

# Numbers 23:1-24:14—Oracles Against the Nations

- Review: Previous Oracles of Balaam
  - Increasingly beneficent toward Israel
  - Balak revokes Balaam's monetary reward b/c of failure to curse Israel
  - Balaam responds by providing a few, unbidden, "bonus features"
- Geography of Genesis 10—The Table of Nations
  - Precursor
    - Curses and Blessings from Noah (Gen. 9:18-27)
  - Japheth
    - קִיִּיִם [kit.tim] = Cyprus? Or some other Mediterranean island (Cf. Isa. 23:1; Jonah 1:3)
    - דּוֹדַיִם [do.da.nim] = דּוֹדַיִם [ro.da.nim] = Ρόδος [Rhodes] (Cf. 1 Chr. 1:7)
    - יָוָן [ya.van] = Ionia (or Greece in general)
  - Ham
    - כּוּשׁ [kush] = Ethiopia region? (Isa. 20:3-4; 43:3; 45:14; Ezk. 30:4-9)
    - מִצְרַיִם [mitz.raim] = Egypt (Jer. 46:9; Ezk. 30:4-9, Ezk. 38:5, Nah. 3:8-9)
    - פּוֹט [put] = Libya region? (Jer. 46:9, Nah. 3:8-9)
    - כְּנַעַן [ke.na.an] = Canaan
      - "Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites." (Gen. 10:15)
  - Shem
    - עִבְרָא [e.ber] has multiple possible understandings
      - (1) "Hebrews" (Gen. 10:22, 11:10-26)
      - (2) Babylon: Eber-Nari (Akkadian)  
Abar-Nahara (עִבְרָא-נַהְרָא Aramaic) meaning "Across the River"
    - אַשּׁוּר [ash.shur] = Assyria (Cf. Gen. 10:11, 22; 2 Ki. 15:19-20)
- Oracle Against Moab (Num. 24:15-19)
  - A Star Will Come out of Jacob
    - Davidic fulfillment
      - David conquers Moab (2 Sam. 8:2)
      - Mesha Steele: clearly describes Israel/Judah dominion over Moab
    - Extended application to messianic figures
      - Rabbis (e.g. Bar Kokhba [Son of the Star] Revolt in 132-136 AD)
      - Jesus: birth marked by a star
        - Is the Star prophecy about Jesus?
        - If yes, then in what sense did Jesus "crush the forehead of Moab" or "conquer Edom"?

- Oracle Against Amalek (Num. 24:20)
  - Background
    - War and guaranteed extermination: Exodus 17:8-16
    - Attacking the weak: Deuteronomy 25:17-19
  - Fulfillment(s):
    - Gideon (Jdg. 6:1-6, 33; 7:12)
    - Saul (1 Sam. 14:47-48; 15:1-3, 6-9)
    - David (1 Sam. 30:1-2, 17-18; 2 Sam. 1:11-16; 1 Chr. 4:41-43)
  - What is meant by “first of the nations”?
    - Were they an especially prominent people group?
    - They were “first of the nations [Israel encountered in the desert]”
      - I doubt it means this, but I’m not sure what else it might mean
- Oracle Against the Kenites (Num. 24:21-22)
  - Joined up with Judah (Jdg. 1:16)
  - Jael and "Heber the Kenite" (Jdg. 4:11)
  - Saul shows mercy on Kenites (1 Sam. 15:6)
  - David protects the Kenites & Judah against the Amalekites (1 Sam. 27:8-12)
  - David shares plunder of Amalekites with Kenites (1 Sam. 30:27-31)
  - Overall assessment: Israel is friendly towards the Kenites
  - So why this prophecy?
    - Ultimate end may just be reality... not a specific punishment
- Oracle Against Ashur, Eber, and Kittim (Num. 24:23-24)
  - Near Future of Israel
    - Kittim = “Cyprus”
      - As a point of origin for sea-peoples (including the Philistines)
    - Ashur = ???
    - Eber = Hebrews
      - Philistines definitely did oppress the Hebrews / Israelites ...
      - and ultimately they were brought to an end
  - Distant Future of Israel
    - Kittim = “Cyprus”
      - As synecdoche for “Greece” which is itself a synecdoche for the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great?
    - (Ashur = Assyria) and (Eber = Babylon)
      - Alexander conquered a pan-mesopotamian empire (Persia) for which “Assyria and Babylon” is likely the best way to express that idea at the time
- Balaam has failed to truly curse Israel and has instead forecast doom for Moab
  - Perhaps there is a different way for him to bring down Israel and earn his fee?
  - Come back next week to find out more!