

PROPHETS FOR HIRE

a Messianic plague

by Mark Huey

Several weeks ago on the way to our *Shabbat* services, I mentioned to my family that with *Balak* (Numbers 22:2-25:9) being the Torah portion, it would be an excellent time for our congregational leader to address some of the problems associated with immorality in the camp. In light of our desire to keep him informed about some of the problems emerging in the Messianic community today, we had loaned him our copy of the vile volume circulating that endorsed polygamy and a number of other serious sexual deviations (see my McHuey Blog posting, “Tare-erized! Beware!” from 29 June, 2008).

Little did I know that shortly after entering into worship as the music commenced, our congregational leader would tap me on the shoulder and ask if I would share some of my thoughts on *Balak*. My initial reaction was a degree of shock, because I had not properly prepared to give a message, but rather than adamantly refuse, I told him I would take a look at some of the Scriptures during the praise and worship time and be prepared to share in the *midrash* he indicated he was going to initiate in lieu of a more formal teaching.

As I thumbed through the pages of *Balak* and the corresponding Haftarah reading from Micah 5:6-6:8, as well as a recommended reading from the Apostolic Writings in 1 Corinthians, it dawned on me that King Balak, who in some interpretations of his name (*Balaq*, בַּלָּק) is referred to as the “destroyer,” was in a very real sense a human representation of the Adversary or Satan. Of course, it did not take but an instant to remember that in Yeshua’s description of Himself as the Door of hope and Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:7-18), He contrasted Himself to the robber or thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

Considering this, I imagined King Balak up on the hills of Moab, looking out over the plains of Moab where the Israelites were encamped in an orderly fashion, after having heard about their victorious exploits during the wilderness sojourn. I pictured him as a type of Satan conniving about how he could bring curses down upon Israel, God’s chosen people, in order to devastate them. Obviously from the reading, Balak also knew of the reputation of a recognized regional prophet who apparently was available for hire. As the *parashah* tells us, Balak sends multiple emissaries to Balaam, with the enticements of remuneration and enhanced prestige. Eventually, despite some supernatural warnings, Balaam decides to make the journey. The lure of financial gain, and perhaps additional notoriety, are too much for him to turn down.

As I contemplated these unique circumstances, I realized that the tactics of the enemy of our souls have not changed over the past few thousand years. Satan absolutely wants to destroy the people of God, or at least ruin their reputation among others, and in so doing take as many people as he can with him to the Lake of Fire. Apparently based on the testimony presented in the balance of Scripture, it is a time-tested strategy that has worked at various levels down

through the generations of humanity.

With all of that in mind, I thought about the current predicaments in the Messianic community, the greater Christian world, and even the Jewish community. Each of these groups claims to be the Israel of God, a part of Israel, or at least somehow connected to Israel. I reflected on not only the ultimate strategy suggested by Balaam to Balak to encourage the Moabite and Midianite women (or prostitutes) to enter the Israelite camp in order to entice the men into sexual perversion, but also to lead them into the worship of false gods. Balaam's ultimate matter was to get the Israelites to commit unfaithfulness against their God:

"Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD" (Numbers 31:16).

Consequently, in light of the fallacious book endorsing polygamy and other sexual sins, the deviant claims and teachings emanating from a purported healing revival right here in Florida, and even some malicious and unwise statements about how to learn the so-called intricacies of Hebrew by a false teacher who denigrates those who seek to understand it as an Ancient Near Eastern language and instead treats it as something mystical—I was just overwhelmed by the perversions from truth. We have strayed too far from the ways of God! Then this struck me like a lightning bolt: **I realized that much of the deviant teaching resulting in ungodly behavior in the greater Judeo-Christian world, is primarily a result of false teachers, false prophets, and false apostles who—knowingly or not—are all essentially prophets for hire.** Let me explain.

Being called into ministry, and accepting God's call upon your life, gives one a unique perspective on what goes on in and around the religious world. You get to see a side to "spiritual people" that before you thought you would never see. Unless genuinely initiated by the Lord, I personally would not recommend that anyone pursue this calling because of the responsibilities it entails. If you do not have the Divine enablement and stamina only available through Him supernaturally gifting you, you will find yourself attempting to minister by your own human talents and fleshly strengths, thus ultimately leading you into a series of problems. There are scores of examples throughout Scripture and history that bear witness to this. Eventually, like Balaam, one can be tempted by the need for financial support, or in some cases human affirmation or recognition as a "prophet," "apostle," or "anointed teacher," for the truths and integrity of God's Word to become severely compromised.

Instead of seeking fortune or fame, a teacher must truly understand and embrace what is probably the most important trait to have in order to minister to the Body of Messiah. **This knowledge is undoubtedly a healthy and genuine fear of the Lord.** James the Just puts it this way: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). The Torah did not tell us that Balaam had a great fear of the Lord, even though he could not directly curse the people of Israel.

If you at all analyze much of the teaching that is coming forth from the current crop of *prophets for hire*, you might note that there does not appear to be any significant fear of the Lord. Repentance of sin and living a life of holiness are not

the name of the game. Whether it is concocting erroneous calendars that time and again make claims about some 6,000 year doctrine that do not materialize, in order to use the spirit of fear to prompt undiscerning people to support their efforts, or disparaging entire books of the Apostolic Scriptures as being uninspired, or people making claims about their “Israelite” heritage that cannot be proven, or stating that God told them to actually tattoo themselves (cf. Leviticus 19:28) or that they are hearing from a female angel or “FILL IN THE BLANK”—it is obvious to me that these hirelings do not fear the consequences of their false teachings and claims!

