

# Kol Mevasser

## SHABBAT HUKKAT-BALAKH

12 Tammuz 5769

July 4, 2009

Kahal Joseph Congregation • 10505 Santa Monica Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90025

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### *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*

*by Rabbi Yosef Benarroch, SEC Jerusalem*

If I could give a theme to this week's Parasha of "Balak" it would be to be careful of religious leaders who come off as pious but speak with a forked tongue. One of the more complicated characters in the Torah is "Bilaam". Questions abound regarding "Bilaam", who we are told in Rabbinic sources was no less a prophet than Moses. First of all how could a person who wanted to curse the Jewish nation be a prophet? Would not such curses be a contradiction to G-d's promise to the Jewish nation? How could a prophet negate G-d's words?

As we begin to read the story of "Bilaam" he seems to live up to his reputation as a trustworthy prophet. On the surface he says all the right things. When approached for the first time by "Balak's" men, who ask him to curse the Jewish nation, he responds with the following words, "Stay here over night and I will give you a response according to the word of G-d" (Bamidbar 22:7). As we would expect from a reputable prophet, "Bilaam" explains that he can only act according to G-d's words.

The following morning after speaking with G-d he gives the men of "Balak" the following response, "Go back to your land for G-d has not given me permission to accompany you" (Bamidbar 22:13). Once again he is faithful to G-d's word. "Balak" is not satisfied with "Bilaam's" response and he sends his men a second time to convince "Bilaam" to agree to the mission. The second time "Bilaam" responds with the following words, "Even if Balak would give me his house filled

### PRAYER SCHEDULE

#### SHABBAT HUKKAT-BALAKH

##### 11 Tammuz / Friday, July 3rd

Shaharith .....6:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....7:00 pm  
Shabbat Candlelighting.....7:50 pm

##### 12 Tammuz / Saturday, July 4th

Shaharit .....8:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....7:15 pm  
Motzei Shabbat .....8:53 pm

##### 13 Tammuz / Sunday, July 5th

Shaharith .....7:30 am

#### Weekdays

##### 14-16 Tammuz/ July 6th to 8th

Shaharith .....6:30 am  
*Learn to Pray: Shaharit, Part III*  
Wednesday, July 8th.....7:30 pm

##### 17 Tammuz / Thursday, July 9th

**Shvah Asar B'Tammuz / Fast of 17th of Tammuz**  
Fast Begins .....4:19 am  
Shaharith .....6:30 am/TBA  
Minhah & Arvith .....TBA  
Fast Ends.....8:47 pm

#### SHABBAT PINHAS

##### 18 Tammuz / Friday, July 10th

Shaharith .....6:30 am  
Minhah & Arvith .....7:00 pm  
Shabbat Candlelighting.....7:48 pm

with gold and silver I cannot go against the Lord my G-d" (Bamidbar 22 18). From the beginning of the story "Bilaam" comes off as a prophet should, always adhering to the word of G-d.

In fact throughout the story he comes out squeaky clean. In the end he agrees to go and curse the Jewish nation but every time he tries to utter a curse a blessing comes out instead. After the first attempt the following dialogue

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takes place, "And Balak said to Bilaam what have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies and behold you have blessed them. And he (Bilaam) answered, did I not tell you that whatever words G-d places in my mouth I will speak" (Bamidbar 23:11-12). Once again "Bilaam" comes off as always wanting to do the will of G-d. This episode is repeated a second (and third) time and once again he responds with the following, "Did I not speak to you thus saying all that G-d says to me, only that I will do" (Bamidbar 23 26).

When reading the story of "Bilaam" one never hears him offending G-d. In each episode he carefully words his responses so as to always appear as if he is one of the good guys. But "Bilaam" is nothing less than a wolf in sheep's clothing. While he may never divulge his true motives, it is clear that he neither likes the Jewish people, and that he would be only too happy to go against G-d to destroy the Jewish nation.

Our Rabbis are quick to point out that "Bilaam" was a man of ill repute. The Zohar explains that "Bilaam" was one and the same as "Lavan". It is not clear if the Zohar meant to say that "Bilaam" was the reincarnation of "Lavan" or whether the two characters were one and the same. The important message of the Zohar is that the two shared common ideas and character traits. Why would the Rabbis compare "Bilaam" to "Lavan"? What did the two have in common? How could the Rabbis compare "Bilaam" to the father of Jacob's wives?

