

#37 Shelach Lekha Numbers 13:1-15:41

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * God cares about us and sees us.
- * We are not a people who put up a fake front.
- * There are some people out there that truly want to do what is right, who want to follow God, and want truth.
- * God is for us, His Holy Spirit is empowering, and we can have true peace in our God.

Why do we talk about the portions from the Torah? The prophet Nehemiah is credited with separating the Torah into portions (54 sections), but Moshe (Moses) himself could have done that. Nehemiah was a holy prophet who wrote one of the books of the Bible. God probably told the holy prophet Nehemiah to teach these portions so people would be instructed throughout the year. We need frequent instruction so we can be faithful. Shaul (Paul) said, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching;" 2 Timothy 4:1-2 NKJV. There was no New Testament at the time, so he was talking about the Old Testament. We need to learn how to apply the Old Testament. It gives us wisdom and understanding. Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV says, "For this is your wisdom and your understanding."

Shelach Lekha means, "send for yourself." This parashah talks about the scouts who were sent into Canaan. Of particular interest for us is Caleb who represented the tribe of Judah. He was not Jewish according to modern Jewish standards, but he was assimilated into the tribe of Judah. It was always God's intention that the Gentiles be assimilated into the Jewish community. Moshe changed Hoshea's name to Yehoshua (Joshua). Hoshea means God saved; Yehoshua means God saves. Joshua could have felt that he was on a mission for God when Moshe did this. Caleb and Joshua were the only ones to give positive reports.

Perhaps they left for Canaan at the end of the month of Sivan because it is said that the sin of the spies took place on the 9th of Av (Mishna Taanit 4:6-7). The 1st and 2nd Temples are said to have been destroyed on the 9th of Av. After forty days, they returned and the 10 negative spies said that although the land was plentiful, the people there were well fortified and that made the Israelites afraid. The people were about to stone Moshe, but the presence of the Lord appeared and the Lord threatens to disown them. Moshe pleads for the people and reiterates the mercy that God had revealed to Moshe and the Lord relents.

Because of all their sins and unbelief, the people of that generation, those 20 and up except for those who didn't commit the sin of the ten spies, would die in the wilderness. Israel would spend forty years (38 more years) in the wilderness. Those that spread the negative rumors would die. Satan the son of Michael who was one of the negative scouts, whose first three letters of his name adds up to 666, was perhaps the instigator of the unbelief among Israel. Perhaps the number used by Yochanan (John) in the book of Revelation, 666, has more to do with a people who lack faith in God. It seems more and more in this age; people are denying the existence of God.

Psalms 14:1-2 NKJV says, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God." Sometimes we try to assess what is going on in the world and it looks like everyone has become fools. Just go to YouTube sometime and listen to some of the junk that's on there. There are as many opinions as there are people. If you want truth, you need to go to the Creator God who knows all and wants us to have the wisdom He has given us in the Bible.

Some among the camp decided to go into Canaan after they were told not to, and they were defeated because they were no longer supposed to go into the land. This teaches us that we need to listen to how God leads us. If He says no, then the answer is no. There is then more information about the giving of offerings after they enter the land. They stoned a man who was not keeping Shabbat. They all had different jobs. He was probably doing his job which he wasn't supposed to do on Shabbat. They were to make fringes on the corners of their garments (tzitzit) with a blue cord as a reminder to keep God's commandments and be a holy people. The Jews can't agree on the color blue so they use all white cords. So, they don't keep the commandment because of their micromanagement. It doesn't seem to occur to them that any shade of blue would provide for keeping this command.

We repeatedly see that God expects His people to be a holy and believing people and be willing to follow God's leading. Israel kept moving forward even after failure and we also need to keep moving forward spiritually. Also, the effect of the negative talk of the spies results is a lack of trust in God and is a deterrent to receiving God's promises. So, stay in faith. What can we learn from the sin of the spies?

The lack of faith in this era has resulted in several things. Some are afraid of the Holy Spirit even though Yeshua commands us not to be afraid of the Holy Spirit in Luke 11:13 NKJV, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him;" Luke 11:13 NKJV. People think negative things about people who speak in tongues; there is nothing wrong with God's gifts; sometimes people can act a little weird; that's not God's fault. Shaul tells us to desire God's gifts. "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV.

Speaking in tongues and desiring God's spiritual gifts are God's commandments, so not pursuing those are sin. Shaul said, "The things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord;" 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV. Wasn't Canaan a gift from God to Israel? God removed the perverted people and child murderers and gave the land to Israel. It is a picture of the future kingdom of God, perverted people will be in the lake of fire. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone;" Revelation 21:8 NKJV. We all have a choice how we will live and where we will go for eternity.

Unbelief can affect many areas of our life. We work to provide for our family; our work represents who we are; we provide services for others; our job also provides for those who work with us. A negative attitude about work can be a detriment to our life and the lives of others.

A negative attitude about people can affect how we treat them. Being negative can cause us to make others stumble. Lashon harah (do not commit evil speaking) is a properly applied command from the Old Testament portion. Stay positive, it's the best defense against the devil. God values people; we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26); we are valuable; others are valuable. Treat others with respect and dignity. Shaul said, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all;" Galatians 6:10 NKJV. That's what we teach; not the hate that these God haters teach. If people became conscientious understanding believers, this world would be a better place.

Doing some things without God's permission can result in calamity. The people were to wear fringes to remind them to keep God's commands. In the present it is appropriate to wear tzitzit at times to keep this command; we also now have the Holy Spirit to remind us to keep God's commands.

The Haftarah for Shelach Lekha is Joshua 2:1-24. Joshua sends in two spies to check out Jericho. Rahab hides the spies and tells them that their God is the true God and asks them to spare her family. In contrast

to the spies that gave the negative report, the spies reported to Joshua that the Lord will deliver the land into Israel's hands. Israel goes on to succeed. Archeologists have found the ruins and conquest of Jericho for an earlier time period than what was originally thought.

When we apply a more recent understanding, it was actually around 1447 BC that Israel left Egypt; the conquest of Jericho and other conquests found in Canaan fall right into place with this recent find. Then, both the timing and archeology then line up for the time period Israel would have actually entered Canaan. Because people are stuck in old thought, many don't see the how archeology proves Israel entered and conquered Canaan. Perhaps they just don't want it to fit together because they don't want to actually believe in God and be held accountable to God. We should be a people who care about the things of God and want to be accountable to the God of the universe; He cares for us.

God cares about us and sees us. It is truly an amazing reality to believe this in your heart and realize this in your heart. I don't know if I could put this into words. King David wrote a song about this.

Psalms 139:1-6 NKJV

"O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it."

God knows us through and through. There isn't anything that we think about or do that He does not know about. God knows what we are going to speak before we speak it. Perhaps we can apply this in different ways to ourselves. One is that God knows all we go through and He truly cares enough about us to know us. I have seen people deeply touched by God revealing His caring nature.

One time while in the jungle, I had a word from God for a teacher there. I told her I had a vision of her before I went to the jungle and that God just wanted me to encourage her. Think about it. Most people would just say thank you, but she had been struggling; I had no idea. She began crying and after she got her composure together, it just turned out that the teaching that was about to begin was on how God knows us and the prophetic can reveal God's love for us. She began to cry again; the person teaching kept on repeating himself and saying more and more about God's love. She had to get up and go to the back. The person doing the translating for me had to get up and go to the back because he began crying too. I sat there with tears in my eyes; I couldn't believe what had just happened. God truly does know us and cares about us.

Another thing to consider is that nothing that is in our heart or mind gets past God. Perhaps we feel a deep repentance just knowing how deeply God knows us. There are many times in my life that I have committed my life deeply to God while knowing that He knows me so completely. I can hardly think about this without stopping what I am doing as I write this. God's people have a true and personal relationship with God.

We are not a people who put up a fake front. We're not interested in putting on a false face, but in living true to God and living how He wants us to live. Someone once came to Yeshua (Jesus) and asked Him how to have eternal life. Yeshua said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." Matthew 19:17 NKJV. There are people out there that think they are okay with God, but Yeshua said otherwise, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your

name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Matthew 7:21-23 NKJV.

Sometimes we look at the world and wonder where are the people who are true to God's heart. There are some people out there that truly want to do what is right, who want to follow God, and want truth. As we get to know some of these people, we truly see that they have a genuine love for God and want to live right. Years ago, one of my cousins believed in God and the Messiah Yeshua and he responded by telling me one day that he wanted to be holy. That is a natural response to wanting to be in relationship with God.

God set Israel free so they could be freed from the sin and idolatry of Egypt and live for God. "For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy;" Leviticus 11:45 NKJV. They were to dedicate themselves to being holy and keep God's commandments. "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you;" Leviticus 20:7-8 NKJV. They were to be a holy separate people and not engage in the perversions of the world. Leviticus 20:26 NKJV says, "And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine."

Joshua and Caleb went into the land that God promised them and they came back and told the people what God said is true; the land is just as God had told them. That should have been enough for them to realize that God was for them and He would not desert them. Israel was now God's people and He would do what He said He would do. But the people listened to the words of unbelief and the worldly. After all that they had been through, God was there for them and remained with them. God is there for us and with us too as believers in the true God. So, don't shrink back from understanding that.

God is for us, His Holy Spirit is empowering, and we can have true peace in our God. There are some great scriptures in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10:35-39 NKJV says:

"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

Don't be downcast, be strong so you will receive God's promise of eternal life. Have faith, don't doubt, don't go back to destructive and sinful ways. Sin can bring bad things into our lives and it also hurts our relationship with God. Through God, Israel was set free to live for God as His holy people and we are set free to live for God through the Messiah Yeshua.

Yeshua tells us, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you;" John 14:15-18 NKJV. The world does not know us because we are not of the world. God has not left us alone, but is with us and works in us through the Holy Spirit.

What kind of people will we be? Will we be overcome by worldly thinking like some were in the desert? Will we seek truth and seek God and change accordingly? God knows everything about us. Will we encounter God and realize He is God and we are not or will we deny Him? It is truly an honor and a privilege to be in relationship with God. How will we treat that privilege? We don't want a fake life, but to

live true and good lives as God's people. We are on a mission with other true believers who out there and who also want to live in relationship with God, and to be holy and keep his commandments. God is holy and He wants us to be holy; He has given us the Holy Spirit through the Messiah Yeshua to help us. He empowers us, so move forward and believe in His promise of eternal life. Israel did not give up, but kept moving forward even after adversity. May we be a faithful people who keep moving forward and don't shrink back into destructive and sinful works.