As the praise music waxing in the background caught my attention, I re-read through the Haftarah Micah prophecy, being reminded of his conclusion where God lays out His requirements for living a life that pleases Him. I started to wonder why these prophets for hire never seem to address these foundational attributes that God absolutely requires His children to exemplify:

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

What happened to the less-than-ear-tickling messages about justice, love, mercy, and humility? Are these not principles taught in the Torah, and indeed throughout the Bible, that we should be hearing today? I was quickly reminded that Yeshua Himself brought these principles to the forefront when admonishing the Pharisaical leaders for their emphasis on the minutiae of the Torah, rather than the weightier demands of its moral and ethical code:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others” (Matthew 23:23).

When the music transitioned to another worship song, I received some confirmation in my spirit that addressing these topics in the upcoming *midrash* was going to be important. A musical rendition of Psalm 27, a song that I sing to myself and out loud when out of earshot, was played. My mind wandered over to the song as I personally claimed its promises:

“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. **And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD”** (Psalm 27:4-6).

When the Holy Spirit confirms in your heart that the direction you are going with your thoughts is valid and has His blessing, then your confidence to continue by stepping out in faith becomes resolute. I then turned to 1 Corinthians 1:20-31, and was reminded of the great contrast between being a fool and having the wisdom of the Almighty. Having just finished writing an article (from last month's OIM News) which quoted a part of this passage, I knew I was tuning in to what the Spirit of the Lord was wanting me to share with those gathered at

the assembly.

As the worship was coming to a close and the more I thought about all of these current realities, the more I was led to consider some of Paul's admonitions in 2 Thessalonians. Paul writes about what is to be expected as the Body of Messiah approaches the days before Yeshua's return. Categorical statements are made that warn Believers that we are *not* supposed to be fearful about the Great Tribulation and the revealing of the son of perdition, **until after the great falling away and the building of a third temple** where the man of sin or lawlessness can sit and claim that he is God:

"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Messiah Yeshua and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. **Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness*" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

As you read these words, the instructions for us are quite sobering. Not only is there going to be a great apostasy or falling away from the faith, but in due time, the Holy One is actually going to send a strong delusion to test people. These are some of the most frightening verses in the Bible, which should make the concept of working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) just that much more tangible. This admonition is very clear to those who read these texts with open eyes. Not only will the coming antimesiah/antichrist demonstrate the powers of false signs and wonders—in order to deceive billions—but the deception will be so great that many will be deceived because they did not love the truth that would redeem them! **This in and of itself is something that every one of us needs to consider and contemplate in our quiet moments before the Lord.** How do we maintain our guard against such strong deception?

Today, we are all witnessing many preliminary tests, trials, and tribulations as prophets for hire have been sown in as tares among the maturing wheat. **These clever tare-erizers profit handsomely from their multitude of followers who will be held accountable for enabling them with their monies!** The challenge is that Yeshua tells us that we are told not to pull these tares out from the field, because

of the possibility of destroying the wheat (Matthew 13:24-43). In His mercy toward all, instead of pulling out the tares an opportunity is extended for them to repent, because in God's economy tares can be turned into wheat.

What we need at this hour is an army of people who have an anointing of priests like Phinehas, and who will verbally challenge these prophets for hire using the sword of the Word of God. It is this sword that can cut down to the marrow and judge the thoughts the intentions of the heart:

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **And there is no creature hidden from His sight**, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

No creature or erroneous action can be hidden from the sight of God. In due time, all things will be opened and laid bare before the Lord for those who do not turn away from evil. However, in the case of the actual Balaam, he had to suffer the painful death of a real sword in the hands of Israel's holy army:

"Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest* of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; **they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword**" (Numbers 31:6-8).

We do not need to slay the modern-day emulators of Balaam, but instead implore them to repent before the Holy One. If they do not turn, but continue on their path as tares sown among God's wheat, then we see that their ultimate destiny is one that I know I would not want to wish on anyone who has ever lived:

"But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, **and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam**, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, **for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever**" (Jude 10-13).

Brethren, if you are given the anointing and Spirit-led opportunity, confront the prophets for hire on the damage they have done and are doing to the Messianic movement! Fearing abuse from these false teachers is not a legitimate obstacle or excuse, because the consequences of their grossly false teachings will eventually catch the eye of the world that we are trying to impact for the Messiah of Israel. We need to be those who will stand up for the Lord, realizing how important the restoration message actually is.

My friends, our faith community does not need an exposé by television shows like 60 Minutes or 20/20, where the issues that plague us—now including

polygamy—are strewn out to the world like dirty laundry, or even like tabloid headlines. We need men and women today who will rise up and stop the plague in our midst! **We need to be mindful that both the Bible and history teach us that unless God’s people rise up to correct the problems in their midst, then severe consequences will result.** The Messianic movement has so much potential for returning people to godliness and holiness that is just being wasted by this generation of today’s “leaders.” When will we wake up and take notice?

As our congregational announcements were coming to a close and the beginning of the *midrash* was approaching, I received one final confirmation that speaking bluntly to those gathered had the Lord’s blessing. In my daily desire to read the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds with the day of the month, I turned to Proverbs 12 in my Bible and found this confirming passage about the need to speak the truth in love, especially since I was led to bring up the passages about the piercing of the sword:

“He *who* speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise *promotes* health” (Proverbs 12:17-18, NKJV).

While difficult things need to be stated in the days ahead, wise people will always be there to offer solutions to those who have been led astray. I implore each of you not to be deceived by the things floating around our movement today, but to return to the foundational principles of God’s justice, mercy, and holiness that He desires us to have. May the Word of God that declares His righteousness pierce all of our hearts as we seek His will for our lives!