

Shavua Tov

Weekly Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Shlach*

שלח

“Send out”

Send out men for yourself to explore the Canaanite territory that I am about to give the Israelites. Send out one man for each patriarchal tribe.
Each one shall be a person of high rank.

Shlach-lecha anashim veyaturu et-erets Kena'an asher-ani noten livney Yisra'el ish echad ish echad lematah avotav tishlachu kol nasi vahem.

Scripture for study:

Bamidbar (Numbers) 13:1 – 15:41

*“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which YHWH ELOHIM had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath Elohim said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For Elohim doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food and that it was **pleasant to eyes**, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did it. And the **eyes of them both were opened**, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” (Genesis 3:1-7)*

If we were to assign another name to our torah portion this week it might be entitled “The Eyes Have It”. From the very beginning of man’s history a battle has been raging between the Word of YHWH ELOHIM and the eyes of man. In many ways, the two trees in the Garden of Eden represent two ways of living before the Creator. Man was created in the image and likeness of Elohim.

And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him: male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

The scriptures tell us that YHWH is not a man but spirit.

"Elohim is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19)

"And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent." (1 Samuel 15:29)

"For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment." (Job 9:32)

"Elohim is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones,..." (Luke 24:39)

"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of Elohim, he hath seen the Father." (John 6:46)

"And YHWH spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." (Deuteronomy 4:12)

We should also remember that Adam and Eve did not see YHWH but rather heard only his voice in the walking in the garden.

"And they heard the voice of YHWH ELOHIM walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH ELOHIM amongst the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

So it is that man was created as a spiritual being. Yes, clearly man had a body but he was still capable of communing with the Creator Spirit to spirit. So the tree of life in the garden represents man living in communion with the Creator and receiving life-giving revelation, knowledge in his spirit from the Spirit of the Creator. In this way of living, man would receive all knowledge from the Creator himself. The Creator would inform man's spirit how to think, feel, and interact with the world around him. By living out this *revelation knowledge*, Adam would be the image of YHWH in the world. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represents the mixed fruit of man living by his senses. Man would still be receiving revelation from the Creator, but now would mix this *revelation knowledge* with knowledge gained through his own senses. Living with his eyes opened, man would become a more sensually oriented

being. No longer dependent upon the Creator for knowledge, man would increasingly live by his own experiences. So the conflict begins between the revelation of the Eternal One and man's own senses and experiences. This is exactly what took place in the Garden of Eden. The serpent inspired Eve to question the revealed word of the Creator by appealing to what her own eyes could see. It is in moments like this that our ability to trust in the Eternal One is challenged and we find ourselves becoming a judge between the Word of YHWH and our own senses. In many ways this was the experience of the children of Israel as they stood on the edge of the wilderness of Paran. But the scriptures declare,

"But the just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

We have repeatedly heard the promise of YHWH to give the children of Israel the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

*"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."
(Genesis 13:15)*

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their Elohim" (Genesis 17:8)

"And behold, the YHWH stood above it, and said, I am YHWH ELOHIM of Abraham the father, and the Elohim of Isaac: the land whereon thy liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed." (Genesis 28:13)

"And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and thy seed after thee will I give it." (Genesis 35:12)

"And I will bring you unto the land concerning that which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am YHWH." (Exodus 6:8)

"When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession..." (Leviticus 14:34)

"And when ye shall come into the land..." (Leviticus 19:23)

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them; When ye be come into the land which I give unto you..." (Leviticus 23:10)

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you,..." (Leviticus 25:2)

We have also repeatedly heard the description of the land as "a land flowing with milk and honey."ⁱ We have also heard the promise that YHWH "will drive out the current inhabitants from the land." We already know that "the land will spew them out for their iniquity."ⁱⁱ YHWH declares,

“Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place, which I have prepared.” (Exodus 23:20)

“For my angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.” (Exodus 23:23)

“I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.” (Exodus 23:27-30)

With all of these promises clearly stated and restated, the children of Israel still could not believe, and therefore asked for the opportunity to SEE the land with their own eyes. This should not surprise us. We may remember when YHWH revealed himself to Moses there was concern about the name of Elohim.

“And Moses said unto Elohim, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the Elohim of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And Elohim said unto Moses, Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel Ehyeh hath sent me unto you. And Elohim said, moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH ELOHIM of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.” (Exodus 3:13-15)

A little later YHWH again spoke to Moses concerning his name.

“And Elohim spake unto Moses and said unto him, I am YHWH: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of El Shaddai, but by my name YHWH was I not known to them.” (Exodus 6:3)

We have discussed in the past how the names or titles for the Eternal One are not so much names as they are descriptions of certain attributes. El Shaddai means Elohim the all sufficient one. This is the manner in which the patriarchs came to relate to the Creator. The Patriarchs knew the Creator as the maker of promises, as we have witnessed in some of the texts above. But the name YHWH given to Moses described the attribute of mercy, deliverance, and one who fulfills promises. It is the wilderness experience that teaches the children of Israel to trust YHWH to fulfill his promises.

