

Numbers 22:2 Balak and Balaam -- a people cursed . . . and 'coming up roses'

## Numbers / Chapter 22 / בַּמִּדְבָּר / background . . .

Balak, the King who cannot command / Balaam, the Seer who cannot see / The Donkey, who does see / the Seer, who then sees / the Cursor, who then blesses . . . .

- א וַיִּסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעַרְבוֹת מוֹאָב, מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן יְרֵחוֹ. {ס}
- 1 And the children of Israel journeyed, and pitched in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. {S}
- ב וַיֵּרָא בָּלַק, בֶּן-צִפּוֹר, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְאֹמֹרִי.
- 2 And Balak (the king who cannot command) the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
- ג וַיִּגַּר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעָם, מֵאֲדָם--כִּי רַב-הוּא; וַיִּקְצַץ מוֹאָב, מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- 3 And Moabites was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was overcome with dread because of the children of Israel.
- ד וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל-זִקְנֵי מִדְיָן, עֲתָה יִלְחֲכוּ הַקְּהָל אֶת-כָּל-סְבִיבֹתֵינוּ, כְּלַחֵךְ הַשּׁוֹר, אֶת יַרְקֵה הַשָּׂדֶה; וּבָלַק בֶּן-צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ לְמוֹאָב, בָּעֵת הַהוּא.
- 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian: 'Now will this multitude lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.'--And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.--
- ה וַיִּשְׁלַח מְלָאכִים אֶל-בְּלַעַם בֶּן-בְּעוֹר, פְּתוּרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַנָּהָר אֲרָץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹ--לְקַרְא-לוֹ: לֵאמֹר, הִנֵּה עִם יִצְחָק מִמִּצְרַיִם הִנֵּה כָּסָה אֶת-עֵין הָאָרֶץ, וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב, מִמְּלֵי
- 5 And he sent messengers unto Balaam (the Seer who cannot see) the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying: 'Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.

ו ועתה לכה-נא ארה-לי את-העם הזה, 6 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 know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.'  
כי-עצום הוא ממני--אולי אוכל נכה-בו, ואגרושנו מן-הארץ: כי ידעתי, את אשר-תברך מברך, ואשר תאר, יואר.

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מא ויהי בבקר--ויקח בלק את-בלעם, Nu 22: 41 And it came to pass in the morning that Balak (the King) took Balaam (the Seer), and brought him up into Bamoth-baal, and he saw from thence the utmost part of the people (who he was hired to curse).  
ויעלהו במות בעל; וירא משם, קצה העם.

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The Amalekites surface again -- as 'first born' -- as we know, this is not the best status to be in the Biblical lexicon . . .

יז אראנו ולא עתה, אשורנו ולא קרוב; דרך Nu 24: 17 I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh; there shall step forth a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite through the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Seth.  
כוכב מיעקב, וקם שבט מישראל, ומחץ פאתי מואב, וקרקר כל-בני-שת.

יח והיה אדום ירשה, והיה ירשה שעיר-- 18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also, even his enemies, shall be a possession; while Israel doeth valiantly.  
איביו; וישראל, עשה חיל.

מיעקב; והאביד שריד, מעיר, יט וירד 19 And out of Jacob (Israel) shall one have dominion, and shall destroy the remnant from the city.

כ וַיִּרְא, אֶת-עַמְלֵק, וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר:  
וַיִּשְׂתַּחֲוֶה עֲדֵי אֲבֹד  
20 And he looked on Amalek, and took up  
his parable, and said: Amalek was the  
first of the nations; but his end shall come  
to destruction.

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And only now, and looking back a few frames . . .

## Numbers 24: 3-5

**Note: This curse / blessing is the Biblical origin of the Prayer “Mah Tovu” of the Jewish liturgy**

ג וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר: נָאִם בְּלַעַם בֶּנוֹ בְּעֹר,  
וַיִּנָּאֵם הַגָּבֵר שְׁתֵּם הָעֵינַי.  
Nu 24: 3 And he took up his parable, and  
said: The saying of Balaam the son of Beor,  
and the saying of the man whose eye is  
opened;

ד נֹאֵם--שָׁמַע, אִמְרֵי-אֵל: אֲשֶׁר מִחֲזוֹ שְׂדֵי  
יִחֲזֶה, נִפְל וְגִלּוֹי עֵינָיִם.  
4 The saying of him who heareth the words of  
God, who seeth the vision of the Almighty,  
fallen down, yet with opened eyes:

ה מֵה-טֹבוֹ אֹהֲלֶיהָ, יַעֲקֹב; מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיהָ,  
יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy  
dwellings, O Israel!

