

פרשת  
שלח לך  
Parashat Shelach Lecha

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Bamidbar / Numbers 13:1-15:41, Joshua 2:1-24  
Mark 10:1-45

### What is going on in the Lives of God's People

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Shelach Lecha, we are told of Israel's refusal to enter into the Promised Land. The people demonstrated a lack of faith in the Lord, even after having seen all of the miracles He was performing on their behalf to bring them to this point, to enter into His blessing and rest. It is interesting how in *Hebrews 3:9* the author of Hebrews writes the following, "*Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me And saw My works for forty years. (NASB)* the author of Hebrews is speaking of this time in the Torah, and the attitude of the people who refused to enter into the Promised Land. The author of Hebrews continues saying, *4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (NASB)* What is interesting is how the author speaks of coming short of God's promise to enter into His rest and the parallel to Parashat Shelach Lecha saying that "*the people in the wilderness had the good news preached to them just as the good news was preached to*

us.” (see *Hebrews 4:2*) This is very significant, because it appears as if the book of Hebrews is speaking of something considered to be the good news message that was preached to these people in the wilderness who then rejected it. The message of the Torah speaks to having faith in the Lord God of Israel and to having faith in the one who is leading God’s people (His Messiah, see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*). The message of faithfulness in the God of Israel and in what He has done for all of us, is so important, Moshe records this in the text saying, *Bamidbar / Numbers 14: 33 And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. (NASB)* The concept here is what we say and what we do are to be mixed with faith. The parents, in their unfaithfulness to God and His promises, led to the children suffering in the wilderness due to their parents sins. Even after all the people had seen and heard, they still did not actively engage the God of Israel. This teaches us that we have to be careful to “*beware of unbelief.*” The point is Yes, you believe in Yeshua for the salvation of your soul, and for the forgiveness of sin, but do you simply stop there in regards to your faith? Isn’t there more to our life with God and His Messiah than salvation? What is God’s purpose for you? Do you stop at salvation in the sense of “*get me out of Hell in the afterlife,*” and leave it at that? Is this the picture of the faith of the average Christian today? When we look at the wilderness journey Israel spending forty years because of her sins, all of this was purposed to cause the nation to come to the knowledge of her sin. Yes, the Lord had delivered her from bondage, redeemed her from slavery, and set her free, but she did not understand the working of sin in her life because she consistently chose to kick against God’s way of life (the Torah). This led the author of Hebrews to say *4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. (NASB)* The purpose of the Torah was to show us God’s standard for living, and to actually bring us to the One who is able to deliver us. This concept is so important, the Torah tells us the following, *Bamidbar / Numbers 15: 14 And if a stranger is sojourning with you, or anyone is living permanently among you, and he wishes to offer a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the Lord, he shall do as you do. 15:15 For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who*

*sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the Lord. 15:16 One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you. (NASB)* Notice how the Lord says the stranger is to do the same as you do, and that there is to be one statute forever. This speaks of the Torah being for all peoples. The duality of the Torah is (i) to bring us to the knowledge of sin and (ii) to draw us to the One who is able to save us. Paul experienced this in *Romans 7*. He says “*look, I wouldn’t have even known what sin was if it wasn’t for the Law. If the Law didn’t say you shall not covet, I wouldn’t have even known about coveting; but when I came to know the Law, all sorts of things were produced in me.*” Paul describes a massive struggle in *Romans 7* that he wants to obey the Lord, he wants to do the things of God, but he finds that there is this law within him, the law of sin and death, working against God’s Torah and he cries out for someone who will deliver him. The parallel to this week’s Torah portion is this, Moshe could only bring the nation so far. For Israel to inherit God’s promises, and for her to enter into the Promised Land, into the land of victory and rest, required a life that was mixed with faith. Faith produces good works and the works of repentance (see *Matthew 3:8*). Paul wrote that it is in God’s Messiah that life and faith come together to produce what the Lord wants for us as His people. This was what was going on in the lives of the people in the wilderness, and this is what is going on in our lives today! Let’s discuss this further in this week’s Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:1-25*.

