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
H2005 Behold these caused the children of Israel in the matter of Balaam  
H2007 H1961 H1121 H3478 H1697 H1109

וְתָהָרָה בְּנֵי פָעָר וְרַעֲלֵל לְמַסֵּר  
to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor caused  
H4560 H4604 H3068 H5921 H1697 H6465 H1961

וְהִנֵּה בְּעֵד תְּמִגְּדָּה  
and there was a plague among the congregation against the LORD  
H4046 H5712 H3068

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Peter 2:15** (Parallel theme): Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

**Revelation 2:14** (References Israel): But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

**Deuteronomy 4:3** (References Lord): Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

**Joshua 22:17** (References Lord): Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,

**Numbers 24:14** (Parallel theme): And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

**Proverbs 23:27** (Parallel theme): For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

**Numbers 25:18** (Parallel theme): For they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.