

Ir-ot-16
I Cannot Go Beyond the Word of the Lord
(Numbers 22-24; 31:1-16)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(These scriptures teach how the Lord is constrained to bless Israel, in spite of all things, and **tells when and how He will bless them**).

I. Through the story of Balak and Balaam Israel is blessed, not cursed (Numbers 22-24).

A. Does this story mean Israel will always be blessed *in spite* of what they do?

B. No. Consider examples which show when Israel has been disobedient she has been punished. (i.e., taken into captivity by Babylon, taken into captivity by Assyria; being conquered and scattered by Romans.)

C. Consider examples which show Gentiles have inherited Israel's blessings at times and become a part of God's people (i.e., after most of Judah rejected Christ the gospel went to the Gentiles).

II. So a clarification must be made: Israel will not always be blessed regardless of what they do, but *overall* they will be blessed.

A. In what ways are they blessed overall?

1. Jesus Christ would come to them and through them (Numbers 24:17).

2. While Israel would be cut off more than once, in fact for many centuries, and would be scattered while the Gentiles received the gospel, in the last days they would again be blessed (Numbers 24:5-9).

III. The Book of Numbers unite with other scriptures to show how Israel would be blessed and *when* they would be blessed.

A. Refer to Numbers 28 and 29. Note how the holy observances commanded here were previously given in greater detail in Leviticus 23 as well as other scriptures.

B. Israel's Holy Days taught of the future blessings to Israel.

God Himself established Israel's Holy Days. **While Israel was to keep these days holy in remembrance of *past* blessings, they were also prophetic of greater future blessings.**

These holy days were generally divided into two groups, the first group observed at the time of Israel's first agricultural harvest, and the last group observed at their final harvest. **Each of these holy days actually prophesied of great and significant events when Israel would be blessed through the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

The First Harvest

Passover (Numbers 28:16-8, 22, 24-5; Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 23:4-8).

Each sacrificed Passover lamb told of the **blessings which would come through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.**

He was slain at the prophesied time, during the hours Passover lambs were being slain. His tomb was found empty, for as the lamb was totally consumed, so His body had arisen in the Resurrection.

Through His lamb's blood shed, death would be passed over, and men would be freed from the bondage of sin and death.

The Offering of the First Sheaf of the Harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14).

The offering of the first sheaf of the harvest taught of the blessing of Jesus' resurrection. The Lord commanded Israel that after they had entered into Canaan, they should bring a sheaf of the first fruits harvests as an offering to the Lord. It was to be offered the day after the Sabbath at the time of Passover.

To keep this observance, the barley was always planted just in time to be ripened by Passover. After the first sheaf was ritually cut down, it was taken to the temple where it lay. On the first day of the week, the priest lifted it up as an offering to God.

After Jesus' death, when He was "cut down," He was laid in a tomb. On the same morning the barley sheaf was lifted up to God, Christ arose in resurrection, a living offering, thus becoming "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Feast of First Fruits (Numbers 28:26; Leviticus 23:15-22).

The Lord also commanded Israel to count seven weeks from the time of the first fruit offering. The morning after (or the fiftieth day), was to be holy with many offerings made. These offerings would celebrate the gathering of the first fruits of the wheat harvest. **This feast also spoke of Christ's great blessings.**

After Jesus' resurrection, he spent forty days preparing His apostles to bear witness of Him throughout the world. One vital step remained --- the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was to be a major force in helping gather the harvest which lay ahead.

When was this special promise fulfilled? It occurred on the Day of Pentecost, the Greek name for "the fiftieth day" or the Jewish holy day of the Feast of First fruits.

The first sheaf of barley offered fifty days earlier was symbolic of Christ, the very first fruit of the harvest from the dead. But this day, **the time of the wheat harvest, the first fruits obtained through the Spirit began to be gathered in, strengthening Christ's Church.**

On this day elders of Israel gathered to Jerusalem from many distant nations -- to keep the Feast of First fruits. The Holy Ghost was poured forth as had been promised. Because of the Holy Ghost the apostles stood and bore witness that Jesus was truly the Messiah. And because of the Holy Ghost they spoke in tongues, in the tongues of those Jews who had come from many lands. Because of the Holy Ghost the hearts of many were penetrated. And that day nearly three thousand persons were baptized (Acts 2:41). **Many of those baptized went back to their distant lands bearing witness that the Messiah had come. This was the beginning of the harvesting of souls in the Meridian of Time --- the first fruits of the harvest of the Church of Jesus Christ.**

The Final Harvest

While the first three holy days taught of the blessings of Christ's first harvest, the holy days set for the seventh month and final harvest taught of his blessings in the Latter-days. [There would be a world-wide apostasy in between].

The Feast of Trumpets (Numbers 29:1; Leviticus 23:23-25).

The Lord commanded Israel to blow trumpets on this feast day, to signify a call for Israel to awaken, repent, and gather. It was set for the time when Israel was to be blessed

with the final agricultural harvest. And it witnessed of the blessings of its *final spiritual* harvest through Christ.