### ***Bamidbar / Numbers 14:1-25***

*14:1 Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 14:2 All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 14:3 ‘Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ 14:4 So they said to one another, ‘Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.’ 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of*

*the congregation of the sons of Israel. 14:6 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 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.' 14:10 But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. 14:11 The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? 14:12 'I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.' 14:13 But Moses said to the Lord, 'Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from their midst, 14:14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O Lord, are in the midst of this people, for You, O Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 14:15 'Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, 14:16 'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 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; 14:21 but*

*indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. 14:22 'Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, 14:23 shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. 14:24 'But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it. 14:25 'Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys; turn tomorrow and set out to the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.'* (NASB)

Reading through this week's Torah portion, there are a number of things that come out of the text from *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:1-25*.

1. The people had responded in unfaithfulness.
2. The wanted to return to bondage and sin (Egypt).
3. Those who had faith believed the Lord will bring them into the land.
4. Moshe argued on behalf of the people to save their lives.
5. Moshe calls upon the character of God, his Chesed (Grace, Lovingkindness, Mercy) in order to save the people from utter destruction.
6. The unfaithful will not see or understand the rest and peace of God.
7. The faithful will see the rest and peace God has promised.

If we consider the context of *Hebrews 3-4*, and the words of Yeshua, and the Apostle Paul, the Torah commands were never changed. The apostle Paul did not change the commandments and neither did Yeshua. In fact, the Torah is a part of the Gospel Message according to the author of Hebrews. Both Yeshua and Paul kept the Torah and spoke

in favor of it in many places. (*Acts 16:1-3, 18:18, 20:6-16, 21:17-26, 24:17-18, 25:8, 28:17, Romans 3:31, 7:12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, 11:17-34, and 16:8.*) The reason the Torah is so important for our lives is illustrated throughout Scripture, such as what David writes in his Psalm saying, פֹּא קָלְתָהּ לְתַשׁוּעָתֶךָ נִפְשִׁי לְדַבְרֶךָ יְהִלְתִּי: פֹּב כָּלוּ עֵינַי לְאִמְרָתֶךָ, 19:81 *My soul languishes for Your salvation; I wait for Your word. 119:82 My eyes fail with longing for Your word, While I say, ‘When will You comfort me?’ 119:83 Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget Your statutes. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, רַגִּיגַת לְפֹרְקַנְךָ נִפְשִׁי לְפִתְגַּמְךָ אֹרִיכִית: פֹּב סָפוּ עֵינַי לְמִימְרֶךָ לְמִימְרֶךָ אִימְתִי תִנְחַם יְתִי: פֹּב אֲרוֹם הוּיְתִי הֵיךְ זִרְנוּקָא דְתִלִּי בְקִטְרָא גִזְרַתְךָ קִיִּימְךָ 119:81. *My soul has yearned for your redemption; I have waited long for your word. 119:82. My eyes are spent for your word, saying, “When will you comfort me?” 119:83. For I have become like a water-skin that hangs in the smoke; your decrees I have not forgotten. (EMC)* The psalmist states that His longing is for the salvation (לְתַשׁוּעָתֶךָ) of our God. Based upon a Torah context, we think upon the Salvation of God within the context of Parashat Beshalach (*Shemot / Exodus 13:17-17:16*) when Moshe states, “*Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more...*” The salvation of God delivers and saves one from death, as in the context here from the invading Egyptian army that wants to take the people back into slavery. When we think about the concept of Salvation, today the Christian influences based upon the theologies that have been developed throughout the centuries tends to limit our understanding to simply getting out of Hell in the afterlife. Most of the Christian understanding of the Judaism of Yeshua’s day is limited to the few glimpses found in the Apostolic Writings where He disagreed with the hypocrisy of the prevailing leadership. The understanding is further distanced being taken apart from its historical context, and interpreted in a non-Hebrew fashion. This was accomplished primarily due to the anti-semitism of the early Gentile believers and due to the fact that the Apostolic Writings are written in Greek. This skewed view of the culture of the times, results in incorrect conclusions that contribute to and reinforce