So our portion begins with the children of Israel on the edge of the promised land, wanting to send spies into the land. While our portion begins simply with YHWH ELOHIM giving Moses

permission to send spies into the land, we discover later in the story that this idea originated not with YHWH or Moses, but with the Children of Israel.

“And ye came near unto me everyone of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.” (Deuteronomy 1:22)

Realizing that man is a sensually oriented being YHWH meets them where they are and grants permission to go and spy out the land.

Moses chooses one leading man from each tribe with the exception of the Levites. By sending one man from each tribe Moses prevents latter accusations that certain tribes were given better lands because their spies staked a claim to the better territory. There was no need to send a Levite to spy out the land because they have no inheritance in the land. Moses is very clear about what their assignment is.

“When Moses sent them to scout the land of Canaan, he said t them, Go up there into the Negev and on into the hill country, and see what kind of country it is. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many? Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified? Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not? And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” (Numbers 13:17-20)

We should take notice of Moses’ use of antonyms in this passage, as well as the broken pattern.

- **Weak or Strong**
- **Few or Many**
- **Good or Bad**
- **Open or Fortified**
- **Rich or Poor**
- **Wooded or Not**

Once again it is the broken pattern that helps us to discover the meaning. Clearly these word sets are all antonyms with the exception of the last set. “Not” is not the opposite of wooded. Moses could have asked “Is it wooded or barren” or “Forested or dessert” but instead the Torah breaks the pattern to draw our attention to it. “Wooded” stands somewhat alone in this list. The Hebrew word used in this passage is “Eytz” which means tree. But why would Moses be so concerned about whether there were trees in the land? We should remember that the righteous are often likened to trees in the Tanak.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of YHWH; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-3)

"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of Elohim: I trust in the mercy of Elohim for ever and ever." (Psalm 52:8)

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." (Psalm 92:12)

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life:" (Proverbs 11:30)

"That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

Moses may have remembered when Abraham interceded for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, YHWH was willing to spare these wretched cities on the merit of ten righteous men living within them.ⁱⁱⁱ So Moses may have been asking for the spies to discover if there were any righteous men living within the cities of this land that may merit YHWH'S protection. We should take note that YHWH had already declared this people under judgment for their perversity and wickedness.

"Defile not yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomited out her inhabitants." (Leviticus 18:24-24)

"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that YHWH thy Elohim hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness YHWH hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations YHWH doth drive them out from before thee." (Deuteronomy 9:4)

It may be the hope of Moses that when the spies realize there are no righteous men in the land, they will realize there is nothing to fear. To help build their courage and faith even further, Moses changes the name of his chief disciple from Hoshea which means "salvation" to Yehoshua which means "YHWH is Salvation". With this encouragement, Moses sends the men into the land. For forty days the spies search out the land, fulfill their mission and bring back the commanded fruit. The spies' report was indeed a very faithful one. They answered Moses' questions, and verified everything YHWH had promised them about the land. It was indeed a land of milk and honey. The spies even brought back evidence for the children of Israel to see and believe. There was really nothing new in all their reporting. And yet, this report caused all manner of reactions within the camp. To this point in our story everything looks good. Caleb boldly stands up and encourages the people to go up and possess their inheritance. But this is when things went from good to bad. Here the mixed knowledge begins to play a part. Human reason is mixed with the revelation of YHWH with disastrous results. While Caleb and Yehoshua boldly encourage the people, the rest of the spies do everything in their power to discourage them. Instead of sticking with facts, the spies began giving their interpretation of the facts, based on what they had seen with their own eyes. Thy spies declare of the Promise Land,

“The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof;” (Numbers 13:32)

A number of the sages teach that everywhere the spies went they saw funerals being conducted and inhabitants being buried. While they interpreted these facts as the land being evil, YHWH showed them these things to reveal to them He was already plaguing and weakening the inhabitants, that they may be easily defeated.^{iv} The spies likewise interpret how they appeared in the eyes of the current inhabitants of the land.

“And we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.” (Numbers 13:33)



Once again this is not fact but speculation. What we witness in the events of this incidence is man’s eyes overcoming his faith. Indeed in this story “the eyes (ayes) have it”. Instead of listening to and believing the numerous promises of YHWH, they trust in what they saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears and interpreted with their own reason.

Quickly the children of Israel made a judgment as to which source of knowledge was more reliable. Almost instantaneously with the report the children of Israel begin to fear and complain and to take matters into their own hands.

There are two specific sentences that deserve our closer attention. Together these two sentences will help us to truly understand the sin of the people and the punishment of Elohim upon this stubborn and faithless people. The first sentence is a statement made by the spies while the second sentence is the response of the people to the first sentence.

