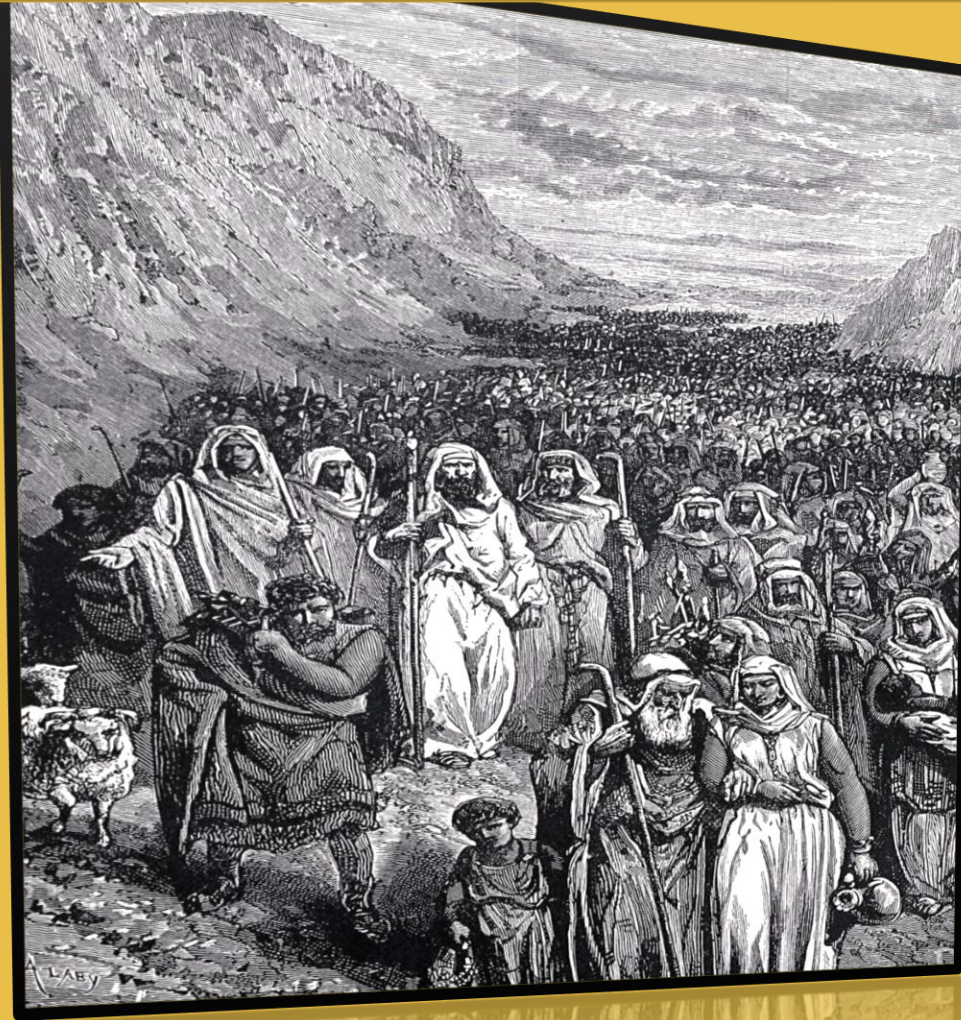


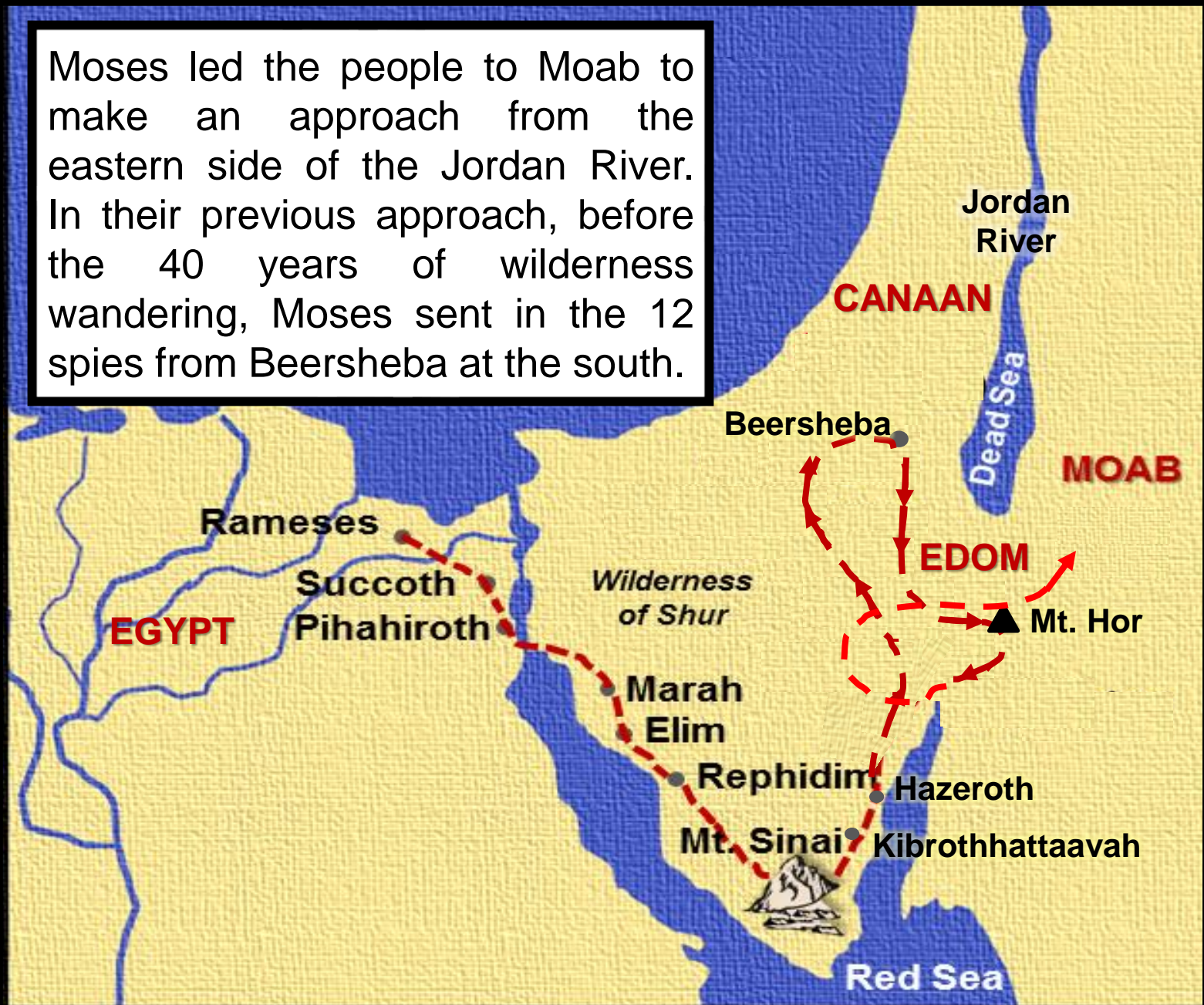
**BALAM'S
ASS**

Numbers 22-24



The children of Israel at length finished their wanderings in the wilderness and were camped in the plains of Moab.

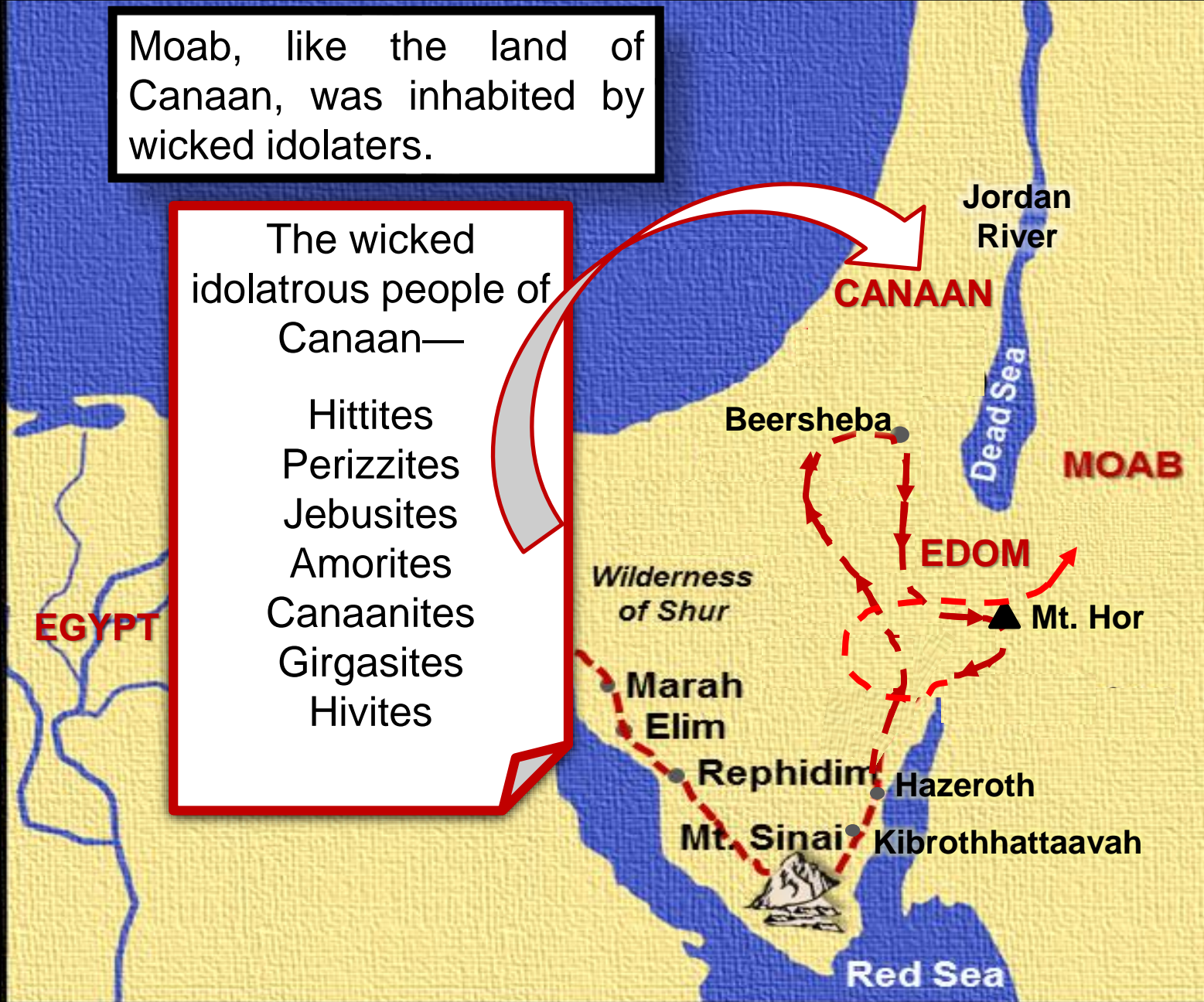
Moses led the people to Moab to make an approach from the eastern side of the Jordan River. In their previous approach, before the 40 years of wilderness wandering, Moses sent in the 12 spies from Beersheba at the south.