these false doctrines and theologies. No level of grammatical scrutiny can make up for this, especially when trying to read the English and/or Greek, in its immediate grammatical context (without Torah). Without taking a Torah based context, these modern methods of interpretation are unreliable. The reason being, the text of modern Christian bibles has been altered to suit these Christian theologies. Finding these modifications within the text takes a certain amount of due diligence on behalf of the bible student. The first approach is to begin studying the New Testament (NT, Apostolic Writings) using a Hebrew translation of the bible. This helps the student of the bible to connect the dots by the way the text is written, especially by the connections made to the Tanach in the way the text is written. One advantage to reading the NT in Hebrew is it forces you to be very careful on the interpretation of words and sentences in order to understand the meaning of the text. In my early years of reading the NT in Hebrew, one of the first observations that I made was in *John 5:1 and 6:4*. In these Scriptures we read the following, *John 5:1 (NASB) "Later on, there was another festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."* *John 6:4 (NASB) "Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near."* What is interesting about these Scriptures is the way the text is written. If John had been the one writing these things down, why did he make a distinction between the Jewish and non-Jewish people? He makes this distinction using the phrase "*the festival of the Jews.*" What is implied from this text is that this festival was only for a period of time, and was not for the non-Jewish person who is reading the text. Note also in *John 6:4* it states "*there was another festival of the Jews*" and then "*Jesus went up to Jerusalem*" which seems to imply Yeshua as separate from, as opposed to providing us with an example from his life to do the same, to celebrate the Pesach (Passover) festival because the Torah instructs all of God's people to do so. This is related to this week's Torah portion in the sense that in order for Israel to inherit God's promises, and for her to enter into the Promised Land, into the land of victory and rest, required a life that was mixed with faith. Our lives are to be lived in the testimonies of God. This is important because it is related to our having faith and then walking in the ways of the Messiah, which are synonymous to walking in the ways of our Father in heaven according to His word.

In Parashat Shelach Lecha, Moshe wrote the following, אָךְ בֵּיתָהּ ט

אַל-תִּמְרֹדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֶל-תִּירְאוּ אֶת-עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לַחֲמִנּוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מִעֲלֵיהֶם  
:14:9 וַיְהִי אֲתָנּוּ אֶל-תִּירָאֵם:  
*‘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)* Joshua and Caleb spoke to the people in this way saying that the Lord had removed the protection of the people of Canaan. The rabbis have the following to say concerning this week’s Torah portion.

***Tur HaAroch on Bamidbar / Numbers 14:9***

אך בה' אל תמרודו. כי יראתם לחוזק העם היושב בה והוא מרד בה' הנכבד כי לא בכחכם יצאתם ממצרים כי יד ה' עשתה זאת עמכם להפליא והוא הבטיחכם שיורישם מפני-  
*“Only do not become guilty of rebelling against Hashem!” By being afraid of the strength of the inhabitants of that land you have rebelled against G'd, for you know very well that you did not leave Egypt by having defeated the Egyptians. It had all been Hashem's doing. He has promised you that you will conquer the land of Canaan, and you have no reason to doubt that.*

Tur HaAroch speaks of being afraid which is connected to having a lack of faith that leads to sin. The Lord works powerfully in the midst of His people. The fact of the matter is the Lord promised He would be with His people to conquer the land and there was no reason to doubt that. Do you have doubts in His promises to you today? Have those doubts led to unfaithfulness of any sort? Is the life that you live consistent with what you say you believe? Remember that the people in the wilderness believed in the God of Israel and His dwelling in their midst, but their lives did not exhibit that reality.

Midrash Tanchuma has the following to say concerning these Scripture verses.

***Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Appendix to Sh'lach 1:1  
(Numb. 14:11:)1 THEN THE LORD SAID UNTO MOSES:  
HOW LONG WILL THIS PEOPLE SCORN ME,***



AND HOW LONG WILL THEY HAVE NO FAITH IN ME ...? This text is related (to Prov. 1:25, 30): BUT YOU HAVE SPURNED ALL MY PLAN AND WOULD NOT ACCEPT MY REBUKE [...] THEY HAVE DESPISED ALL MY REBUKE. What is the implication of BUT YOU HAVE SPURNED ALL MY PLAN? Simply that all the good which I planned for you, you have spoiled and spurned.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is stated (in Prov. 1:25): BUT YOU HAVE SPURNED (rt.: PR') ALL MY PLAN? At the beginning I said to Moses (in Exod. 3:8): I HAVE COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM OUT OF THE HAND OF THE EGYPTIANS AND TO BRING THEM UP <OUT OF THAT LAND UNTO A GOOD AND SPACIOUS LAND>.... But you did not act in the way <I intended>. Instead you came to the sea and immediately spoiled my plan, as stated (in Ps. 106:7): THEY REBELLED AT THE SEA, AT THE RED SEA. When you came to Mount Sinai, I descended and spoke with you. I brought down on your behalf thousands upon thousands and myriads upon myriads of angels, and I passed on two angels to each and every person in Israel. R. Johanan said: One to gird him with his weapons and one to put a crown on his head. R. Huna of Sepphoris said: He bound their weapons to them, while R. Simoy said: He clothed them in purple, as stated (in Ezek. 16:10): I CLOTHED YOU WITH EMBROIDERED GARMENTS. R. Simeon b. Johay says: He clothed them with an instrument of weaponry with the Ineffable Name written upon it. Moreover, as long as it was in their hand, nothing evil had power against them, neither the angel of death nor anything else. But when they sinned, Moses had said to them (in Exod. 33:5): NOW THEN, REMOVE YOUR ORNAMENTS (i.e., your weapons) FROM YOURSELVES, THAT I MAY KNOW WHAT TO DO TO YOU. At that time (according to vs. 4): WHEN THE PEOPLE HEARD THIS BAD NEWS, THEY WENT INTO MOURNING, <AND NO ONE PUT HIS ORNA-

