Bits of Torah Truths | Parashat Shelach Lecha

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The Fear of the Lord is a Healthy Thing!

This weeks reading is from Parashat Shelach Lecha (*Bamidbar / Numbers 13:1-15:41*), the Lord commands Moshe to send men to spy out the land of Canaan which He was giving to the Children of Yisrael (*13:1-2*). Moshe says יח וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ מַה-הִוא וְאֶת-הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ הֲחָזָק הוּא הֲרָפֶה הַמְעַט הוּא אִם-רָב: *13:18 'See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. (NASB)* Moshe seeks to have these questions answered of whether the land is fat or lean, are the camps well fortified or open, is the land flowing with milk and honey (זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ הִוא) and is the land very plentiful? Having sent the men out, the men returned from spying out the land bringing a good report of the land being filled with milk and honey and a bad report of the inhabitants who live in the land (*13:32*). As a result of the bad report, the people wept all night long and grumbled against Moshe and Aaron. Caleb and Joshua stood up before the people and said the land is good and plentiful and filled with milk and honey (*14:7-9*). If the Lord is pleased with us He will give the land to us only do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land for they will be our prey (*14:7-9*). The congregation of Israel however wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua (*14:10*). The Lord asks Moshe how long will these people spurn me? Again we find Moshe standing as an intercessor on behalf of the people to spare their lives. Moshe prayed saying יז וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל-נָא כֹּחַ אֲדֹנָי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵּאמֹר: יח יְהוָה אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד נֹשֵׂא עָוֹן וָפָשַׁע וְנַקֵּה לֹא יְנַקֶּה פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים עַל-שִׁלֵּשִׁים וְעַל-רִבֵּעִים: יט סְלַח-נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדֶּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נָשָׂאתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הֵנָּה: כ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סָלַחְתִּי כִּדְבָרֶךָ: *14:17 'But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 14:18 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations. 14:19 'Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.' 14:20 So the Lord said, 'I have pardoned them according to your word. (NASB)*

שדוקה יבתכ / The Holy Scriptures

ספר במדבר פרק יד

ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֲדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבַרְנוּ בָהּ לָתוּר אֹתָהּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד: [שלישי] ח אִם-חָפֵץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה וְהֵבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וּנְתָנָהּ לָנוּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-הִוא זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבָשׁ: ט אַךְ בַּיהוָה אַל-תִּמְרֹדוּ וְאַתֶּם אַל-תִּירְאוּ אֶת-עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לַחְמֵנוּ הֵם סָר צִלָּם מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיהוָה אִתָּנוּ אַל-תִּירָאֵם:

Bamidbar / Numbers 14:7-9

14:7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, 'The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 14:8 'If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us a land which flows with milk and honey. 14:9 'Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.' (NASB)

In this week's reading Moshe asked twelve men to examine the Promised Land, was it good or bad, the cities are they open or fortified, are there trees, and to bring back some fruit of the land. The men went up to spy out the land and when they return they describe the people who live in Hebron as the Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai the descendents of Anak. The men gave both a good and a bad report; they feared men more than they feared God. King David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 19*, י יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לָעַד מִשְׁפְּטֵי-יְהוָה אֱמֶת צָדְקוּ יַחְדָּו: | *19:9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states י דחלתא דיהוה דכיא קיימא לעלמין לעלם דינייא דיהוה הימנותא זכיאו זכיין כחדא: *19:10 The fear of the Lord is pure, lasting forever; the judgments of the Lord are faithfulness; they are altogether just. (EMC)* The rabbis who produced the Targum say that the judgments of God are faithfulness (הימנותא). Studying these verses, when the Lord brings his judgment do we think that He is doing so in faithfulness? What does it mean the judgments of the Lord are faithful? In addition to this, David says that the fear of the Lord and His judgments יא הַנֶּחֱמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז רָב וּמְתוּקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים: *19:10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. (NASB)* How are the judgments of God desirable and sweeter than honey? Aren't God's judgments painful and undesirable? The reason God's judgments are faithful, desirable as gold, and sweeter than honey is the Lord makes known our faults, so that we repent of our sins and He forgives us. The fear of the Lord keeps our lives in check. On the other hand, to deliberately disobey God is an act of rebellion, and it can and will bring God's judgment upon us. Studying the scriptures, the Lord does not always chasten His children every time they do something wrong. The Lord is gentle and patient with us. The psalmist said in *Tehillim / Psalms 103:10*, יא כִּי כִגְבֹהַּ שָׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ גָּבַר חַסְדּוֹ עַל-יְרֵאָיו: יב כִּרְחֹק מִזְרָח מִמַּעֲרָב הִרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-פְּשָׁעֵינוּ: יג כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל-בָּנִים רִחַם יְהוָה עַל-יְרֵאָיו: יד כִּי הוּא יָדַע יִצְרֵנוּ זָכוּר כִּי-עָפָר אֲנָחְנוּ: טו אֱנוֹשׁ כָּחָצִיר יָמָיו כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן יָצִיץ: טז כִּי רוּחַ עָבְרָה בּוֹ וְאֵינֶנּוּ וְלֹא יַכִּירֶנּוּ עוֹד מְקוֹמוֹ: יז וְחֶסֶד יְהוָה מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד-עוֹלָם עַל-יְרֵאָיו וְצִדְקָתוֹ לִבְנֵי בָנִים: יח לְשֹׁמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וּלְזֹכְרֵי פִקֻּדָיו לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָם: יט יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם הֵכִין כִּסְאוֹ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בַּכֹּל מָשָׁלָה: כ בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה מַלְאָכָיו גִּבֹּרֵי כֹחַ עֹשִׂים דְּבָרוֹ לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ: כא בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-צְבָאָיו מְשָׁרְתָיו עֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ: כב בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-מַעֲשָׂיו בְּכָל-מְקוֹמוֹת מֶמְשַׁלְתּוֹ בָּרְכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה: *"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him."* The psalmist recognized that God is very gracious and exceedingly patient with His children. While recognizing that God is very patient and forbearing with us, we must also realize that a single act of willful disobedience can have serious and far-reaching consequences. In the reading for this week, the children of Israel wanted fellowship and faith in the Lord but did not want the more difficult thing to walk in and obey His commands. How often does this happen today in our own lives? Today do we have a healthy mix of faith and fear? The Scriptures say that both are necessary to please God, faith in His Son Yeshua the Messiah, and fear (respect) to obey Him in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Israel spent 40 years in the desert as a result of their disobedience. Let's learn from this and trust in the Lord whole heartedly!

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