

# Shelach Lecha (Send on your behalf)

by Mark Huey posted 19 June, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

Leviticus 13:1-15:41

Joshua 2:1-24

## “Nevertheless”

“Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them” (Numbers 13:2).

This week the Torah continues to discuss some of the challenges that Israel has and will continue to have with leadership issues, as the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land proceeds. Having just witnessed a threat to his leadership from his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, Moses is now placed in a position to continue encouraging the Israelites to move forward on the journey toward the ultimate goal of securing the land promised to them. This humble servant of the Most High had just survived accusations from his sister that resulted in her temporary bout with leprosy. She was healed after her seven-day quarantine and then the sojourn continued. However, the memory of the challenge to his leadership was fresh on his mind, as Moses and the people stood at the threshold of entering into the land.

It is at this point that *Shelach Lecha* begins with the infamous incidents concerning the adventures of the twelve spies, who were chosen to scout out the land and return with a report about the prospects for invasion. If you will recall, Moses, the reluctant leader, realizes that he is dealing with a recalcitrant group of people who are not exactly content with their current status of wandering through the wilderness. Complaints and murmuring are commonplace. In spite of the miraculous interventions resolving the water and diet issues, the Israelites are constantly looking at the “half-empty glass,” rather than reveling in the “half-full” one. Human nature continues to drive the great majority of the people, as the instincts of survival and selfishness prevail.

This is quite a dilemma for Moses, who in his desire to fulfill the unwanted call upon his life, simply wants to obey the Lord and guide the people to their prophesied return to Canaan. So with the Promised Land on the horizon, God instructs Moses to choose one leader from among each of the twelve tribes who will go into the land and come back with a report to endorse the incursion. Little did Moses know that the resulting report of the spies would not be what he expected. Instead, as we read the text, we find that the opposite result occurred as only two of the twelve leaders actually returned with a good report. The other ten got hung up on the often-used word that is heard frequently by leaders when they are attempting to impose their will upon the teeming masses. That word is the preposition “but” (Heb. *ki*, כִּי), or as the New American Standard renders it, “nevertheless”:

“Thus they told him, and said, ‘We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan” (Numbers 13:27-29).

In spite of all the positive aspects of the Promised Land that were seen during the forty-day excursion from north to south and east to west, the ultimate report of the ten spies focused on negative things rather than the many positive attributes of the territory. Human fear of others and doubt about the promises of the Holy One prevailed. The ubiquitous insertion of the reservations about the leadership decision to enter the land is best characterized by the word “but.”

As human beings we each have varying roles as leaders and followers of families, groups, or even greater responsibilities. Have you ever considered how often you hear the word “but”

come forth from your own heart, or listen to others respond with that same retort? If you are a parent you can certainly relate to children using this excuse, especially if you are attempting to impose your will upon them. On the other hand, if you are in a position where you are under the authority of someone else, you might hear yourself utilize this term when being asked to do something that was not on your personal agenda. The challenge for each of us is how we should deal with the innate human tendency to want to “do our own thing,” when we have a Creator who has clearly spelled out how we are supposed to conduct our lives in His Word. Are there principles we can learn from the leadership style of Moses that can be applied to our daily walk with the Messiah?

Surely the examples that we have been given of how Moses dealt with his detractors are for our instruction and edification. When considering the role that Moses had as the one chosen to be the “deliverer” of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the contrast that he was first an excellent follower allowed him to execute his responsibilities as a leader. Moses had been chosen from birth to be the one selected for the position he reluctantly received. For forty years he was trained in the halls of Pharaoh's courts with great responsibility and the incumbent authority to make things happen. Then in an impetuous moment of the flesh, he committed murder, however justified, and was threatened to the point of fleeing to the wilderness for survival:

“Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. **So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.** He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, ‘Why are you striking your companion?’ But he said, ‘Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and said, ‘Surely the matter has become known.’ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. **But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well”** (Exodus 2:11-15).

For the next forty years, Moses learned the skill of being a shepherd tending to the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro the priest of Midian. During these long years in the desert, he had a great deal of time to dwell on his transgression while he reflected on his relationship with the Lord. According to the author of Hebrews, Moses knew that he was a Hebrew and that he had a call upon his life. Moses' problem was that he got ahead of God and tried to operate in his own strength, rather than waiting upon Him for His timing of events:

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God **than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.** By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them” (Hebrews 11:23-28).

Imagine going from the pinnacle of power in Egypt to Sinai to shepherd another man's herds. This does not seem like a very exciting promotion, and yet through it all, the Lord was molding a man who would be called into an incredible relationship with Him as His spokesman to Israel. It was during these years of self-reflection that Moses developed a circumcised heart that was only seeking to do the Father's will. After all, Moses had let his anger overtake his reason to murder another human being. Certainly, this memory was a vivid reminder of his human failings no matter how often he justified his actions. Later it is recorded that the Torah had a severe punishment for murder, however in his heart, Moses probably already understood this principle:

“If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:17).

Eventually, Moses was the primary witness to the finger of God actually inscribing “you shall not murder” on the very stone tablets received at Mount Sinai. It is difficult to fathom how Moses must have felt as he recognized that his impetuous action to murder an Egyptian must have influenced his entire life. Surely as a result, Moses fully understood the mercy and compassion of the Most High, who did not execute the prescribed judgment. Could these circumstances determine permanent character changes? Is there no wonder why in the previous portion, *Be’Ha’alotecha*, the description that best exemplifies Moses is his humility?

“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).

