



Parasha Shelach

June 17, 2023

Torah: Numbers 13:1-15:41

Haftarah: Joshua 2:1-24

Ketuwim Shlichim: Hebrews 3:7-19

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *Torah* portion is *Shelach*, meaning send, and begins with these words: *1 Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 2 “Send some men on your behalf to investigate the land of Canaan, which I am giving to Bnei-Yisrael.”* (Numbers 13:1-2a TLV). This sending began an event which the writer of Hebrews calls “the rebellion.” Twelve men were sent into the land of Canaan by ADONAI to show Israel what a beautiful land it was, a land of milk and honey. But, the spies didn’t see that at all. They saw the warlike people and refused to go in and convinced the rest of the people of their opinion. Up until this point, ADONAI had prepared Israel by giving them *Torah*, a priesthood and a Tabernacle through which to worship Him and now, they had the opportunity to possess the Promised Land just about a year and a half after leaving Egypt. But, they rebelled and through their rebellion, they sealed their fate: *21 “But as certainly as I live and as certainly as the glory of Adonai fills the entire earth, 22 none of the people who saw My glory and My miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness—yet tested Me these ten times and did not obey My Voice— 23 not one of them will see the land I promised to their forefathers. None of those who treated Me with contempt will see it!”* (Numbers 14:21-23 TLV). The tenth time Israel rebelled, ADONAI had had enough. That generation would wander and die in the wilderness for forty years, one year for each day that the spies spent in Canaan, except for Joshua and Caleb. They gave a positive report and would enter Canaan with the second generation, those born during the wandering in the wilderness.

This rebellion, the tenth since leaving Egypt, had been a warning to Israel throughout their long history, a warning they continued to ignore. *Parasha Shelach* was read on schedule in the synagogues. In the 1st century, the writer of Hebrews was concerned about the spiritual condition of the people of Israel and brought a strong message of warning. He wrote: *7 Therefore, just as the Ruach ha-Kodesh says, “Today if you hear His voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness.”* (Hebrews 3:7-8 TLV). Probably written between 64 and 68 CE, some think this was in response to some of the Messianic Jews of that day considering going back to traditional Judaism because of the persecution on Yeshua’s followers. What was happening at that time may have been serious enough for the writer to implore them not to harden their hearts. It has been ADONAI’s message throughout the generations and continues to be His message to us today. Its relevance could not be more important in our modern world.

In the 1st century, the time of the writing of Hebrews, the known world was just a very small part of the earth. Today, the whole earth is open to us. A few years ago, Mary Louise and I went to China, a distance of 7,400 miles. And, we did it in just a matter of hours. We had to flap our wings really hard. But, a distant trip in the 1st century would have been less than a thousand miles and would have taken days. Today, ADONAI’s message is to the entire earth, all of the world’s inhabitants. He is concerned about all of them and is currently

waiting until His threshold for the “fullness of the Gentiles” is reached. (Romans 11:25). Our worldview has expanded so much that we now know instantly what is happening everywhere on the earth. ADONAI is speaking today to Yeshua’s followers, wherever they are, through the writer of Hebrews; don’t harden your hearts as in the rebellion!

What is a rebellion? The dictionary says: It is “an act of violent or open resistance to an established government or ruler.” (Oxford Languages). In this case, in “the rebellion,” the ruler is ADONAI. What is resistance? It is “the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.” (Oxford Languages). In “the rebellion,” it was Israel’s resistance, actually their refusal, to obey ADONAI’s command to enter Canaan. Whether Israel did that because of fear or other reasons, the real reason was that they did not trust ADONAI. They had witnessed their miraculous deliverance from Pharaoh, had seen it with their own eyes, yet now, they refused to trust Him. And, it was one revolt after another.

Do those of us who follow Yeshua really trust what the Word says? We say we do, but do we really? Distrust leads to disobedience. Is that what we are seeing today? In the body of Messiah, we hear grace, grace, grace. Grace is the center point of the worship of Yeshua by a large portion of His body. Yes, ADONAI is graceful and merciful to the extreme, and we can never thank Him enough for His grace and mercy. But, He also has a breaking point. That’s what He reached in the wilderness, a point which He will again reach in the end of days. His steadfast love endures forever, but a day is coming when enough is enough. This generation of Yeshua’s followers have been fed such a heavy diet of grace that there is very little obedience in their relationship with Him. We pray for Yeshua’s body in these days of trouble and falling away that they would *t’shuvah*, return, to their first love, Yeshua. Yeshua was speaking to the congregation at Ephesus, but it could just as well be the whole body of Messiah today: 4 “*But this I have against you, that you have forsaken your first love.*” (Revelation 2:4 TLV). He was our first love and still should be our first love, even above family and especially above our pleasure. Speaking to the congregation at Laodicea, His words also reflect what is happening within His body today: 15 “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. Oh, that you were either cold or hot! 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.*” (Revelation 3:15-16 TLV). I don’t believe anyone would disagree when I say that Yeshua’s body today is loaded with the lukewarm. Are even some of us lukewarm?

ADONAI has shown us the way to be in a strong relationship with Him and much of Yeshua’s body rejects it. The basis of this relationship is *Torah*, actually a principle, a way of relating. After He rescued Israel from Egypt, ADONAI took them to Mount Sinai where He established His covenant with them. It was a covenant of *Torah*, teaching and instruction. Through it, He taught them how to live under His kingdom rule, laws which kept the relationship firm. It is no different today. Although we are under a different covenant, the New Covenant, His *mitzvot*, His laws, are still in effect, but now have been written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:32). Everyone in His body knows that if you trust in Yeshua, you will receive the promise of salvation. But, no one really knows at what point ADONAI may take it away from those who continually live contrary to His Laws. ADONAI has not given us a way of salvation which allows us to live any way that we want. We must fit into His system, not He into ours. There is a point at which ADONAI will say “no more.” Yes, there are many who will never lose their promise of salvation because ADONAI knows the end from the beginning. But, from our human vantage point, we don’t know exactly what Yeshua meant by saying “You have lost your first love.” Did they lose their place in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

And, we don't know what it means to be lukewarm and spewed out. If someone is spewed out of Yeshua's mouth, does he lose his promise of salvation? Since we don't know these things, the most logical thing to do would be not to come close to these danger zones and to stay far away from the cliff's edge where we might be in danger of falling off. But, it's much better to do it out of love rather than fear.

As followers of Yeshua, we should believe that what ADONAI says in his Word is true, especially if we say we believe it is His infallible word as conservative Christianity does. If we believe it's His Word, why then, don't we obey it? The word *Torah*, meaning teaching and instruction, and containing *mitzvot*, laws, is found throughout the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. It's especially prominent in the Psalms. *1 Happy is the one who has not walked in the advice of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of scoffers.* (Psalm 1:1 TLV). When we read this, we immediately think of the Beatitudes, Yeshua's words on the Sermon on the Mount. The word *ashrei*, happy in Psalm 1:1, is translated as *makarios* in the Septuagint, the Greek language translation of the Hebrew Bible. *Makarios* is also used in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount and could also be translated happy there as well as blessed. Psalm 1:1 is describing a righteous person and his actions are connected to the next verse: *2 But his delight is in the Torah of Adonai, and on His Torah he meditates day and night.* (Psalm 1:2 TLV). If you want to be *ashrei*, happy in the sense of verse 1, you should take delight in ADONAI's *Torah* and meditate on it. *Esher* (אֶשֶׁר) means happiness or blessedness and is the root of *ashrei* (אֲשֶׁרִי), the state of being happy or blessed. *Torah* is an important concept for those who love ADONAI, but so few see it.

What is the *Torah* (תּוֹרָה) of ADONAI? According to Strong's Online Concordance, it is direction, instruction or law. In this verse, Psalm 1:2, it is presented as *hatorat* (תּוֹרָה), "the *Torah*." As a follower of Yeshua, it is our responsibility to know what we believe. Can we disregard *Torah* and remain in ADONAI's good graces? Should we not respond positively to ADONAI's instructions? Should we not learn from His instructions? Should we not obey His laws? It is very clear that ADONAI has taught us and also commanded us that if we are to remain in His good graces, we must respond properly to His instruction. These two verses in Psalm 1 show us that a righteous person must not only follow *Torah*, but love it and think about it constantly.

ADONAI has given us free will and even after trusting in Yeshua, we can exercise it. Every follower of Yeshua must make their own decision as to what they believe and how they are going to walk in their relationship with Him. ADONAI has shown us a specific way of Messianic Judaism here in *Beit Shalom*, but the individual still must decide how they are going to walk in it. How we walk, *halacha* for us, is based completely on ADONAI's Word, His holy Scriptures, Genesis through Revelation. Our *halacha* is not based on any outside written source or tradition. Jewish traditions which we follow that are not commanded in ADONAI's Word are just that, traditions. We can learn from the *Talmud*, but it is not in any way our authority. Our understanding of *Torah*, ADONAI's teaching and instruction and His laws for us, are only based upon His written *Torah*, Genesis through Revelation.

How then, are we to understand *Torah*? It's really very simple. ADONAI's Word without translator additions is our only guide. *Sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone, is how we reach our understanding. ADONAI said: *2 "You must not add to the word that I am commanding you or take away from it – in order to keep the mitzvot of ADONAI your God that I am commanding you"* (Deuteronomy 4:2 TLV). It's just that simple. Everything which we need

to know is contained in the sixty-six books written by Jewish authors who were inspired by ADONAI.

Here is how we understand and follow *Torah*. Step 1- Trust in Yeshua, ADONAI's anointed One, the Mediator of the New Covenant, who died as a sacrifice for our sins and follow Him according to the anointed words of the Jewish authors of His sixty-six books. Step 2- There is no step 2. Everything we need is right there in Step 1 and ADONAI has very specifically told what is *Torah* for us today. It was just that simple under ADONAI's covenant with Israel made at Sinai. Keep ADONAI's covenant by obeying His commands – all of them. ADONAI would atone for their sins each year at *Yom Kippur* and they remained in covenant with Him. That sounds a lot like grace.

There is considerable difference today regarding what the members of Yeshua's body believe they should obey. But, ADONAI has made it easy for us if we but take at face value what He has told us. ADONAI made it easy for us to know what to obey by taking away the means of obeying *mitzvot* which are not active for us today. Those which have been taken away and are not active for us are those which require a Temple and Levitical priesthood to carry out. The ones which remain are for us and are carried out under the High Priesthood of Yeshua. Taking those away does not leave a huge number to know and to follow. In my case, it's less than 140. When you consider that someone has counted the commands in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua's disciples, and found 1,050 commands there, less than 140 is not a huge number to understand and follow. Following them is an act of the heart. They have been written there to remind us to follow them. But, we completely understand that obeying these commands will not save us. Keeping laws has never saved anyone, not even under the First Covenant.

That this is true has been made clear to us by *Sha'ul*. He wrote: *26 Through God's forbearance, He demonstrates His righteousness at the present time—that He Himself is just and also the justifier of the one who puts his trust in Yeshua. 27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith. 28 For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance.* (Romans 3:26-28 TLV). ADONAI is just. The human definition of just is “what is morally right and fair.” G-d, who Himself is only “good” is the highest example of just. He is also the “justifier,” the one who makes people righteous, justified before Him. These verses tell us exactly how He justifies us. It is by putting our trust in Yeshua, believing by faith that He is the sacrifice which paid the price for our sins. Not by works, but by the principle of faith. A person is “set right,” justified, apart from *Torah* observance. *Torah* observance has nothing to do with justification, salvation, but is still an integral part of the walk of a follower of Yeshua. *Sha'ul* followed this verse by saying: *31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah.* (Romans 3:31 TLV). How can he say that justification is by faith yet we uphold *Torah*?

It is because the original intention of *Torah*, *Torah* first given at Sinai, was never to provide a means of salvation, but a way of life for those who were already redeemed. After safely crossing the Red Sea, Moses sang a song. One verse reads: *13 You in Your lovingkindness led the people You have redeemed. You guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.* (Exodus 15:13 TLV). “Have redeemed.” Israel was already a redeemed people when they left Egypt and then at Sinai, ADONAI made a covenant with them. As a redeemed people they followed the *Torah* of the covenant, ADONAI's constitution with them, His *ketubah* (marriage covenant) with them. By offering the appropriate sacrifices and receiving ADONAI's

atonement year by year as the High Priest took their sins to ADONAI on *Yom Kippur*, they remained in covenant faithfulness. What we should understand from this is that the original intention of *Torah* was not to provide a means of salvation, but was the way of life for those who were already redeemed.

In the 1st century, the only Scripture was the *Tanakh* (1Timothy 3:16), and it was through understanding *Torah* with its meaning of teaching and instruction and seeing Yeshua pictured in *Torah* (Romans 10:4) that all of Yeshua's disciples and all of the others who trusted in Yeshua came to believe that He was the prophesied Jewish Messiah. *Sha'ul* wrote: *28 For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance.* (Romans 3:28 TLV). But, then he said something seemingly opposite: *19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing—but keeping God's commandments matters* (1Corinthians 7:19 TLV). How can *Sha'ul* speak about salvation as occurring apart from *Torah*, and then immediately say that what matters is keeping *Torah*. The explanation is to be found in the different contexts in which *Sha'ul* spoke of the “Law.” Speaking in Greek, he had only one word to use, *nomos*, meaning law. He had to use that one word for every different situation which he had to explain. That was the limitation of the Greek language in trying to explain Hebrew concepts. When he went to the different Gentile locations and spoke face to face, he made certain that the people understood. But once those who were intimately involved were no longer living, some of his written word became difficult to understand. But, we believe that we have been able to see through these problems and understand what *Sha'ul* meant in these different situations. When he wrote *nomos* and meant *Torah*, Law, in the “context of salvation,” *Sha'ul* clearly stated that *Torah* keeping, Law keeping, would not provide it. He wrote: *20 For no human, on the basis of Torah observance, will be set right in His sight—for through the Torah comes awareness of sin* (Romans 3:20 TLV). *Torah* shows us what sin is, but cannot save us. On the other hand, when *Sha'ul* spoke of the *Torah* in the context of “believer’s conduct,” what we understand as sanctification or right living before ADONAI, he affirmed the validity of ADONAI’s *Torah*. To the Romans he wrote: *12 So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good* (Romans 7:12 TLV). To Timothy he wrote: *8 But we know that the Torah is good if one uses it legitimately,...* (1Timothy 1:8-10 TLV). The Complete Jewish Bible says “uses it for the purpose it was intended.” (also, Romans 13:8-10 and 1Corinthians 7:19). And, that is what we are doing, using *Torah* in the way that ADONAI intended for it to be used. The *Torah* is not intended for salvation, and so we don't use it for that. It is intended to show us how to live in fellowship with ADONAI and disciples of Yeshua as members of the New Covenant.