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**Esther / Chapter 3 / אֶסְתֵּר / from Amalekite to Haman / from Israelite to  
Mordechai the Jew / a fuller context**

א אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, גִּדַּל הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֶחָשֶׁרוּשׁ אֶת-הָמָן בֶּן-הַמְּדֵתָא הָאֲגָגִי--  
וַיִּנְשְׂאֶהוּ; וַיִּשֶׂם, אֶת-כִּסְאוֹ, מֵעַל, כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים  
אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ.  
3: 1 After these things did king Ahasuerus  
promote Haman the son of Hammedatha  
the Agagite, (Amalekite lineage) and  
advanced him, and set his seat above all  
the princes that were with him.

ב וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ,  
כָּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהֶמְן--כִּי-כֹן, צִוָּה-לוֹ  
הַמֶּלֶךְ; וּמֹרְדֵכַי--לֹא יִכְרַע, וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה.

**2** And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed down, and prostrated themselves before Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him.

ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ--  
לְמֹרְדֵכַי: מַדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר, אֶת מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ.

**3** Then the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai: 'Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?'

ד וַיְהִי, בְּאִמְרוֹם (כְּאִמְרוֹם) אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם, וְלֹא  
שָׁמַע, אֲלֵיהֶם; וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהֶמְן, לְרֹאוֹת הַיַּעֲמָדוֹ  
דַּבְּרֵי מֹרְדֵכַי--כִּי-הִגִּיד לָהֶם, אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יְהוּדִי.

**4** Now it came to pass, when they spoke daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

ה וַיֵּרָא הֶמְן--כִּי-אִין מֹרְדֵכַי, כָּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה  
לוֹ; וַיִּמְלֵא הֶמְן, חֲמָה.

**5** And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him, then was Haman full of wrath.

ו וַיִּבְזֶז בְּעֵינָיו, לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֹרְדֵכַי לְבַדּוֹ--  
כִּי-הִגִּידוּ לוֹ, אֶת-עַם מֹרְדֵכַי; וַיִּבְקֶשׂ הֶמְן,  
לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מַלְכוּת  
אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ--עַם מֹרְדֵכַי.

**6** But it seemed contemptible in his eyes to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai; wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

ז בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ נִיסָן, בְּשַׁנַּת  
שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה, לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ: הַפִּיל פּוּר  
הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לְפָנֵי הֶמְן, מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמִחֹדֶשׁ  
לְחֹדֶשׁ שָׁנִים-עֶשֶׂר--הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר. {ס}

**7** In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. {S}

ח וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן, לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ--יִשְׁנֹו  
עַם-אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים, בְּכֹל  
מְדִינֹות מְלֻכּוֹתָי; וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל-עַם,  
וְאֶת-דַּתֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים, וְלִמְלֶכֶךְ  
אֵין-שׁוֹה, לְהַנִּיחֵם

**8** And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus:  
'There is a certain people scattered  
abroad and dispersed among the peoples  
in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and  
their laws are diverse from those of every  
people; neither keep they the king's laws;  
therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer  
them.

ט אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב, יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָּם; וְעֲשֶׂרֶת  
אֲלָפִים כֶּבֶד-כֶּסֶף, אֲשַׁקּוּל עַל-יְדֵי עֹשִׂי  
הַמְּלָאכָה, לְהַבִּיא, אֶל-גְּנֹזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ.

**9** If it please the king, let it be written that  
they be destroyed; and I will pay ten  
thousand talents of silver into the hands of  
those that have the charge of the king's  
business, to bring it into the king's  
treasuries.'

י וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ, מֵעַל יָדוֹ; וַיִּתְּנָהּ,  
לְהָמָן בֶּן-הַמְּדַתָּא הָאַגְגִּי--צָרֵר הַיְהוּדִים.

**10** And the king took his ring from his  
hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of  
Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews'  
enemy.

יא וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן, הַכֶּסֶף נָתוּן לָךְ;  
וְהָעַם, לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ.

**11** And the king said unto Haman: 'The  
silver is given to thee, the people also, to  
do with them as it seemeth good to thee.'

Link to full article: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/goysplaining-away-antisemitism-is-a-problem-on-the-political-left-opinion/ar-AAKpsqc?ocid=msedgntp>

## Goysplaining Away Antisemitism is a Problem on the Political Left | Opinion'

Josh Levs

Recent days have made this clear: Jewish communities are not the ones conflating antisemitism with "criticism of the Israeli government." Antisemites are doing that.