Moab, like the land of Canaan, was inhabited by wicked idolaters.

The wicked idolatrous people of Canaan—

Hittites
Perizzites
Jebusites
Amorites
Canaanites
Girgasites
Hivites



EGYPT

CANAAN

Jordan River

Dead Sea

MOAB

Beersheba

Wilderness of Shur

EDOM

Mt. Hor

Marah
Elim

Rephidim Hazeroth

Mt. Sinai Kibrothhattaavah

Red Sea



Numbers 22

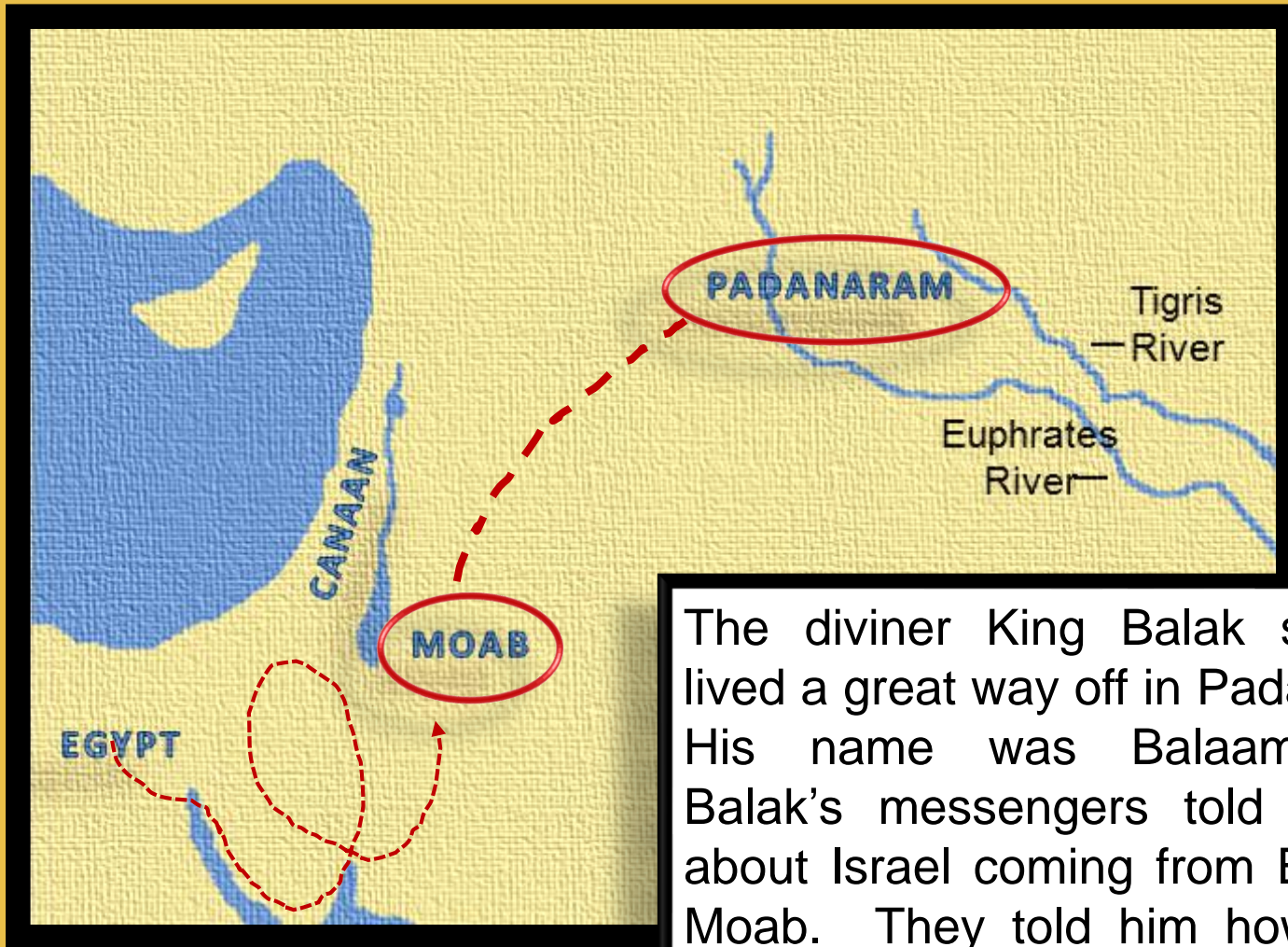
“⁴And Moab said unto the elders of **Midian**, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field, and **Balak** the son of Zippor was **king of the Moabites** at that time.”

The Midianites were a nomadic people who were descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham by Keturah. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a Midianite. He was kind to Moses but now, 40 years later, the Midianites had sunk into idolatry and were enemies of Israel.

Balak, King of Moab, planned to curse Israel.



King Balak trusted his “arts” more than his “arms.” He sought to conjure up a curse against Israel using a diviner.



The diviner King Balak sent for lived a great way off in Padanaram. His name was Balaam. King Balak's messengers told Balaam about Israel coming from Egypt to Moab. They told him how afraid the Moabites were and asked him to come and curse the Israelites.

Balaam The Diviner



Every ancient reference to Balaam considers him to be a non-Israelite.

In Revelation 2:15 John writes to the church at Pergamos that though they have not denied the faith they have those among them that “**hold to the doctrine of Balaam**” which was a stumbling block, for they eat food offered to idols, and commit fornication.

Interesting Note:

God communicated with Baalam though he was a wicked man. Genesis 20 relates another example of God communicating with an unrighteous even wicked man, Abimelech King of Gerar.

Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, so Abimelech thought she wasn't married and felt free to take her to be his wife.

God came to King Abimelech in a dream, told him she was married, not to touch her, and to return her to Abraham or he would die.



[Back to our lesson on Balaam](#)

**Balaam the diviner lodged King Balak's messengers.
That night he considered what he would do.**





Numbers 22

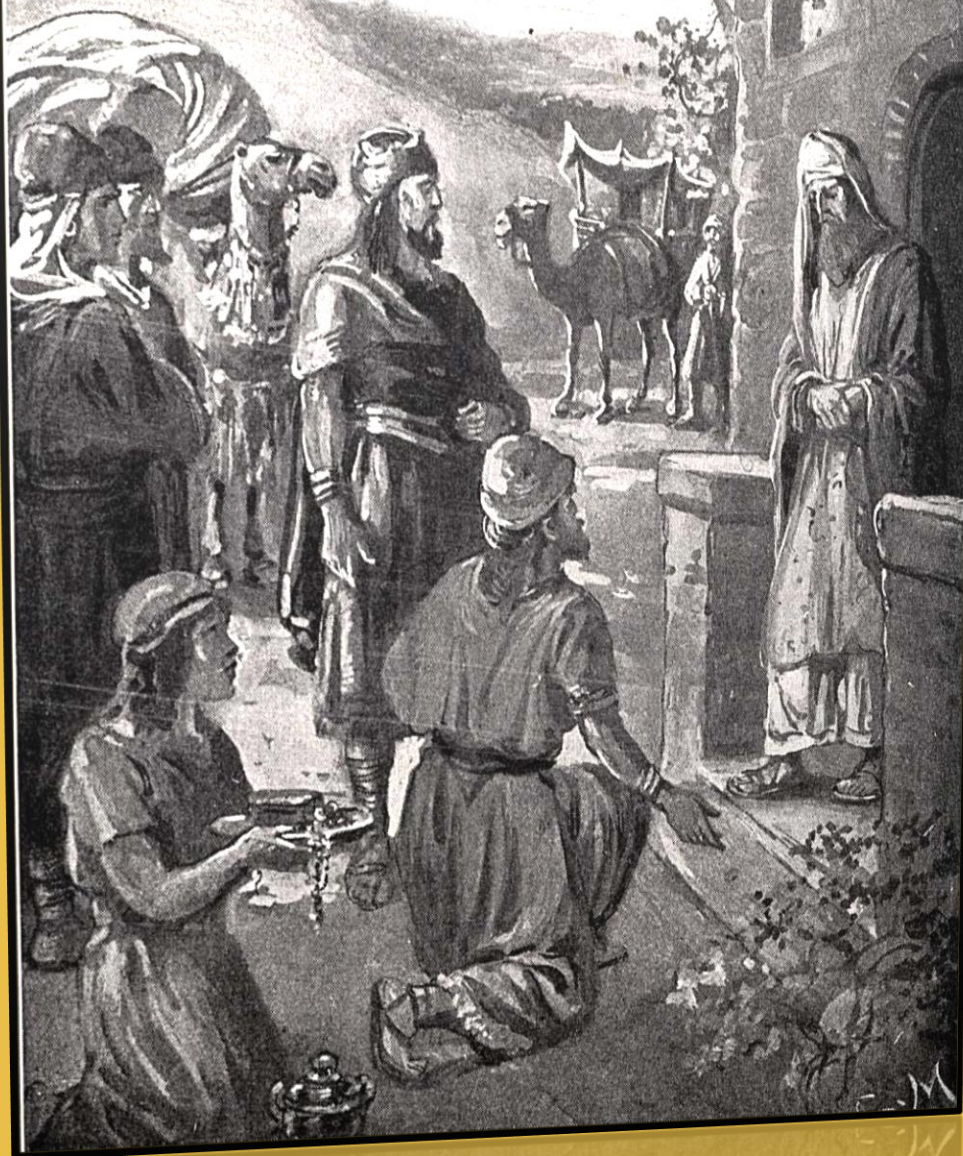
“⁹And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?

[We are not told if he was surprised that God spoke to him. From this point on he seeks God's advice though he doesn't hear what he wants to hear.]

¹⁰And Balaam said unto God,

Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, ¹¹Behold, 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.

¹²And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.”



Numbers 22

“¹³And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

[He didn't tell them that God had said Israel was a blessed people and must by no means be cursed.]

¹⁴And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.”

A second embassy was sent to Balaam to fetch him to curse Israel.

Numbers 22

“¹⁵And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. ¹⁶And they came to Balaam, and said to him,

Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: ¹⁷For 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.”



The temptation King Balak laid before Balaam was bait not only for his covetousness but for his pride and ambition.

2 Peter 2:15

“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.”



Numbers 22

“¹⁸And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak,

If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

¹⁹Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.”



**It is a great insult to God to ask permission to sin.
As sometimes God denies the prayers of those he loves,
so sometimes he grants the desires of the wicked in wrath.**

Numbers 22

“²⁰And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him,

If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. ²¹And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.”