The answer is that they both spoke with forked tongues. With "Lavan" as with "Bilaam" the agenda was never clear. They said one thing but really thought another. The most striking parallel between the two is that they both disguised themselves as saintly and honest individuals when in reality they were dishonest.

"Do not fear the Pharisees and do not fear the Sadducees, but fear those who are of color for they act as Zimri (who sinned) but ask to receive the reward of Pinhas" (Talmud Sotah 22b). What Yannai was telling his wife is that when dealing with the Pharisees or Sadducees one knows exactly what they are up against. The most dangerous people, he was telling her, are those who disguise their true intentions.

This in fact was "Bilaam". He constantly came off as a righteous man who feared G-d and would not dare go against him to curse the Jewish nation. But in truth he was a man of deceit who wanted nothing less than to see the Jewish nation annihilated.

There is much to learn from this story. In our personal lives we have to be careful of "Bilaam" personalities. We have to ourselves aspire to be truthful with others, and to be on the lookout for those who speak with forked tongues. But if we must be careful on a personal level we must also be careful as a nation. The Jewish people have encountered too many "Bilaam's". Those who in public claimed to be our friends but in truth were our greatest enemies. Who can forget the face that Yasser Arafat showed the west, always claiming to be a champion of peace with Israel, but when he spoke to the Arab media he spoke about Jihad exposing his true intentions. He was one of the great students of "Bilaam" and yet was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. He was nothing less than a wolf in sheep's clothing. Our Parasha warns us to always be on guard and to expose those with forked tongues for who they really are. Wishing you all a Shabbat Shalom

*Published courtesy of the SEC*

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<p><b>Parasha &amp; Haftara</b> <i>Parashat Hukat-Balak</i> pp. 652 <i>Haftarah</i> pp. 682</p>
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We offer our  
deepest condolences  
to Alice Zekaria and her family  
on the loss of

Isaac Hanono, z"l  
her father, who passed away  
last week in Mexico

We thank our guests  
Rabbi Abner Weiss  
and members of the  
Westwood Village Synagogue  
who shared a wonderful  
educational, and inspiring  
joint Shabbat with us.

**Kahal Joseph Congregation  
Norma & Sam Dabby  
Talmud Torah Corner**

Registration for the  
2009-2010 year continues  
through the summer.

*For more information please contact  
Molly Jalali, Director at 310.474.0559  
or molly@kahaljoseph.org*

### **In Memoriam**

These anniversaries occur from Shabbat, the 12th of Tammuz (July 4, 2009) to Shabbat, the 19th of Tammuz (July 11, 2009). It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services.

**Shabbat / 12 Tammuz**  
Eshagh ben Yehuda\*

**Monday / 14 Tammuz**  
Rachel bat Aziza

**Tuesday / 15 Tammuz**  
Mazal Sawdayi bat Rima Cohen

**Thursday / 17 Tammuz**  
Abdallah ben Ezra Itzhak

**Friday / 18 Tammuz**  
Naamat bat Zimha Zelkha

*\*Yahrzeit names with asterisks are missing contact phone numbers and addresses for family members. To update the database, please call 310.474.0559.*

### **Refuah Shlemah**

*Please include these individuals in your prayers*  
Yonatan ben Alizah ▪ Mazal Tob bat Sulha  
Matana ▪ Jack Wickett ▪ Ayala bat Naomi  
Yosi ben Esther ▪ Yaheskel ben Regina  
Matilda Louisa ▪ Victor ben Pauline  
Haim ben Mordechai ▪ Khayah Noa bat Sara  
Pnina bat Esther ▪ Moshe ben Najj

## **Kahal Joseph Calendar 2009-2010 DEADLINE July 24, 2009**

**Be a Sponsor of the Month for \$600  
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Send us photos of new babies by e-mail or on CD for our newborn collage . We also would like information about events such as births, bar/bat mitzvahs, graduations and weddings that occurred in your family from September 2008 to September 2009.

*For more information please contact either  
Yvette Dabby at ydabby@sbcglobal.net  
or Selena Dallal at selenadallal@gmail.com*