Thus it is extremely significant that the Golden Plates were delivered to Joseph Smith on the day the Jews were observing this Feast of Trumpets, though this was unknown at the time. The angel Moroni who delivered those plates now stands on temple spires with a trumpet to his mouth proclaiming to all Israel it is time to waken and gather. And those records, now translated and spreading throughout the world are in fact bringing blessings to a latter-day Israel once scattered and in exile. (For further explanations see Lenet Hadley Read, "The Golden Plates and The Feast of Trumpets," *The Ensign*, January 2000.)

Another Significant Witness of the Feast of Trumpets (Numbers 10:2-9).

The Lord commanded Israel that the blowing of trumpets was a signal they should gather to battle against those enemies who had oppressed them (Numb.10:2-9). This gives great significance to other events in the early hours of September 22, 1827.

On that night, Heber C. Kimball recorded in his Journal that he and several others viewed together an amazing sight in the heavens. They saw an army marching across the heavens organized for battle. This vision went on for hours, yet they could not bring themselves to return to their beds, for it was both real and astonishing.

Others also saw this vision, which included Brigham Young at another location. He did not know Heber C. Kimball then, and neither had ever heard of Joseph Smith. Only much later did they learn that this very night Joseph Smith had received the Golden Plates. Not until the mid 1980's was it discovered this night was also the Feast of Trumpets and Israelite trumpets actually blown. **But this signal was the signal**, the one awaited for centuries when the armies of Israel would gather for *spiritual* battle. And they *were* gathering --- in the heavens. All those still **waiting in the heavens were organizing for that final fight against apostasy and Satan's powers. It was a sign for Israel to fight again for their place in the Kingdom of God.** (See Numbers 31, a likely foreshadowing of this great latter-day battle.)

The Day of Atonement (Numbers 29:7; Leviticus 23:26-32).

The holiest of all Israelite holy days, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, is the Day of Atonement, full of blessings through Christ. Anciently it was on this day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, symbolic of entering the presence of God, giving his offering of blood which would atone for Israel's sins, thus reuniting the repentant with God.

Christ performed His great work of atonement in the Meridian of Time. But for most, reunification with God remains incomplete. That will come only when we actually reenter His presence. Note that this day is to be a day of great "affliction of soul" (Numbers 29.7) Christ Himself warned of the great affliction to occur at His return. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:21-2.) *The Book of Mormon* further reveals the affliction of soul which will occur at Christ's return, which will be like His appearance made to Book of Mormon peoples. "O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our

fair daughters, and our children have been spared... And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible” (3 Nephi 8:25).

This great affliction of soul will occur among the unbelieving and unrepentant as great destructions occur and the veil is finally rent and men behold their God, Jesus the Christ.

The Day of Atonement bore witness of Christ’s atonement wrought in the Meridian of Time but also of Christ’s return. For the believing and obedient there will be the blessings of reconciliation and reentrance into His presence, a prophesied portion of the Day of Atonement (one of the great steps of becoming “At-One.”)

The Feast of Tabernacles (Numbers 29:12-38; Leviticus 23:34-44).

This last feast initially celebrated those times when Israel was sheltered by the Lord in the wilderness. But it is also a witness of the Millennium (Zechariah 14:16). Our true shelter then will be Jesus the Christ.

The ways ancient Israel kept this feast taught what the Millennium would be like:

1. They were to offer seventy (70) bullocks among lambs and rams. Jews and early Christians understood the number seventy symbolized all the nations of the earth. **The coming of people from all nations to celebrate this feast signified that in the Millennium all nations will acknowledge and worship Jesus Christ as Savior and King.**

2. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the completion of all the harvests of the year. The Millennium will truly be a celebration of Christ’s harvest. We will rejoice in that harvest which has already been brought in: the righteous from all previous dispensations, and all the deceased who will no longer be hidden as “dead,” but will arise and stand as souls harvested by Christ through His ordinances performed under His priesthood authority.

Obviously the full harvest will not be truly completed until the end of the Millennium. The wonderful news is **that at that time, every soul who has ever lived upon the earth will have heard the gospel preached without unrighteous restriction or influence, and all temple work will have been done for every receptive soul.**

What great rejoicing there will be then in Christ’s completed harvest! **This *Israel* will indeed be blessed. And its Numbers will be swollen with believing and repentant persons from all nations, all generations, and all ethnic backgrounds.**

The Book of Numbers is full of prophecy. It tells us much about the future times when some will be cut off from Israel’s numbers. It is also prophetic **in telling the times when Christ would bless** --- when men must make choices whether to be found “Numbered among Israel.” Here is a summary of those times of blessings:

Christ’s First Harvest

1. Passover = His Crucifixion:
2. The offering of the first sheaf of the harvest = His Resurrection
3. The gathering of *all* first fruits = Beginning of the First Harvest of souls.

Christ’s Final Harvest

1. The Feast of Trumpets = Beginning of the Final Harvest of souls.
2. The Day of Atonement or At one ment = The Second Coming of Christ
3. The Feast of Tabernacles = The Millennium and completion of harvest!