But with this humility comes great strength. Moses learned through the lessons of his life that he was chosen to be an instrument for the work of the Most High. In order to let this happen, he had to learn the fine art of denying his own fleshly inclinations. When he felt the tendency to say “but” when given various instructions, he chose instead to simply repeat what he was told, even when he was perplexed about the various things that he was told to state. Does this not sound like another great servant of our Father? In fact, is this not a characteristic of Yeshua the Messiah, who spoke only what the Father told Him to speak?

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me” (John 12:49-50).

Of course, we know that when Moses did exercise his own will, as explained when he willfully struck the rock without following the clear instructions to speak to the rock, the consequences were devastating. Moses was a fallible human being like the rest of Israel:

“Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and **speak to the rock before their eyes**, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.’ So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, ‘Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?’ **Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod**; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank” (Numbers 20:8-11).

Here we see Moses, in the wake of the Miriam debacle and on the precipice of entering the Promised Land. God has already told him to send ahead the twelve spies for a scouting report, knowing full well in His omniscience that the report would be distorted by them, because they lacked the faith to believe in Him. The servant leader Moses follows his instructions and the results are recorded.

The ten come back with a bad report, and immediately the infection of doubt and disbelief permeates the camp. Insurrection is on the rise as the people murmur, complain, and ask for another leader to take them back to Egypt. It is at this point that Moses and Aaron give all leaders a second example of how a leader should react when confronted by his followers. Just like Moses’ response to the attack of leprosy on his sister Miriam, Moses and his brother Aaron fall on their faces in prayer and supplication. There is no other place to turn but to the mercy of the Almighty:

“Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes” (Numbers 14:5-6).

Even the two faithful spies knew what to do when confronted with the doubt of their brethren. They repented and tore their clothes in a physical act of displaying great sorrow for the report of their fellow spies. Later, we see that Joshua learns the fine art of falling on his face in order to implore the Lord for direction:

“He said, ‘No; rather I indeed come now *as* captain of the host of the LORD.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, ‘What has my lord to say to his servant?’” (Joshua 5:14).

It is here, prostrated on the ground before the presence of the Almighty, that men and women of God can truly cry out to Him for His protection, wisdom, grace, mercy, and compassion for not only themselves, but for others who are walking into the jaws of judgment. There is no better place to be when one is confronted with questions about what to do in certain circumstances than on your face imploring our Heavenly Father for answers. Only God has the answers to life's problems and challenges, and it is through our humbled hearts that He will reveal how we should proceed in the circumstances of life.

This is a great example of how men and women who are given leadership calls upon their lives should behave in times of great discomfort and stress. Prostrate yourself before the Holy One and wait upon Him for the directions on what to do next. The Almighty appreciates this level of trust and dependence on Him for guidance that you give Him. As you do this, you will discover that you begin to emulate the examples of Moses and Yeshua, the Servant of servants, who came to not be served, but to serve and become a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

Over time as you submit yourself to God, the Holy Spirit will reveal to you that leadership is all about serving and that the Biblical model for leadership is all about humbling yourself, as the world rests squarely upon the shoulders of the Messiah Yeshua (Isaiah 9:6). Yeshua and He alone is holding up the rest of humanity by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Yeshua is at the bottom of it all, yet because of His extreme service He is also at the top. Via experience you will discover that in order to be called into a position of leadership like Moses, you need to learn to put yourself last and to think and pray for others ahead of yourself. You learn about the need to serve others, and the more you serve the closer you come to the ultimate position occupied by the Messiah Himself:

"It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; **just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**" (Matthew 20:26-28).

The Apostles knew what service was all about, and it meant losing their lives in order to gain His life. The Apostles learned that becoming servants required one to minister to the needs of the body with whatever was necessary. In almost all cases, it required them giving up their physical lives in order to pass on the blessings associated with pointing people to the Messiah of Israel.

Of course, one of the absolute keys in service to the Lord is learning how to listen intently to the voice of God. Moses had an advantage, because God spoke to him face to face (Exodus 33:11). The exchanges between the Most High and Moses as recorded are a unique description of one who has been called for a huge assignment. But today, as the Lord is molding Messianic Believers as Torah obedient followers of the Messiah Yeshua, He is challenging each and every one of us to exemplify the same faith and willingness to submit our wills to His will. God is training us to crucify our flesh in order for the guiding power of the Holy Spirit to operate effectively through each and every one of us:

"I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

As we learn to be led by the Spirit and to walk by the Spirit, we should find that the **"buts" become fewer and fewer**. This is not to say that we understand all that the Father requires of us as we walk out our various calls. But we do know that He has a desire to use each one of us as His children in the unique circumstances where we are placed. His basic principles do not change. He has indicated that as we are faithful in the little things like learning to serve others, or in Moses' case, learning to serve sheep and then the nation of Israel, He is faithful to give us even greater things to serve. Yeshua teaches this very clearly:

**"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? And if you have**

not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12).

As we consider this week's Torah portion, perhaps you can think about how often you are prompted to use the word "but" when called upon to serve. Leaders in the Body of the Messiah must first become followers of God and learn to listen to His voice for instructions on how to deal with the issues of life. If the ten spies understood this principle, the people of Israel could have perhaps avoided a great deal of heartache during their trek to the Promised Land.

How about us today? Are we following the model of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb—all testimonies of people who learned the way to humbly serve as leaders during their generations? The same principles apply today. Are we going to be a people that falls on their faces, or people that follow after the dictates of their own self-centered hearts? The answers to these questions are personal to one and all. Every one of us has the chance to make the right choice. Nevertheless, will we?

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