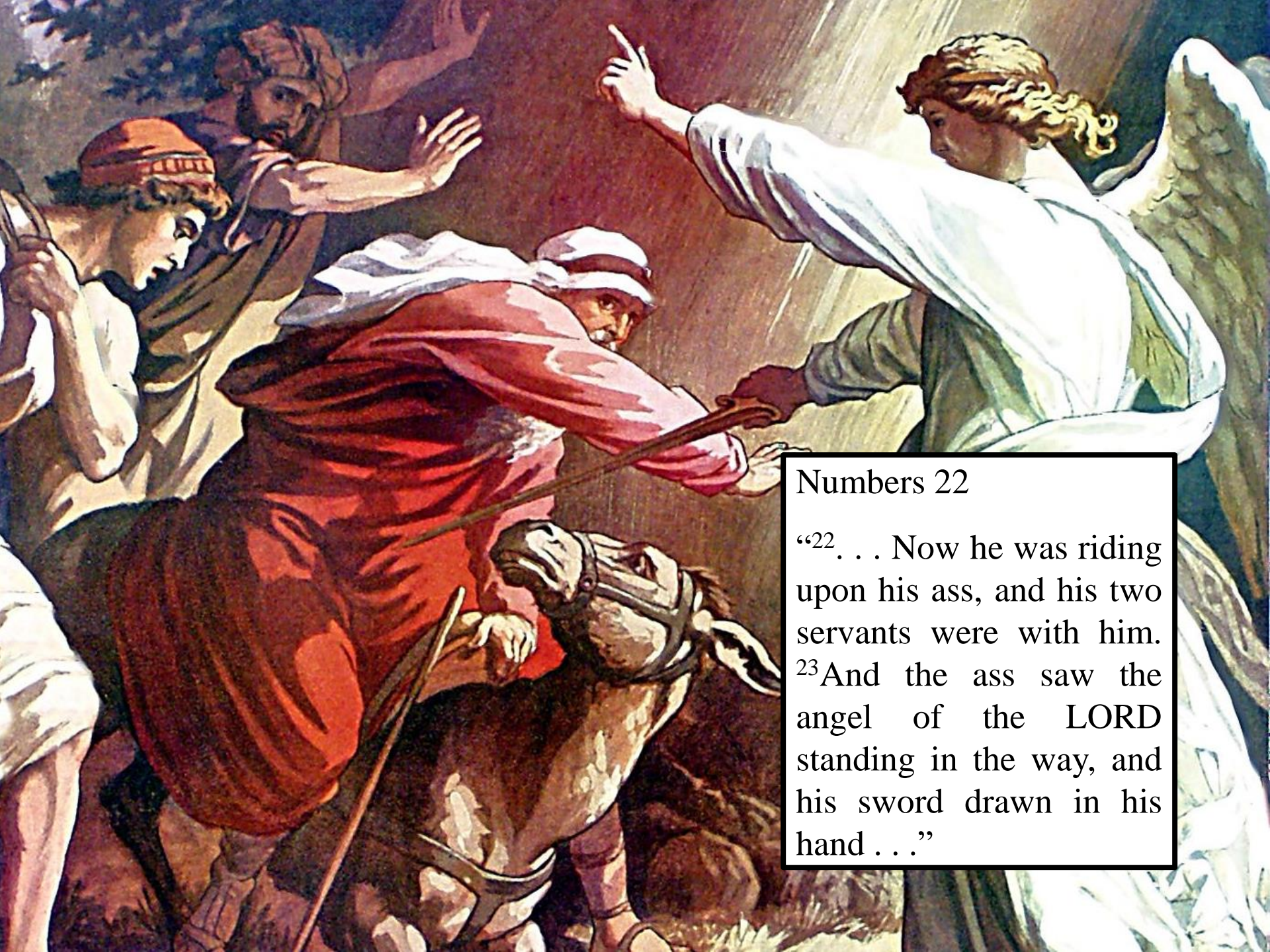


The sin of sinners
is not to be
thought the less
provoking to God
because he
permits it.

Numbers 22

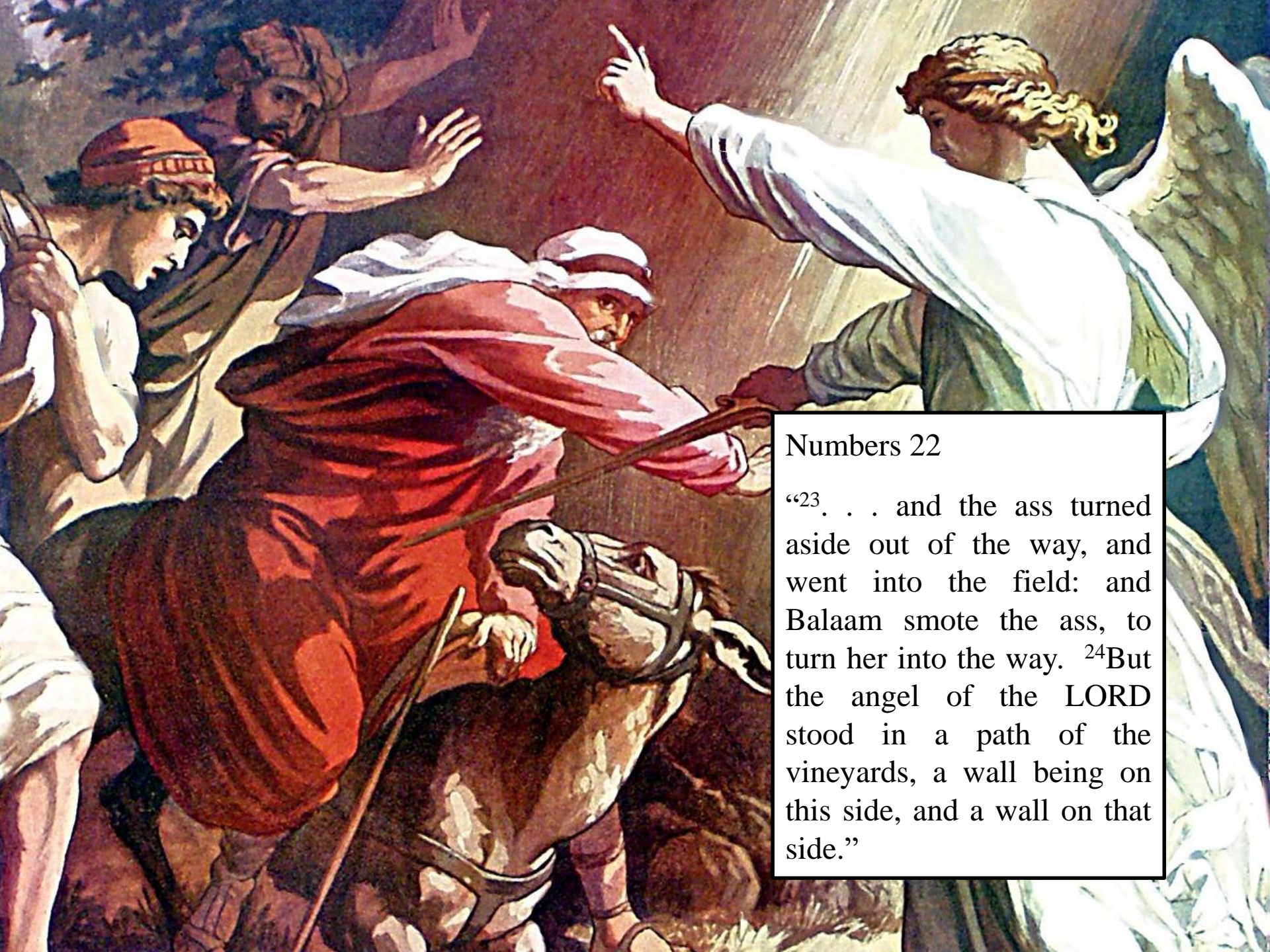
“²²And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him . . .”





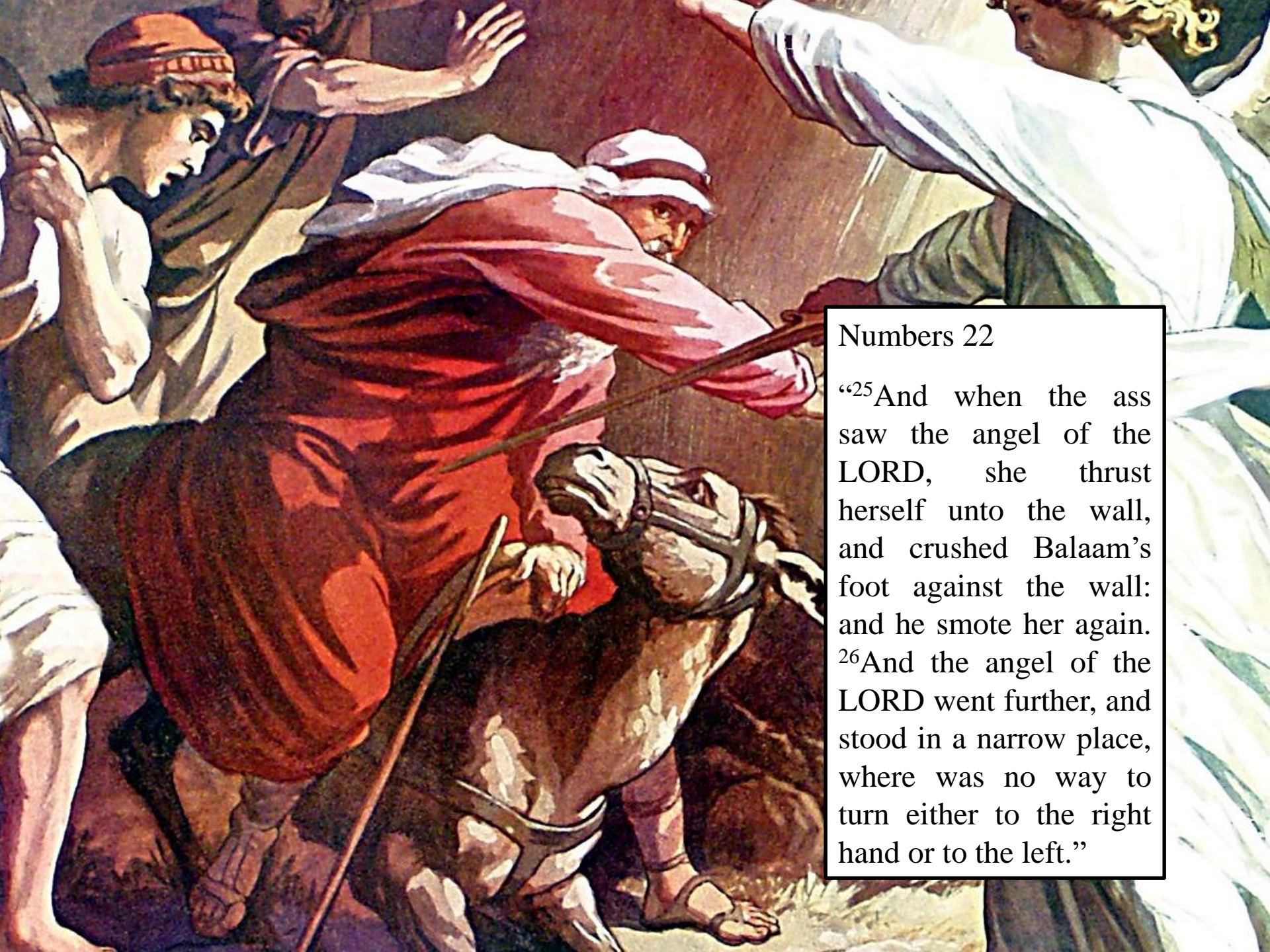
Numbers 22

“²². . . Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. ²³And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand . . .”



