**פרשת שלח לך / Parashat Shelach Lekha**

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**Have you ever studied the etymology**

**of Hebrew Names?**

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| **השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week’s Reading** | |
| **תורה:**  **הפטרה:**  **הברית:**  **החדשה:** | Numbers 13:1-15:41  Joshua 2:1-2:24 Hebrew 3:7-4:1 |

In this week’s parsha, Parashat Shelach Lekha, Yisrael has arrived to the point that HaShem has planned for them to enter into the Promised Land. Moshe puts together a group of twelve men (leader from each tribe) to go in and spy the land to give a report of the condition of the land, the cities, and who has possession of the land. This leads to the event that is commonly known as “Chet HaMeraglim” (the sin of the spies).

In the names of the twelve spies (*Bamidbar / Numbers 13:4-16*) we find twelve examples of biblical names that follow the pattern “name son of father” pattern. (Note also that in *Bamidbar / Numbers 1:5-15* there are another twelve names which follow this pattern.) There are various ways we can examine names in the Hebrew bible. For example, names can give us a description of HaShem by describing his character or reflecting his actions. Another way of looking at the text is the use of a name change, like in *Bamidbar / Numbers 13:16* when Moshe changes Hoshea son of Nun to Yehoshua son of Nun; ask yourself the question “what does this name change reflect?” (Note: An interesting study would be one that looks at the names of the Kings of Yehuda (Judah) ie. Yehidyah, Yehoshaphat, Yehoram, Chizkayahu, etc. why where their names changed and what does it reflect?) In Judaism, even the names can give us a clear message but only if the reader knows what to look for; typically the rabbis look at the frequency of G-d’s name in the list, its location, how do the names relate to the theme of the text, etc. In order to do this sort of study, one really needs to examine the Tanach in the original Hebrew language in order to get the etymology of the original spellings of the names.

**etymology**

noun (plural etymologies) an account of the origins and the developments in meaning of a word.

In this week’s parsha I would like to apply the rabbinic technique of examining the list of names of the twelve spies and see what we can learn. First I want to look at the list of tribes and its order and then the names of the Meraglim. In *Bereshit / Genesis*, the tribes originate from the twelve sons of Yaakov (Jacob); listed in birth order, (i) Reuben, (ii) Simeon, (iii) Levi, (iv) Yehuda, (v) Dan, (vi) Naphtali, (vii) Gad, (viii) Asher, (ix) Issachar, (x) Zevulun, (xi) Yoseph, and (xii) Benyamin. Now notice the names of the tribes in the list in this week’s parsha are not given in birth order but are in fact listed out of order. What might be the reason for this?

**Looking at the names of the Tribes**



1. ראובן Reuben
2. שמעון Simeon
3. יהודה Yehuda
4. יששכר Issachar
5. אפרים Ephraim
6. בנימן Benyamin
7. זבולן Zevulun
8. מנשה Menasah
9. דן Dan
10. אשר Asher
11. נפתלי Naphtali
12. גד Gad

**Looking at the names of the Meraglim**



1. שמוע Shamua
2. שפט Shaphat
3. כלב Caleb
4. יגאל Yigal
5. הושע Hoshea
6. פלטי Palti
7. גדיאל Gadiel
8. גדי Gadi
9. עמיאל Amiel
10. סתור Setur
11. נחבי Nakhbi
12. גאואל Geuel

Here are listed the twelve tribes and also the twelve names of the men who were leaders of each tribe from the children of Yisrael. The next step is to look at the meanings of each name doing an in depth study based upon their root meanings. Sometimes these names when listed in a particular way in the Hebrew Scriptures make a sentence and can give us a deeper understanding of the mind and heart of G-d.

**Examining the meaning of the names of the tribes which are listed:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ראובן | Reuben | Behold a Son |
|  | שמעון | Simeon | Hear Him |
|  | יהודה | Yehuda | Give Him praise |
|  | יששכר | Issachar | He brings reward |
|  | אפרים | Ephraim | Doubly blessed |
|  | בנימן | Benyamin | The son of my right hand |
|  | זבולן | Zevulun | Dwelling with us |
|  | מנשה | Menasah | He will cause you to forget |
|  | דן | Dan | Judge |
|  | אשר | Asher | Happy and blessed |
|  | נפתלי | Naphtali | Strife – ie. the struggle between Rachel and Leah. |
|  | גד | Gad | Good luck / fortune |

**Examining the meaning of the names of the twelve men listed:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | שמוע | Shamua | Hear |
|  | שפט | Shaphat | To decide / judge |
|  | כלב | Caleb | A dog |
|  | יגאל | Yigal | To liberate / redeem |
|  | הושע | Hoshea | Salvation |
|  | פלטי | Palti | My deliverer |
|  | גדיאל | Gadiel | G-d is my good fortune |
|  | גדי | Gadi | My good fortune |
|  | עמיאל | Amiel | G-d of my people |
|  | סתור | Setur | To be hidden, concealed |
|  | נחבי | Nakhbi | I hide / conceal (ref. strong’s # 5147 and 2245) |
|  | גאואל | Geuel | G-d is magnified / exhalted |