*MENTS ON HIMSELF>. And what is written (in vs. 6)? SO [THE CHILDREN OF] ISRAEL STRIPPED THEMSELVES OF ORNAMENTS.... What had the Holy One done (at the giving of Torah)? He had brought the angel of death and said to him: All the world is under your authority, except this people whom I have chosen for myself. R. Eleazar the Son of R. Jose the Galilean said: The angel of death said to the Holy One: Have I been created in the world for nothing? The Holy One said to him: I created you so that you would destroy <all> the peoples of the world except this people, over whom you have no authority to take a single one of them. Look at the plan which the Holy One had devised concerning them for them to live and endure! Thus it is stated (in Deut. 4:4): BUT YOU WHO CLUNG TO THE LORD YOUR GOD ARE ALL ALIVE TODAY. So also it says (in Exod. 32:16): AND THE WRITING WAS THE WRITING OF GOD INSCRIBED (harut) ON THE TABLETS. What is the meaning of harut? R. Judah says: FREEDOM (herut) from the empires; but R. Nehemiah says: FREEDOM (herut) from the angel of death; and our masters say: FREEDOM from afflictions. Look at the plan which the Holy One had devised for them! Then they immediately spoiled this plan after <only> forty days. It is therefore stated (in Prov. 1:25): BUT YOU HAVE SPURNED ALL MY PLAN.*

The rabbis speak of the people scorning (despising) the Lord God of Israel on the idea of going into the Promised Land. The Midrash says they did not act in the way that was intended, they were supposed to move by faith, enter into the Land and take possession of what God had promised. The Midrash goes on with an illustration of the Lord equipping the people, each person was sent two angels to gird him with weapons and to crown his head. The weapon is the Ineffable Name, and the crown is in reference to the glory of God that rests upon His people. The plan the Lord had devised concerning His people was for them to live and endure according to His Word (*Devarim / Deuterono-*

*my 4:4*). The Midrash speaks of the Lord's love for His people, and of His equipping us for what is ahead in our lives. In order for Israel to inherit God's promises, and for her to enter into the Promised Land, into the land of victory and rest, the people needed to live their lives mixed with faith. Our lives are to be lived in the testimonies of God. This is important because it is related to our having faith and then walking in the ways of the Messiah, which are synonymous to walking in the ways of our Father in heaven according to His word.

This is what the writer of the book of Hebrews recognized when he said, "*Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me And saw My works for forty years. (NASB)* The author of Hebrews is relating this time in the Torah, and the attitude of the people who refused to enter into the Promised Land, to the Gospel message as it is related to the Messiah Yeshua. (*Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. NASB*) The parallel to this time in Parashat Shelach Lecha saying that "*the people in the wilderness had the good news preached to them just as the good news was preached to us*" (see *Hebrews 4:2*) illustrates for us the importance of God's Torah, and His instructions for our lives as His people. The book of Hebrews is speaking of the people in the wilderness being given the good news of the Gospel, but they rejected it. The Gospel message of the Torah speaks to having faith in the Lord God of Israel and to having faith in the one who is leading God's people (Messiah, see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*).

Just as Israel was required to have faith and then to live their faith in order to inherit God's Promises, we too are to have faith and then to live out our faith in the Lord. Without these things we cannot enter into the promises, victory, and rest, that He has promised. Faith in the Messiah Yeshua produces good works and the works of repentance (see *Matthew 3:8*). Paul wrote that it is in God's Messiah that life and faith come together to produce what the Lord wants for us as His people. This was what was going on in the lives of the people in the wilderness,

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and this is what is going on in our lives today!