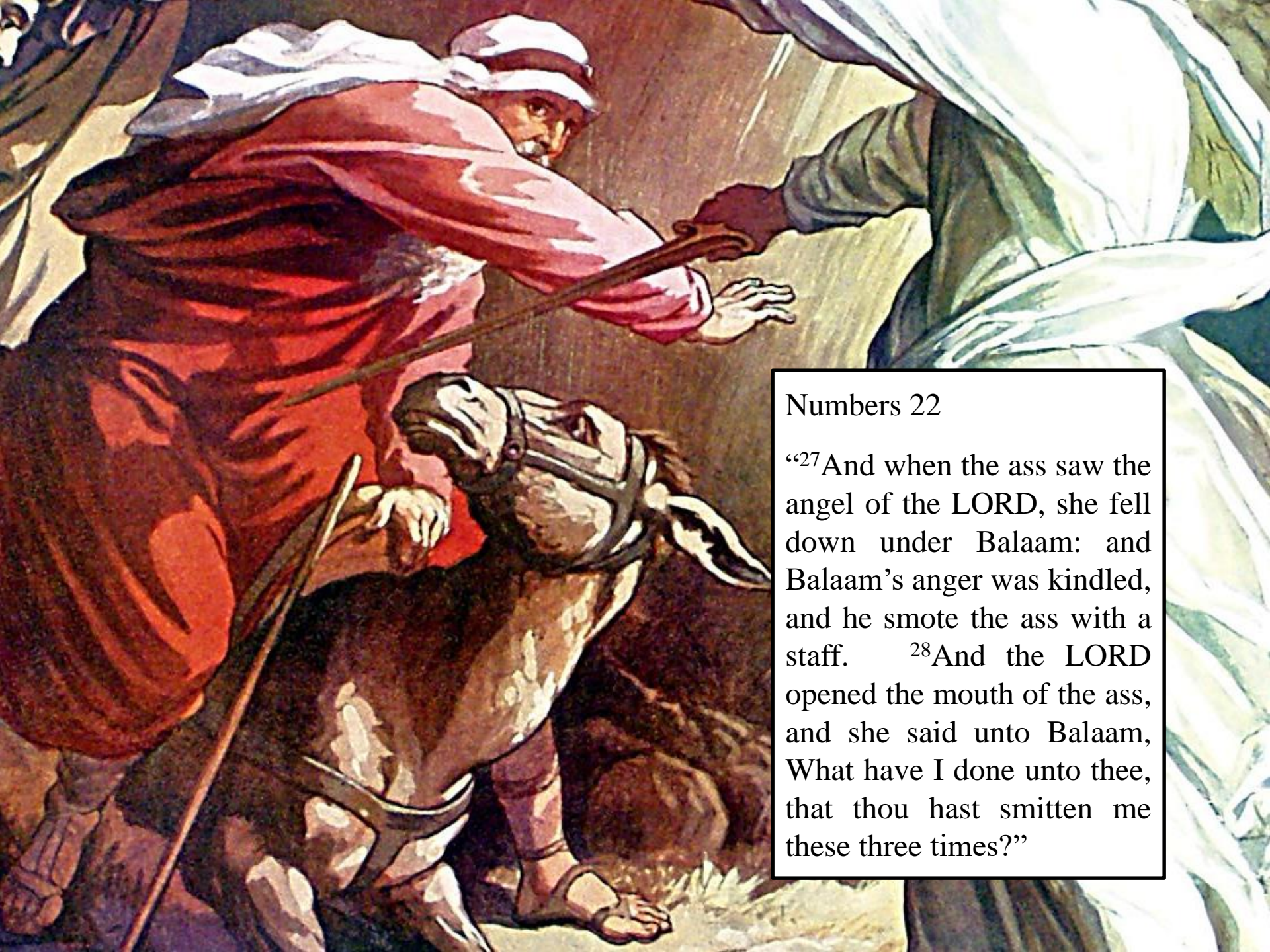
Numbers 22

“²³. . . and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. ²⁴But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.”



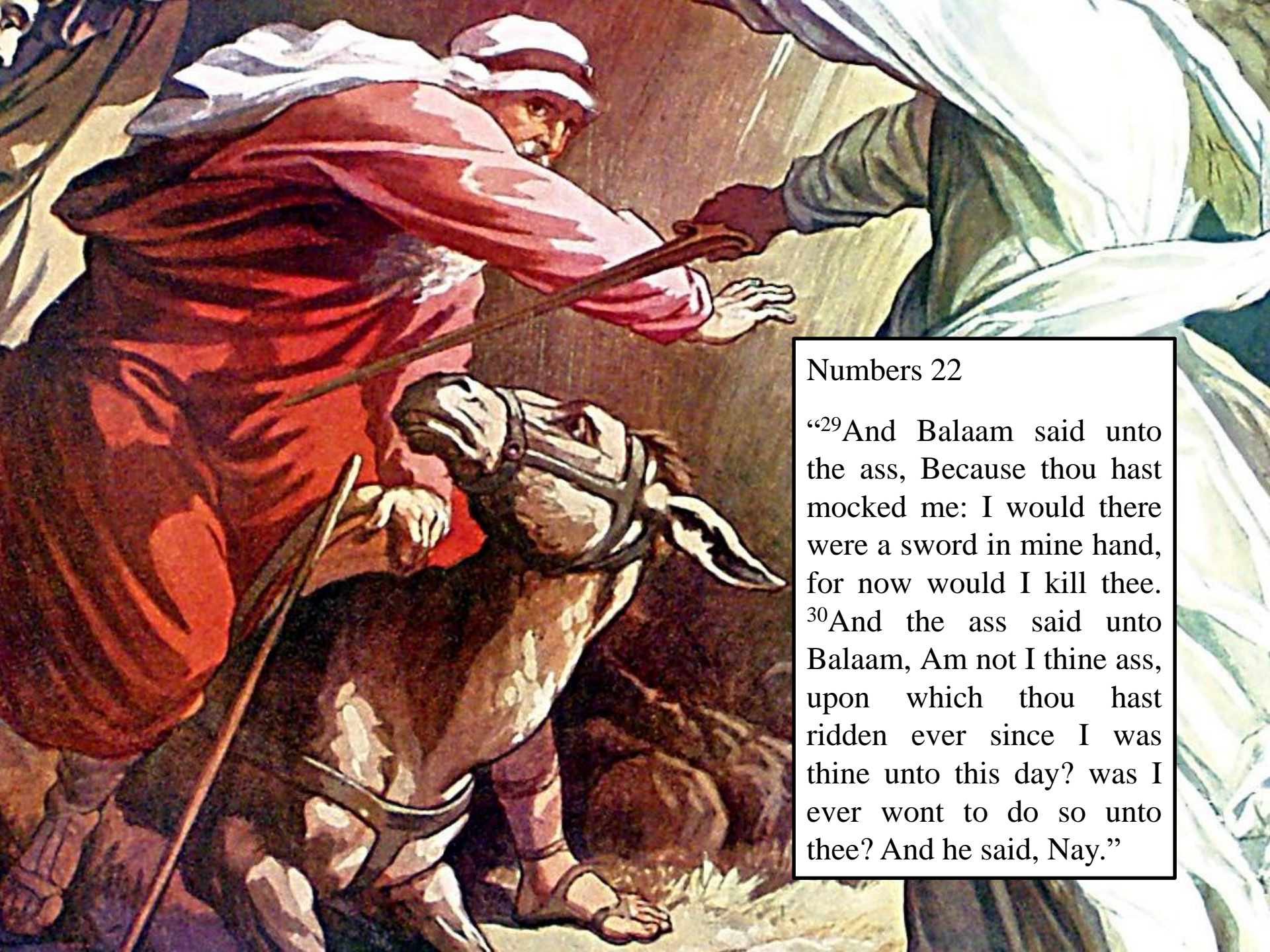
Numbers 22

“²⁵And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall: and he smote her again. ²⁶And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.”



Numbers 22

“²⁷And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam’s anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. ²⁸And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?”



Numbers 22

“²⁹And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.
³⁰And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.”

Numbers 22

“³¹Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. ³²And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: ³³And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.”



**The angel continued his permission for Balaam to go—
*if thou has a mind to be made a fool of, and be shamed
before Balak and all the princes of Moab then GO!***

Numbers 22

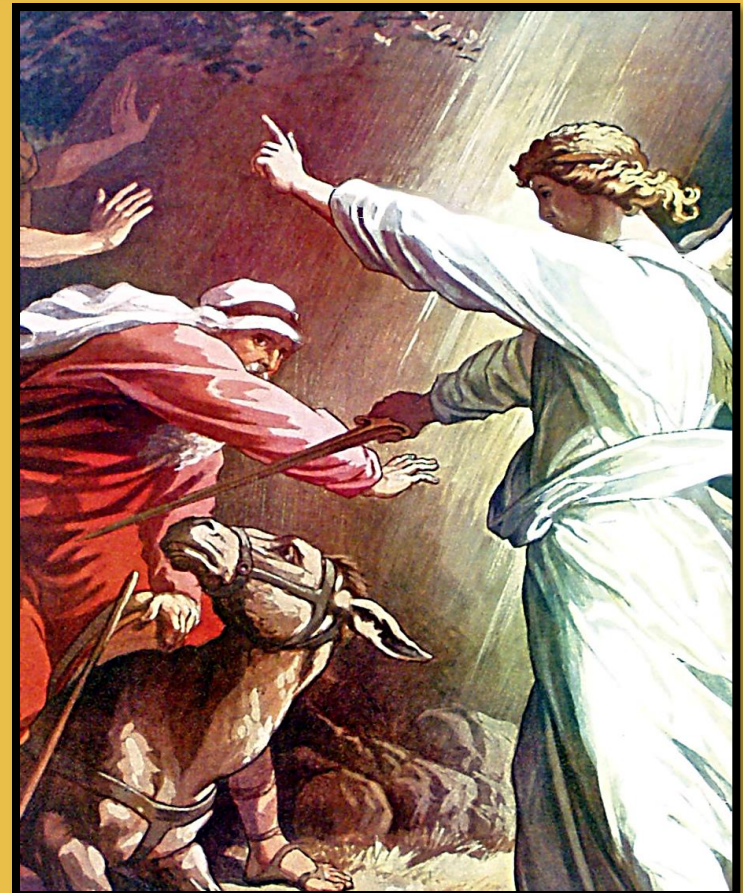
“³⁴And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD,

I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

³⁵And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam,

Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.

So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”

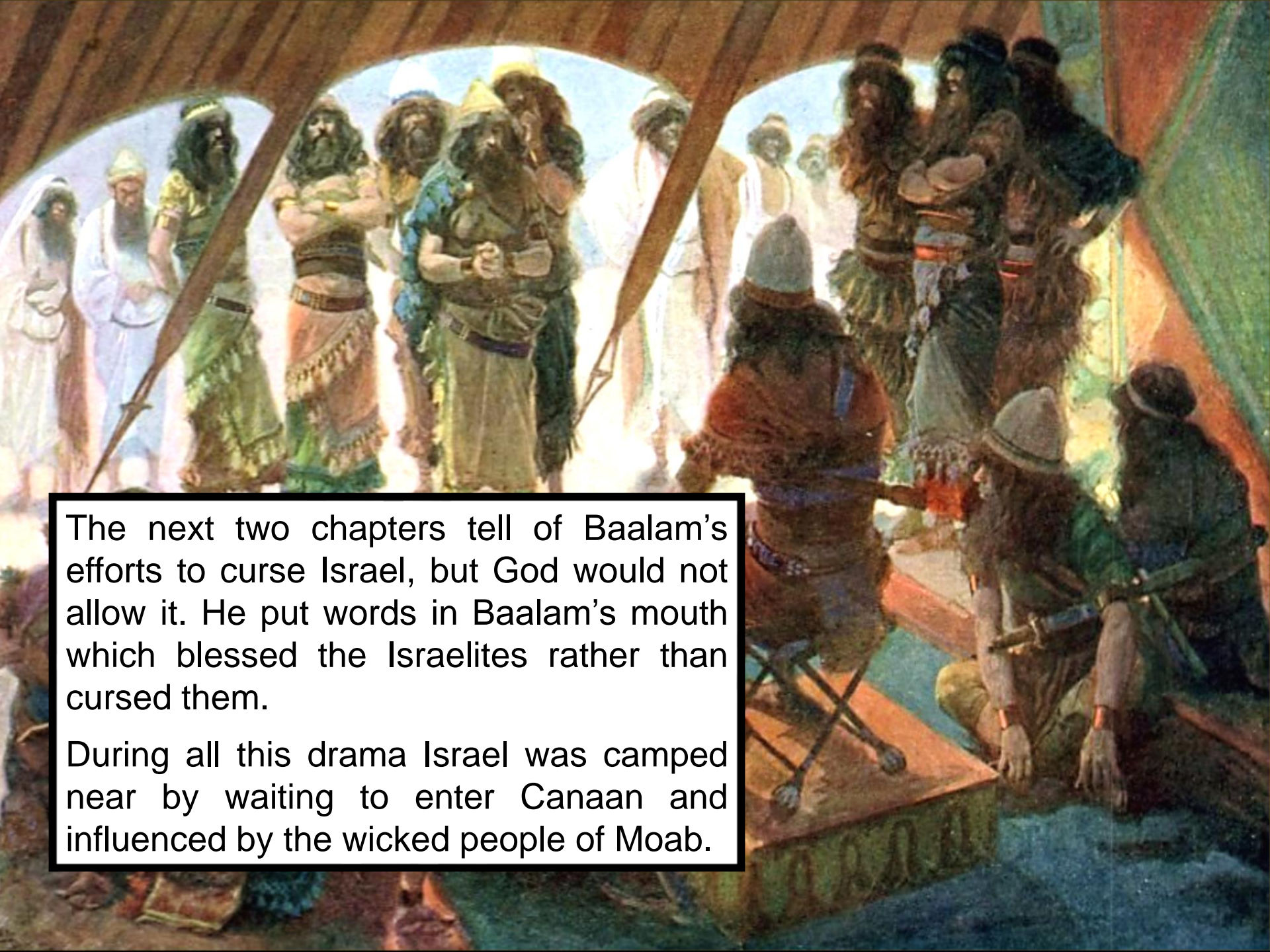


Balaam and King Balak Meet

Balaam wanted to please King Balak by cursing Israel that he might receive the king's rewards, but when he spoke God caused him to speak only blessings.

No matter how many times he tried, or how many locations and sacrifices King Balak offered Balaam could not curse Israel.





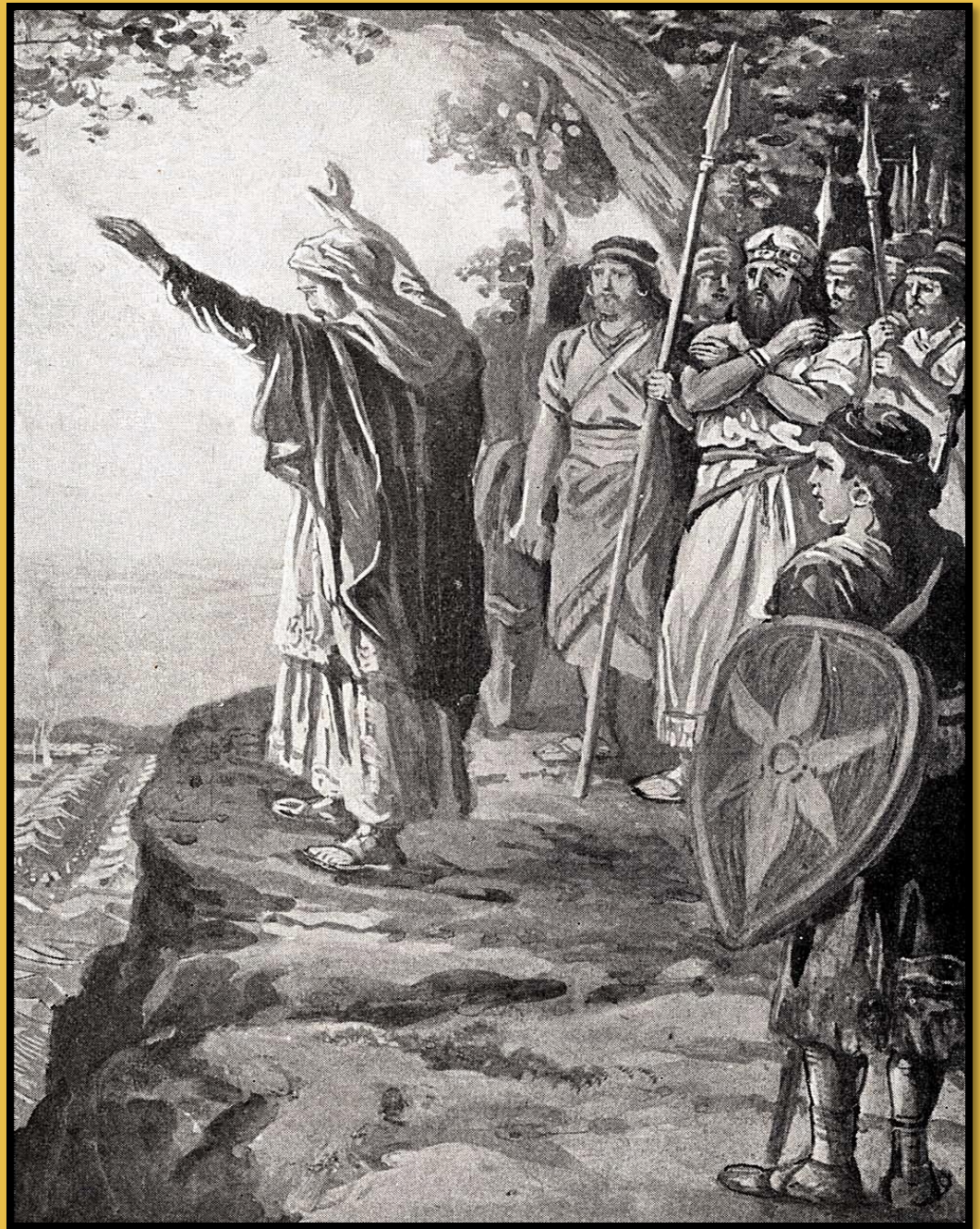
The next two chapters tell of Baalam's efforts to curse Israel, but God would not allow it. He put words in Baalam's mouth which blessed the Israelites rather than cursed them.

During all this drama Israel was camped near by waiting to enter Canaan and influenced by the wicked people of Moab.

In Numbers 24:1 we read that in Balaam's attempts to curse Israel he used "enchantments," which means he used spells, charms, or magic arts. Balaam was a **soothsayer** according to Joshua 13:22.

JOSHUA 13:22

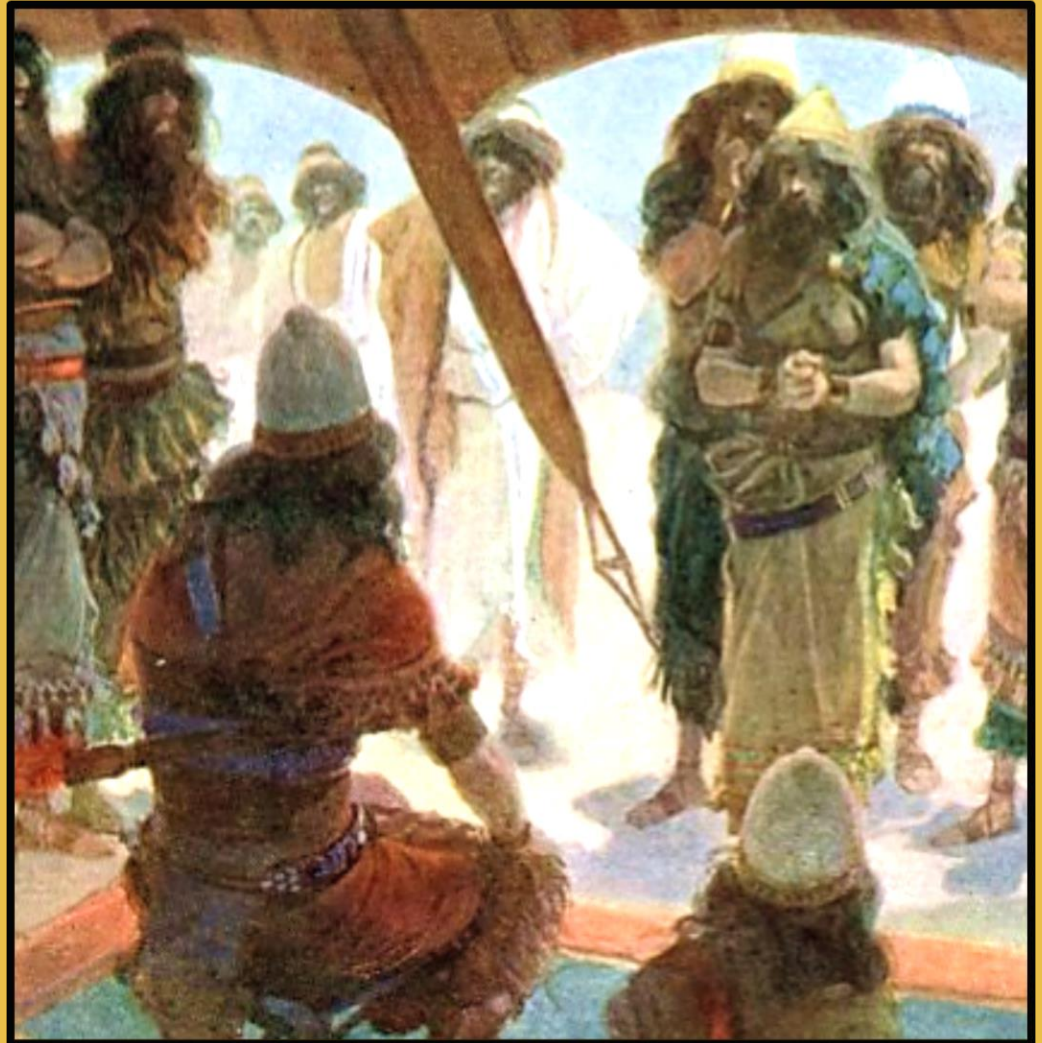
"Balaam also the son of Beor, **the soothsayer**, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them."



King Balak became angry.

Numbers 24

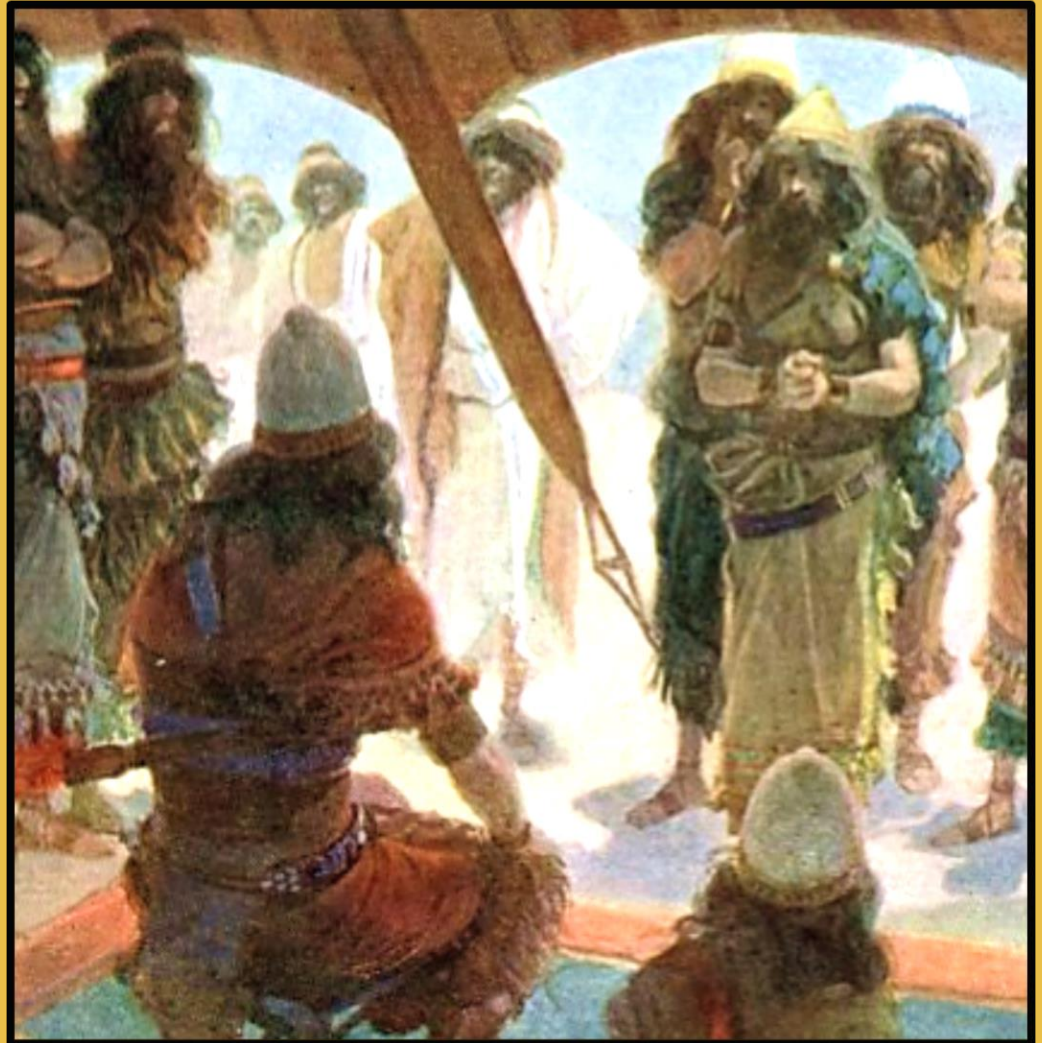
“¹⁰And Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. ¹¹Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.”



Balaam promised to leave but first—

He reminded King Balak that he had *told him* so, and really King Balak should not have felt cheated, for he had been warned.

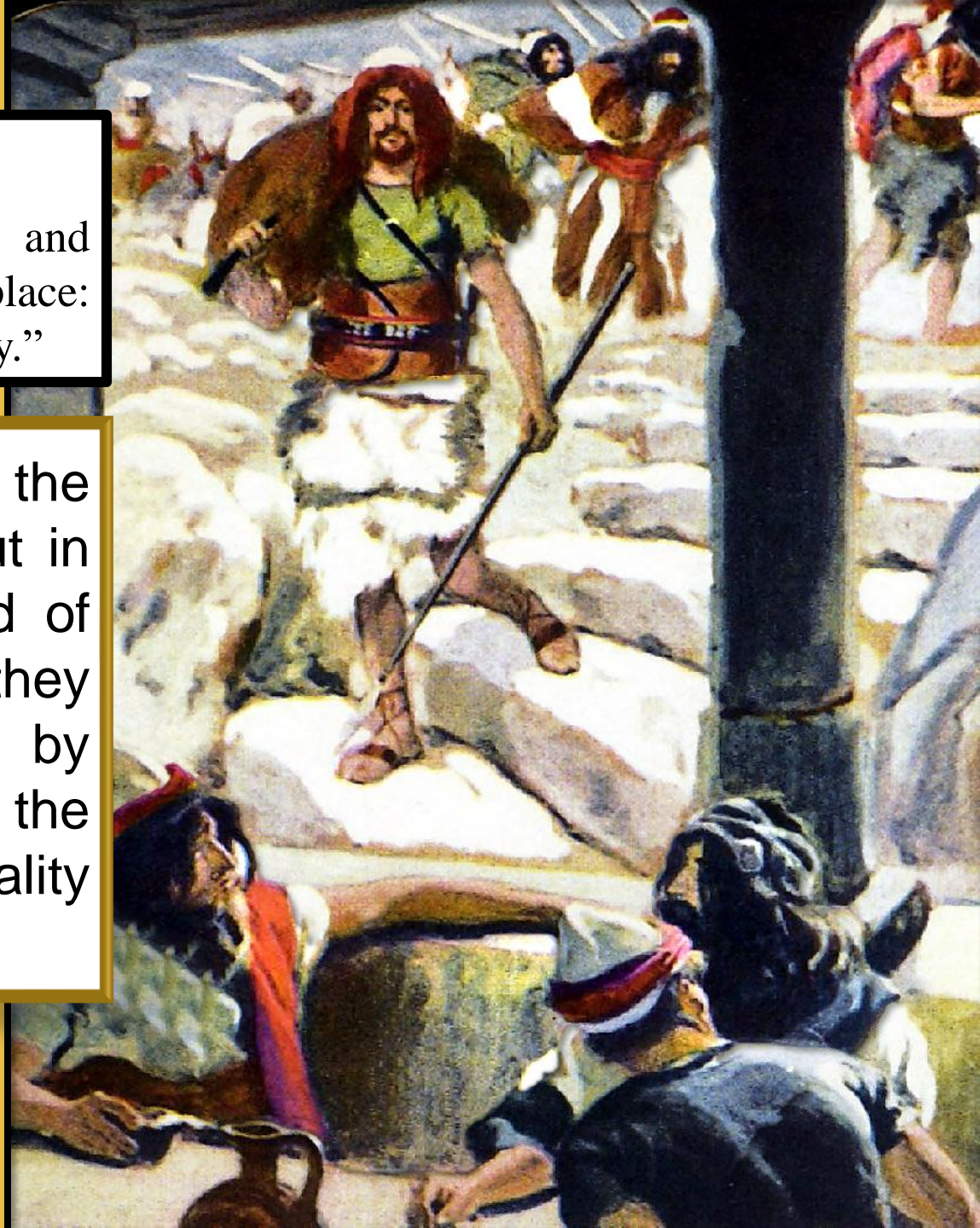
Then Balaam prophesied telling what Israel would do to Moab. He made an effort to console King Balak by assuring him that God would not punish Moab immediately.



Numbers 24

“²⁵And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.”

Israel escaped the curse of Balaam, but in Chapter 25 we read of how quickly they became corrupted by the influences of the idolatry and immorality of the Moabites.



Rather than destroying the Moabites for King Balak's attempts to curse the Israelites, God used them as a trial for Israel.