It seems simple enough. You get saved by faith and then after salvation, live by walking in *Torah*. In other words, *Torah* is the way of life for those who are saved. Psalm 119 describes the benefits of *Torah*. It has twenty-two stanzas of eight verses each, each stanza corresponding to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The words *Torah* and *mitzvot* are found throughout it. Do you want to be happy? The first stanza tells us that those who live by the *Torah* of ADONAI are happy. The second stanza tells a young man how to keep his way pure; by guarding his way by ADONAI’s Word and not straying from His *mitzvot*. It also shows us that His word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (v. 105). How can we not understand this?

There is an article in *World Israel News* this week entitled: *The Jew Whisperers: An exploration of the psychopathology of missionaries In Israel*. As you might expect, it’s about Christians and Messianic Jews. They are the “missionaries.” Whisperers are those who have an almost magical ability to calm or soothe and this article applies that term to missionaries

who believe they can erase all the hurts and troubles by converting Jews to Christianity. Of course, I don't agree with their assumptions. But, I bring this up for one reason and that is to suggest that they look more closely at Messianic Judaism. There is no conversion involved. It would be within their own faith, Judaism, by trusting in their *Mashiach*, Yeshua, and then living according to *Torah* in the way which ADONAI has provided for this time. I sincerely mean this and pray for understanding for those who don't understand. We try to make a righteous life so complicated, but ADONAI has made it easy for us. He has very clearly shown us which *mitzvot* are active and we make life difficult for ourselves by trying to follow inactive *mitzvot*.

ADONAI is speaking to us today, all of us: 7 *Therefore, just as the Ruach ha-Kodesh says, "Today if you hear His voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness."* (Hebrews 3:7-8 TLV). Hardness of heart is a problem, a problem that all of us can have at one time or the other no matter how committed to ADONAI we are. It even happened to Moses who struck the rock twice in anger: 8 *"Do not harden your heart as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers tested Me, they challenged Me, even though they had seen My work."* (Psalm 95:8-9 TLV). Do you have an area of hardness in your heart? Is there something that you have against another person and have not forgiven? Is there an area of your life that you have hardened and are withholding this part of you from Yeshua? The writer of Hebrews continued: 12 *Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you has an evil heart of unbelief that falls away from the living God.* (Hebrews 3:12 TLV). It can happen to all of us and Yeshua is continually calling to us to give it all up. He wants all of us. This is not a feel good message. It's what some call "a come to Jesus" message. It's a time of serious thought and then, decision making.

ADONAI wants us to obey Him. As our *parasha* ends today, we read: 37 *Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 38 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael. Say to them that they are to make for themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they are to put a blue cord on each tzitzit."* (Numbers 15:37-38 TLV). The *tzitzit* are a symbol of Israel's obedience to ADONAI's *Torah*. When Jewish males stopped wearing four cornered garments, they designed the *tallit* in order to be able to continue to carry out this commandment. Although it is sometimes called a "prayer shawl," that is not its purpose. It is to remind us of ADONAI's *mitzvot*. Although women don't wear them, they see them and that also reminds them that the *mitzvot* are for them too. We should make a conscious effort when we see *tzitzit* to think about the *mitzvot* for which we are responsible. Are we faithfully following ADONAI's *mitzvot*, those which we can keep today? It's not for salvation. It's for love of Yeshua and ADONAI, the thankfulness in our hearts for His taking us into His covenant. Here's something to think about. *Shimon Kefa* said that we are "a royal priesthood" (1Peter 2:9). Some translations say "kings and priests." As priests, we should certainly know the *Torah* for which we are responsible. Kings were commanded by ADONAI to write a copy of the *Torah* for themselves. If we are "kings," should we not consider writing a copy of *Torah* ourselves? If you write it, you will know it.

This is a serious message for all of us. If there is an area in your heart that you have not yielded to Yeshua, yield it today. Don't let hardness of heart endanger your relationship with Him. How far will He allow us to stretch our relationship? Give it all up! *Shabbat shalom!*