© ED JONES/AFP via Getty Images Pro-Israel demonstrators attend a rally denouncing antisemitism and antisemitic attacks, in lower Manhattan, New York on May 23, 2021.

As the violence in Israel and Gaza flared up, hatred and disdain for Jews, both in Israel and all over the world, was instantly put on display. Threats and attacks on Jewish people and institutions spiked, and vicious loathing of Jews was expressed at numerous pro-Palestinian rallies all over the world.

When Jewish people like me tried to raise the alarms, some self-declared progressives we worked alongside to defeat Donald Trump showed their true colors. Without asking what we were seeing and experiencing or looking into it, they mindlessly launched into the mantra they've been trained to regurgitate: "Criticizing Israel is not antisemitic." As though that's what we were referring to—and as though we don't know the difference.

There's a term for this: goysplaining. As a Ha'aretz column once explained, goysplaining is the tendency of non-Jewish people to "condescendingly explain to Jews why they are wrong at being offended."

Over the last few years, more and more people have finally woken up to the need to listen to women about the many ways sexism rears its ugly, dangerous head. Since early 2020, many have finally done the same with recognizing the horrific dangers Black people face. Progressive leaders have been outspoken in their support.

But when Jews ask some of these same progressives to listen to us about the very real dangers we face—and about how their one-sided, hateful and often false rhetoric against Israel inflames and radicalizes dangerous people—they write us off immediately.

The belief that Jewish people reject all criticism of Israel as antisemitic is, itself, antisemitic. It's a false belief used to deny real dangers. Jewish people criticize the Israeli government all the time. Speaking up is endemic to our culture. We also support and express gratitude for the groups in Israel that fight for peace and against human rights abuses of all kinds, including against Palestinians.

### **Sudden 'Allies'**

When the wave of antisemitic attacks became too prominent to ignore, some goysplainers suddenly sought to portray themselves as allies against

antisemitism. They sent out a tweet or posted a blue square on Instagram. But there's no sign that many have learned their lesson.

If you want to be a real ally, stop reflexively repeating what *isn't* antisemitism, and learn what *is*. For example: Saying or suggesting that Jewish civilians in Israel deserve to be bombed. Supporting Hamas, which has a stated goal of killing as many Jewish people as possible. Describing the conflict without mentioning the constant terror attacks on Israelis, Hamas' use of human shields, or other Hamas tactics. Anytime you condone, ignore, or downplay this part of the violence, you're devaluing Jewish lives. (Take note, Trevor Noah and John Oliver.)

If you echo and rush to share every negative accusation or description you hear about Israel without bothering to educate yourself, you're being antisemitic. If you believe that state religions are fine except a Jewish one, that's antisemitic too.

If you liken Jews in Israel and/or elsewhere to Nazis, you're engaging in Holocaust Inversion, which is antisemitic for many reasons. You may also be unaware that leaders of Jewish communities in Germany weren't committed to killing as many Aryans as possible, nor were they amassing rockets to bomb German civilians in an effort to exterminate Germany. But if you want to bring up Germany, maybe address the fact that even the more moderate Fatah in the West Bank still celebrates the Munich Olympics terrorists as "heroic" to this day.

Goysplaining is not the only tool some progressives use to ignore antisemitism. There's also deflection, in which they try to change the subject to the etymology of "Semite," as though that has anything to do with what we're talking about. And some use tokenism, highlighting their support from "anti-Zionist" Jews. Never mind that to the overwhelming majority of Jews, Zionism is simply a recognition that of course Jewish people deserve to hold onto their state in their existing homeland alongside a Palestinian state. The fact that this tokenism is exactly what Trumpists do to write off accurate accusations of racism and antisemitism in their movement is lost on these progressives.

To be clear, it's only *some* progressives who engage in goysplaining. Many absolutely recognize the simmering antisemitism on both sides of the



political spectrum, care about it deeply and fight against it. Many also openly support Israel, noting that it's the only nation in the Middle East with free speech, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights and more of the things progressives stand for everywhere else in the world. And many Democrats insist the party is not shifting on Israel as much as anti-Israel progressives want.

Still, many who have been loudest in their one-sided attacks on Israel haven't woken up to how their words and actions fuel hatred and violence against Jewish people all over the world. If they're going to stay true to the principles they claim to stand for, it's time.

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The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*