After Caleb boldly encourages the people to go up and take the promised land, the spies respond:

*“We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than **we**” (Numbers 13:31)*

It is this statement that begins the downfall of the people. They had already heard how there were giants in the land, numerous enemies, and a devouring habitat to contend with. so it would seem quite natural for the spies to question their ability to overcome such challenges. But in the Hebrew the phrase “ than we” is the word MEMAYNU which can be read as either first person plural as in our translation, or as third person masculine singular. In other words we may read the statement of the spies as saying,

*“We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than **HIM**.”*

If this is what was said, or if this is what was heard, then the people felt that not even YHWH could overcome this formidable an enemy. This would explain the response of the children of Israel. After weeping and wailing all night the people arose in the morning and declared,

“Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt.” (Numbers 14:4)

The word hidden beneath the English word “captain” is the Hebrew word “rosh” or “head”. This is a very significant declaration. Remember that the children of Israel have been called to be the wife of YHWH. As such, they are to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. The children of Israel are to be the body and image of YHWH in the world. From the beginning of the book of Numbers we have seen how Israel was to ‘Lift up ALEPH TAV the HEAD of all the congregation of Israel.’ If Israel is the body, then Messiah is the head.^v The children of Israel are here renouncing their calling and rejecting their head. In response to the perceived comments of the spies that YHWH cannot defend them against the land and its inhabitants, the children of Israel reject YHWH and seek someone else to lead them back to Egypt from where they began. It is this rejection of YHWH that evokes judgment upon this generation.

YHWH ELOHIM is indeed merciful and gracious. He recognizes that man is a sensually oriented being and so he met the children of Israel in a very sensual fashion. Israel saw with their own eyes ten plagues brought upon Pharaoh and Egypt. The children of Israel saw with their own eyes how YHWH parted the sea and swallowed the Egyptian army and Pharaoh. The children of Israel saw with their own eyes manna and quail fall from the skies. Israel saw with their own eyes the bitter waters made sweet and water pour from a rock. Israel saw with their own eyes the defeat of the Amalakites. Israel saw with their own eyes the smoke, thunder, and fire, and heard with their own ears the voice of YHWH as he spoke to them from Sinai. Israel saw with their own eyes the pillar of fire that came from the tabernacle and consumed their offering. The children of Israel saw with their own eyes how YHWH fulfilled all of the promises he made to them while they were still in Egypt. And yet, with all this evidence of the faithfulness of YHWH to deliver on his promises, the children of Israel believed what they saw with their own eyes and rejected YHWH and chose to return back to bondage in Egypt. We should not be surprised at YHWH’S response. The children of Israel asked to die in the wilderness rather than enter the land and this is exactly what YHWH granted them.

“If only we might die in this wilderness!” (Numbers 14:2)

“Say to them, As truly as I live, saith YHWH, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.” (Numbers 14:28)

And so it is that the children of Israel become destined to wander in the furnace of the wilderness until all the dross is refined from them. Forty years the children of Israel will wander before they enter in to their inheritance. Only Caleb and Yehoshua from that generation would be allowed to enter the land. So the children of Israel would walk and wander until they learned to walk by faith and not by sight.

It should be of no surprise that our portion ends where it begins: with our eyes.

“YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue; And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of YHWH and do them, and that ye seek not after our own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring. That ye may remember and do all my commandments and be holy unto your Elohim. I am YHWH your Elohim which brought you out of the land of Egypt. To be your Elohim: I am YHWH your Elohim.” (Numbers 15:37-41)

Tzitzit or fringes are again a reminder of YHWH’S mercy and patience with a stubborn people. So strong is YHWH’S desire for us to get it right that he helps us every step of the way to succeed. When the children of Israel failed to understand what it meant to be a tabernacle for the living Elohim, YHWH blessed the children of Israel with a material tabernacle as an object lesson to learn what it means to be holy. And when the children of Israel trusted their own eyes instead of the word of YHWH, he blessed them with Tzitzit to cast their eyes upon and remember all that YHWH did to deliver us from Egypt and bring us to land flowing with milk and honey. David declared of his mouth,

“I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” (Psalm 39:1)



Likewise James wrote,

“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2)

Tzitzit are like bridles for our eyes. When we see them we should remember how we are called to live not by sight but by faith.^{vi} As long as we are of both a sensual and spiritual nature we shall war within ourselves, and need to bridle our eyes, tongues and imaginations. To this end, the commandment to wear Tzitzit is no small matter. There are many who believe that wearing Tzitzit is among the least of the commandments. This may be so, but I remember the words of my Rabbi Y’shua who said,

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in least is unjust in much.” (Luke 16:10)

Tzitzit are to be worn and seen. Not only are we to wear Tzitzit to remind ourselves, but as a reminder for all the people of YHWH. This is a commandment of YHWH. It is a commandment to all the children of Israel, men, women, and children. It is a first step in obedience. It is a first step in living by the Word of YHWH as opposed to our own eyes, reason, and imaginations. As Caleb boldly encouraged the children of Israel to GO UP in obedience and enter the promise land, I want to boldly encourage all of you to be obedient to the WORD OF YHWH even in the least commandments; wear your Tzitzit. Walk in obedience to the Word; not by sight but by faith. And when your sensual nature rises up train your eyes upon the Tzitzit and remember the exodus, the wilderness, and all the promises YHWH fulfilled according to his word, and have faith in YHWH our Elohim.

SHAVUA TOV !

ⁱ Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:3; Leviticus 20:24

ⁱⁱ Leviticus 18:24-28

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 18:17-33

^{iv} The Stone Edition The Chumash, Mesorah Publications, Pg. 803

^v See my studies on Bamidbar and Naso

^{vi} 2 Corinthians 5:7