**Discussion**

In this day and age, I have found modern Christianity is becoming more and more something that relies upon mystical experiences regardless of how incredible they may be. Some examples I can think of are the recent Florida movements that follow along the lines of the Brownsville Pensacola revival with the “holy laughter,” barking like dogs, and behavior that is just quite frankly one that is characterized as being totally out of control. Our society and culture today places a lot of emphasis on inner feelings and outer appearance and so it isn’t surprising that the religious community can be pulled into this without giving it much thought. This however I believe is disastrous especially if it is used to defend ones belief or faith in Yeshua. Trying to use the mystical experience to explain why one becomes a follower of Yeshua to a skeptic is completely without substance outside of one’s own personal experience, the person being ministered to does not really understand and never could without having experienced the same. There needs to be an objective foundation, something outside of our experience with which we can use as a frame of reference by which we can judge our experiences.

ie. Like the ***word of faith movement*** whose doctrine teaches that Christians are gods and therefore do not need to ask “in God’s will” but rather use our own divinity to speak what we want into being, like if we lack faith we are not healthy and wealthy because God intends for us to be rich … etc.

This objective authority is nothing less than the inspired and eternal word of G-d, the Bible. As you know the attacks upon the bible today are at an all time high, but not only that, attacks upon the very person of Yeshua the Messiah from all major religions specifically the scriptures which are being taken into question are the Apostolic Writings (the gospels, epistles, etc). So, you make ask the question whether or not we can trust the Apostolic Scriptures or not? If we are honest we need to ask the same question about all of scripture, whether we can receive the Tanach (Torah, Prophets, and Writings)? Can we trust our personal experience? Were we there at Mount Sinai, did we see and hear the thundering of HaShem’s presence? We did not personally witness the writing of the Torah by Moshe’s hand, but we receive the Torah because it comes to us endowed with G-d’s mark of authenticity. We receive it because it has been passed down from generation to generation by HaShem’s people until it has come to us into our hands. We believe and receive the Torah based upon faith, not by an irrational leap … but into faith which is given by G-d himself. Therefore, in what we receive, the Torah, we take as the final measuring rod of all Scripture. For example if a prophet comes and speaks contrary to the Torah he/she is to be rejected as a false prophet. A true prophet of HaShem cannot set aside the Torah.

So this brings us to this week’s study on the names of the tribes and twelve men (Meraglim) who were sent into the Promised Land. As I mentioned earlier that if we examine the meaning of the names found in the Holy Scriptures, it sometimes can make out sentences, and give us a deeper understanding of the meaning and heart of G-d. So, let’s have a look at what the scriptures say when we study the etymology of the names:

**1**

**Names of the Tribes**

Behold a son … Hear him … Give him praise … He brings reward … Doubly blessed … The son of my right hand … Dwelling with us … He will cause you to forget … Judge … Happy and blessed … Strife … Fortune.

**2**

**Names of the Meraglim**

Hear … judge … dog … to redeem … salvation … my deliverer … G-d is my good fortune … my good fortune … G-d of my people --- to be concealed … I hide … G-d is magnified.

**Conclusion**

So ask yourself this question: “How do we know Yeshua?” through the apostolic scriptures and we must strive to find G-d’s Messiah in the ancient inspired record which HaShem has revealed to us. We know the Yeshua of the gospels but do we know the Yeshua as revealed to us in the Torah? When I read the etymology of the names of the tribes in the order in which they are written, I see G-d telling me to behold a son (referring to the Messiah), hear him, give him praise for he brings reward. He will cause you to forget your troubles and pain, but he will also return as judge. Happy and blessed are we who believe, though we struggle and strife in this world, Hashem is my wealth.

Examining the etymology on the names of the Meraglim I see I am judged guilty, but HaShem has redeemed me, I have salvation through my deliverer, G-d is my good fortune/riches. I also see that G-d has concealed something, and He is magnified. Interestingly Yeshua mentions something about concealment in the gospel of Matthew and Luke:

Please go reread all the verses quoted within the scriptural context it is written.

***Matthew 11:25***

*11:25 At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. (NASB)*

***Luke 10:21***

*10:21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. (NASB)*

Ultimately the scriptures form the foundation of our faith, apart from the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings (Tanach), and the Apostolic Writings we have no faith because we would have nothing to base it upon. The question you have before you today is this: “will I receive the inspired message of the Most High G-d regarding His Messiah?” If so, ask HaShem today to forgive you of your sins because of the blood atonement that has been made by His Messiah Yeshua, ask Yeshua to become Lord of your life and help you to walk in newness of life, and faith and to understand what that truly means to live a life that is wholly given in faith as he has shown us in his Holy Torah.

**Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

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**הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:**

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever