**Abstract**

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                Scholars have employed the biblical Balaam traditions both in the defense of and in opposition to Jan Assmann’s assertion that early Israel rejected cross-cultural religious translatability on the basis of a strict monotheism. The Hebrew Bible’s diverse portrayals of Balaam have long stimulated scholarly, literary-critical analysis. Also, the Deir ʿAlla inscription provides an intriguing extra-biblical glimpse of this enigmatic character. In this study, I discern how these early depictions of Balaam reflect socially shaped and shared memories of Balaam as a foreign religious specialist who participated in Israel’s past. I argue that early memories of Balaam suggest his warm reception among Yhwh worshipping Israelites in spite of his foreign status. However, later guardians of Israel’s written traditions came to remember and write about Balaam as a diviner whose role in Israel’s past primarily served to demonstrate the dangers of non-Israelites and their abominable religious practices.