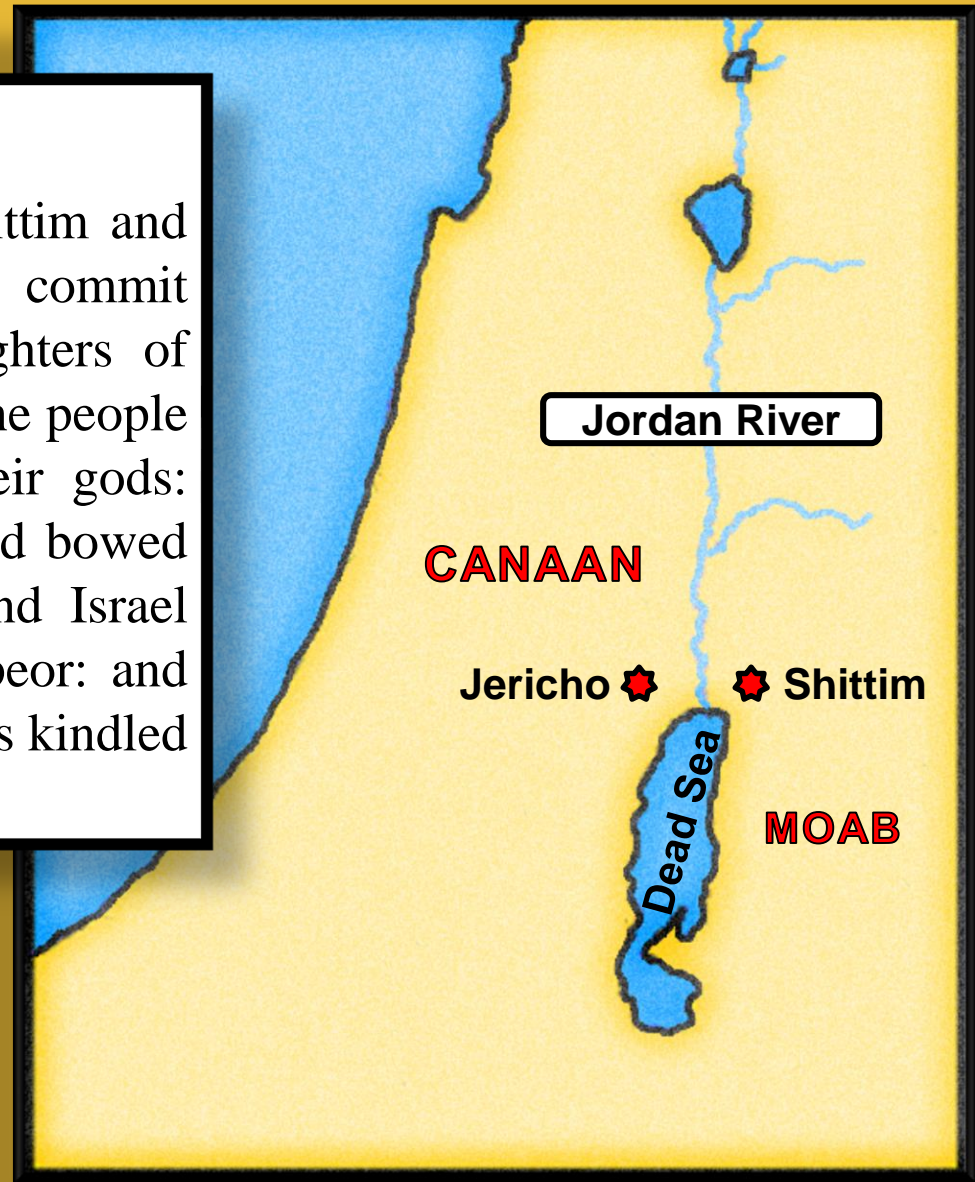
ISRAEL FAILED

They sinned with the whoredom and idolatry of the Moabites.

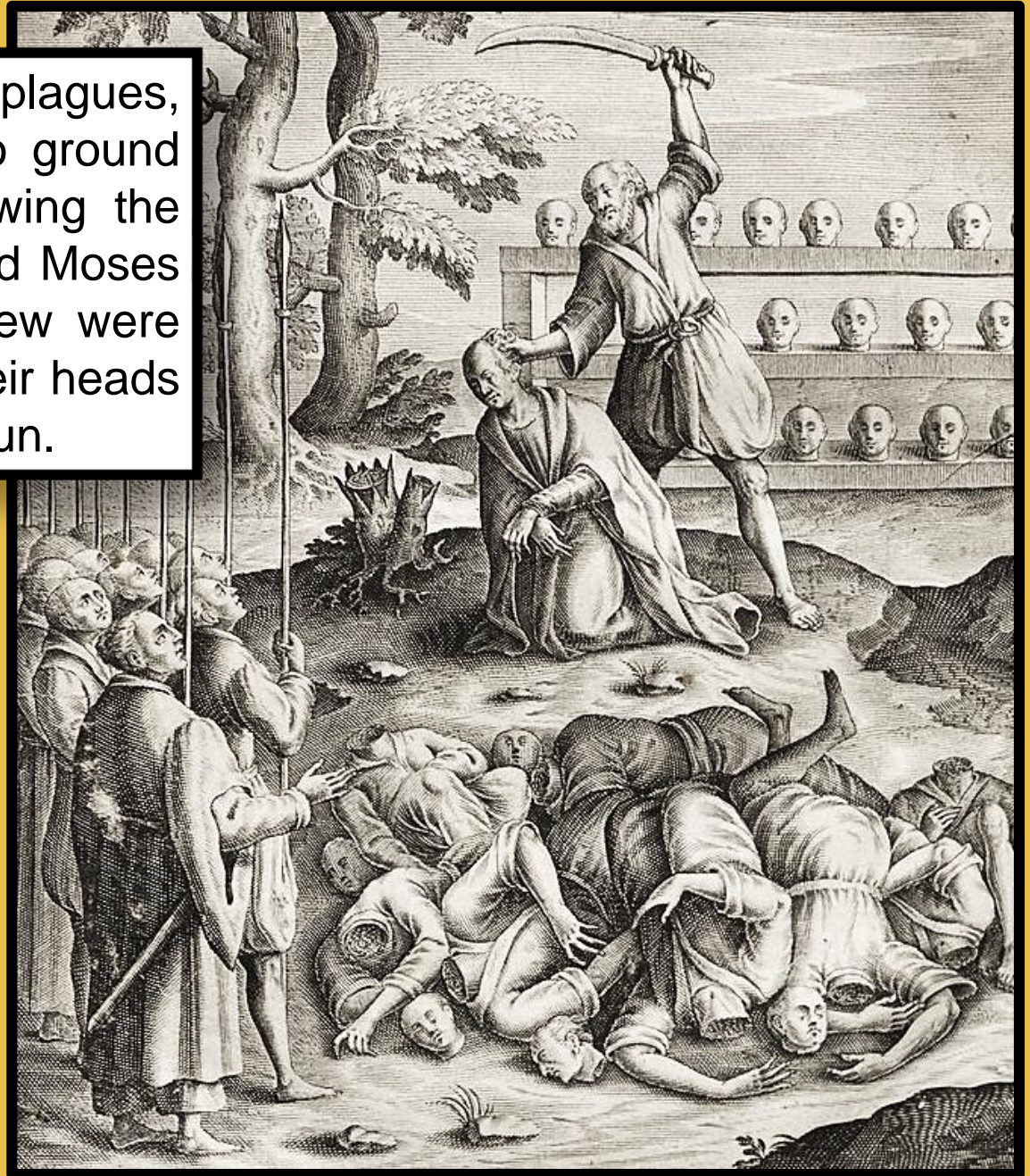


Numbers 25

“¹And Israel abode in Shittim and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. ²And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. ³And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.”

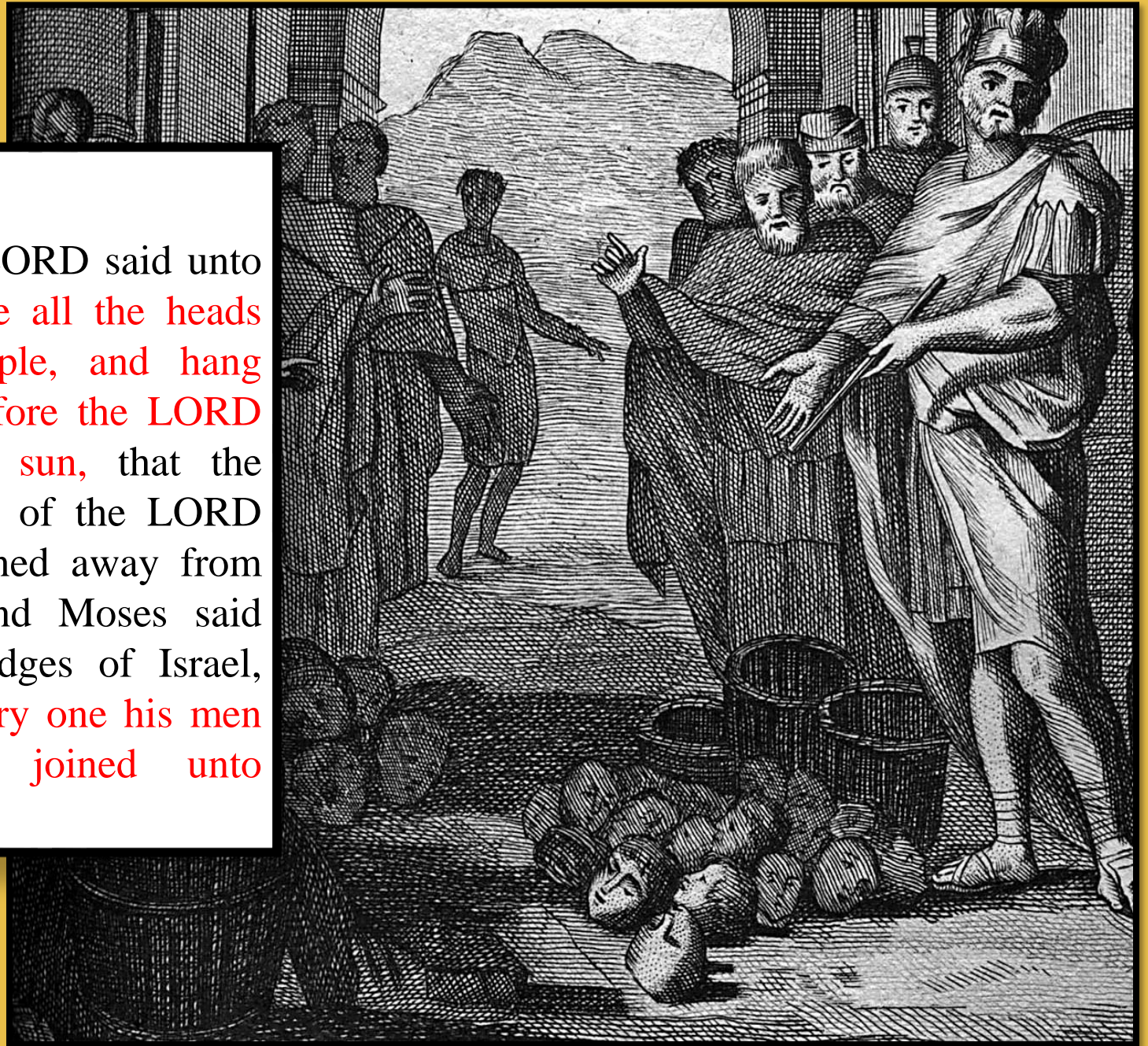


This time there were no plagues, no fire from heaven, no ground opening up and swallowing the wicked. God commanded Moses to execute those he knew were idolaters, and display their heads as they putrefied in the sun.



Numbers 25

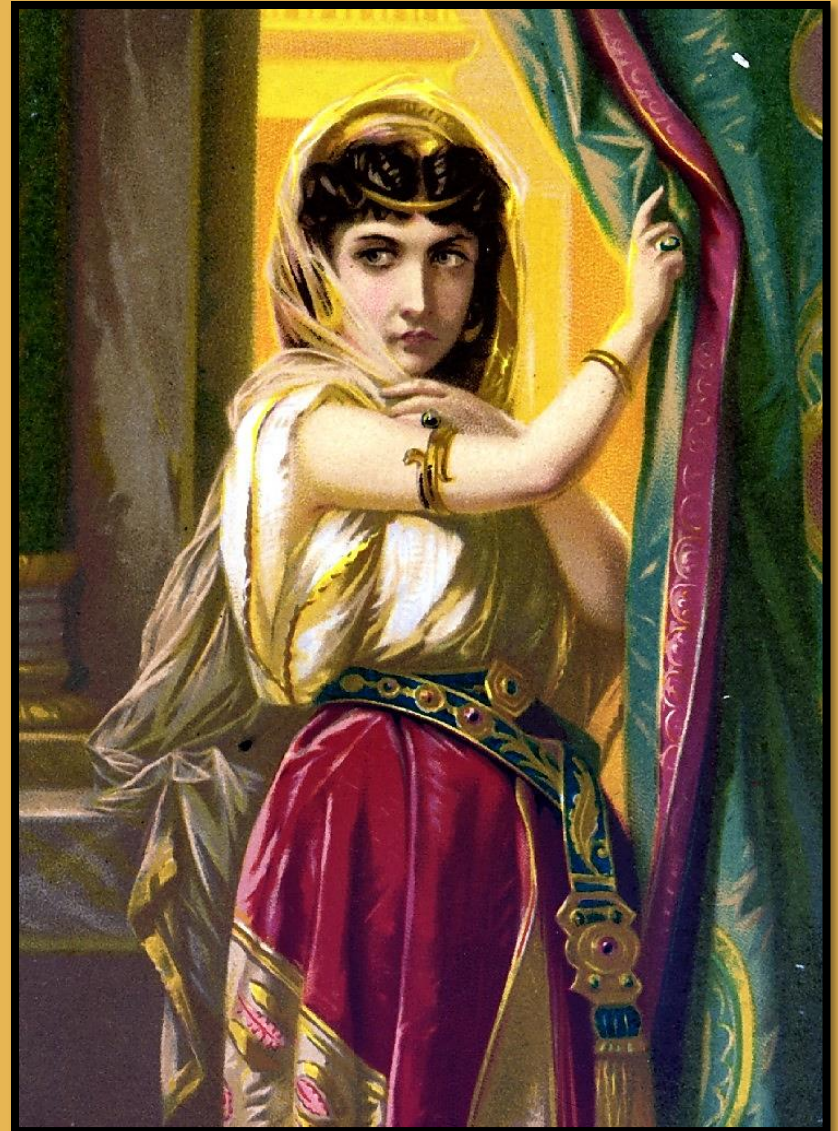
“⁴And the LORD said unto Moses, **Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun,** that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. ⁵And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, **Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.**”



Zimri and Cozbi the Adulterers

NUMBERS 25:6-18

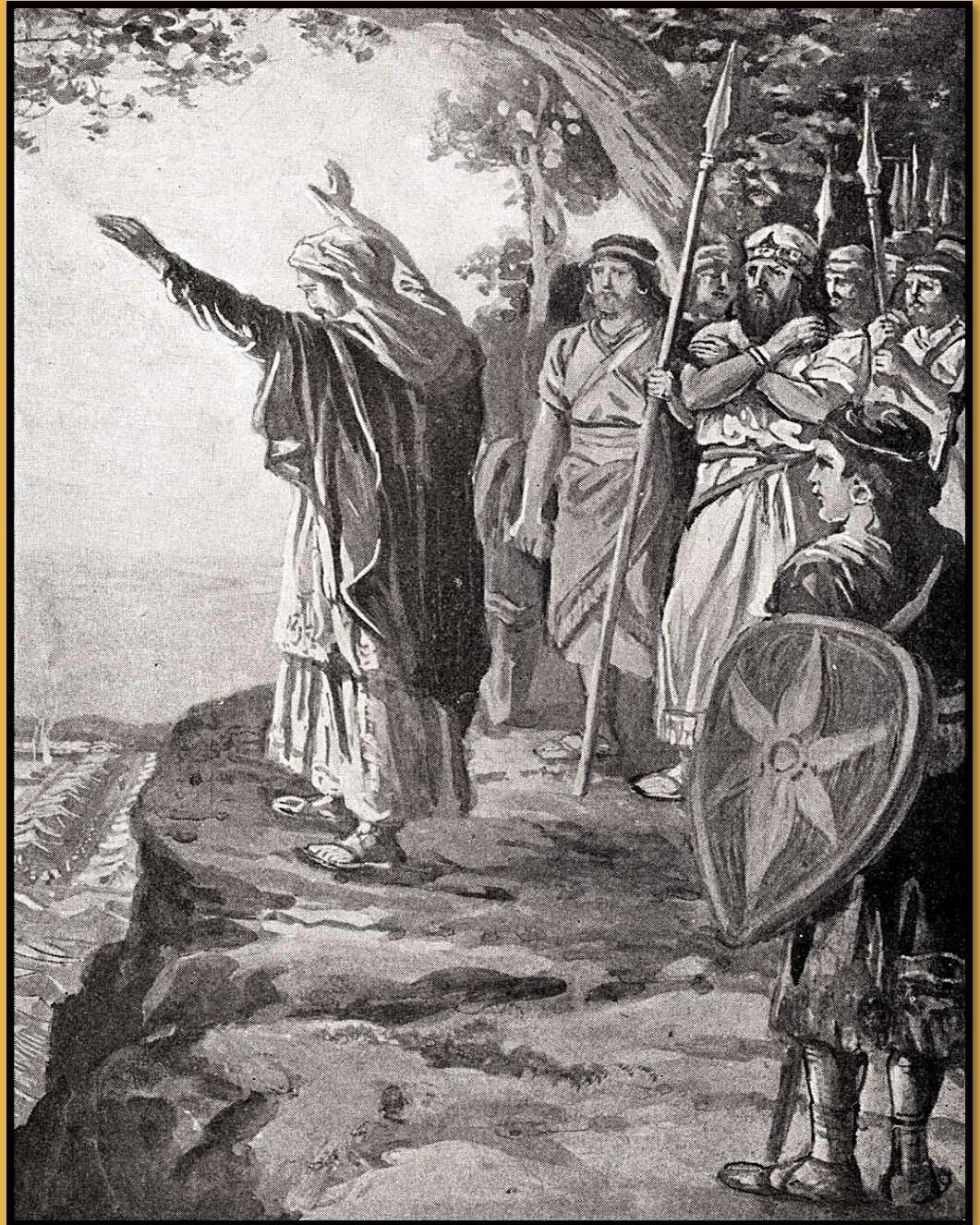
Zimri, an Israelite and prince or chief of the tribe of Simeon, publicly led a Midianitish harlot named Cozbi through the Israelite camp and into a tent. He was not ashamed to parade her before Moses and all the people. He was defiant as he passed by Israelites who were weeping because he was openly dishonoring God. Immediately a plague began, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest went into the tent and thrust both of them through with a javlin. The plague stopped but already there were 24,000 dead.



The Midianites were in league with Balak king of Moab when he took Balam the sorcerer on top of Peor to pronounce a curse upon Israel.

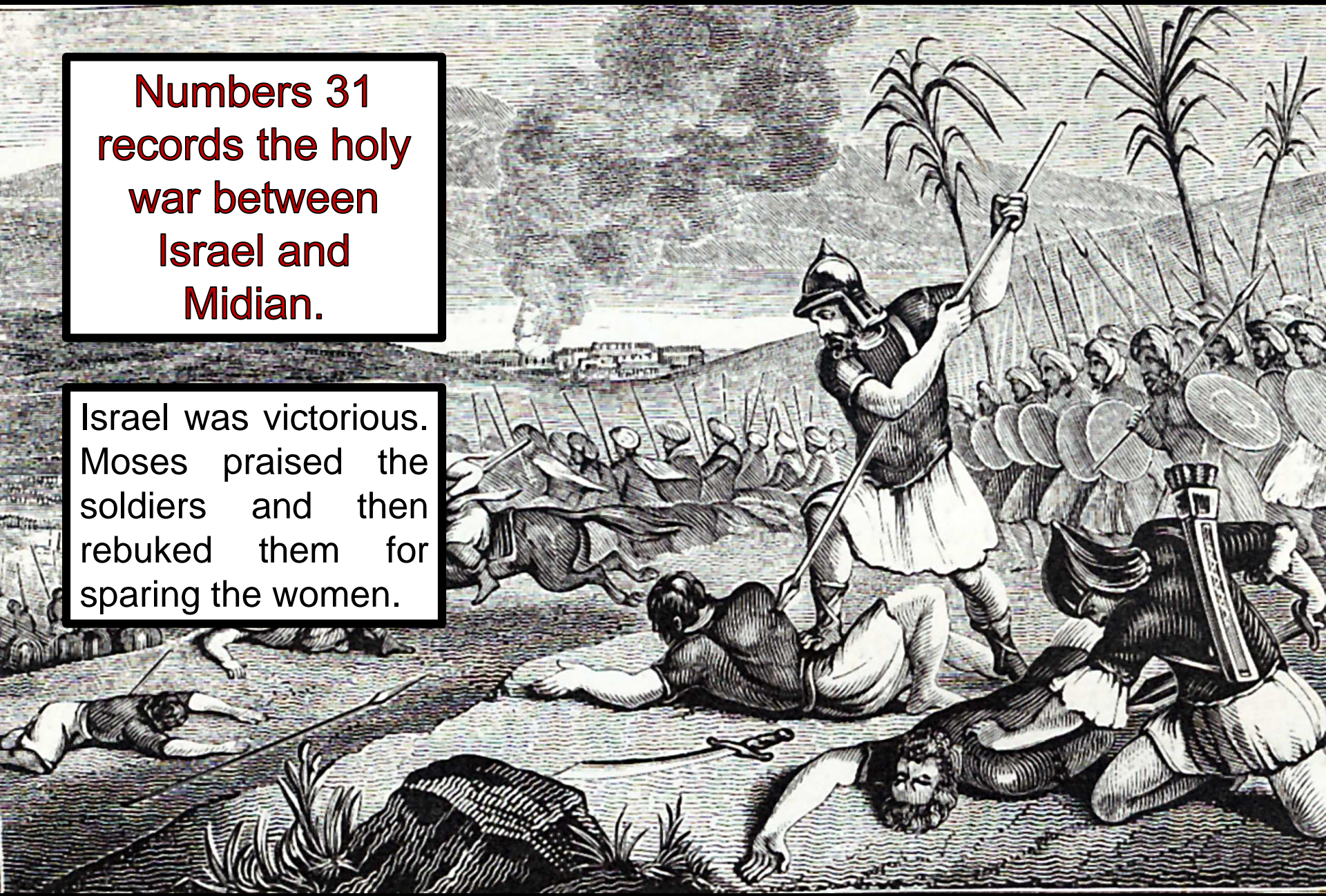
AND NOW,
this Midianite woman,
Cozbi, had seduced
Zimri, an Israelite prince,
and brought about the
death of 24,000 people!

God was ready to smite
the Midianites for their
wickedness.



Numbers 31
records the holy
war between
Israel and
Midian.

Israel was victorious.
Moses praised the
soldiers and then
rebuked them for
sparing the women.



Numbers 31

“And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.”

[It is curious that Balaam returned to Moab from Padamaram and fought in this war against Israel. He must have finally decided whose side he was on.]



The

End