

While Praying:

- * Have a heavenly outlook. Grow in God. Stand by God's help.
- * Watch where you are headed; stay in God's light.
- * Look to God and not just in your own abilities.
- * No barrier is too great for God; don't be discouraged.

Shelach means, "send." This parashah begins by talking about the scouts who were sent into Canaan. Of particular interest for us because we believe that both Jew and Gentile have the right to believe and follow the true God is Caleb. He was a Kenite (Numbers 24:21-22) who represented the tribe of Judah as a spy/scout sent to the land of Canaan to check out the land. He was not Jewish according to any modern Jewish standards, but he was assimilated into the tribe of Judah. Some think that the Kenites were one of the Midianite tribes (Judges 1:16). It has always been God's intention that the Gentiles be assimilated into the Jewish community so they could follow God.

The scouts went into the land at the time of the first ripe grapes. After forty days they returned and they said that although the land was plentiful, the people there were well fortified and the Israelites then became afraid. The scouts were committing what we call lashon harah, speaking with an evil tongue. In last week's portion, God punished Moshe's sister Miriam for slandering Moshe. The Israelites should have known better. We should also be careful what we say.

Caleb and Joshua said God will give them the land, but the people wouldn't listen to them. They were about to stone Moshe, but the presence of the Lord appeared and the Lord tells Moshe that He will disown the Israelites. Moshe pleads for the people and appeals to God's mercy (the mercy that God had revealed to Moshe in Exodus) and the Lord relents of His judgment. The Jews derive the 13 Attributes of God's Mercy from Exodus 34:6-7.

Because of all their sins and unbelief, the people of that generation, 20 and up, would die in the wilderness and they would spend forty years in the wilderness. Not being able to enter the promised land seems like a harsh punishment, but what do you think this can teach us?

- It shows the destructiveness that can be sown by fear or unbelief towards God.
- When you are afraid, move towards God.
- God takes sin seriously; they should have trusted in God. God will forgive us if we repent.
- God will hear us when we appeal for forgiveness. God heard Moshe's appeal for the people.
- Some say it doesn't matter what we do. That's not what we see here. God expects us to trust in Him and trusting in Him includes keeping His commandments.

Those that had spread the negative rumors would die. Satur the son of Michael who was one of the negative scouts, whose letters of his name adds up to 666, was perhaps the instigator of the unbelief among Israel. Hebrew letters are also numbers. Perhaps the person Yochanan refers to in the book of Revelation as having the number 666 will be a person who spreads unbelief and his name will also add up to 666 (Revelation 13:18) as did the name Satur. The person in the book of Revelation is referred to as someone who will make the people commit idolatry of some sort. Following our own beliefs instead of God's commandments is a form of idolatry. Isaiah 5:20-21 NKJV says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" Wise in their own eyes means they value what they believe instead of what God tells us.

God then told the Israelites to turn around and go south. There is actual evidence in the Sinai desert that they did this. Some among the camp decided to go into Canaan even though God now told them **not to go** and they were defeated because they were no longer supposed to go. There is then more information about the giving of offerings after they enter the land. The Torah is the standard for judgement for all, both Jew and Gentile it says in Numbers 15:16. They stoned a man for gathering sticks on Shabbat. It was probably his job; he shouldn't have been doing it on Shabbat. They were to make fringes on the corners of their garments (tzitzit) with a blue cord as a reminder to keep God's commandments and be a holy people. The Jews can't agree on which color blue so they disobey the commandment of God and make all the tassels white.

We repeatedly see that God expects His people to be a holy and believing people and be willing to follow His commandments. Also, the effect of negative talk results in a lack of trust in God and is a deterrent to receiving God's promises. Doing something without God's permission can result in calamity. The people were to wear fringes to remind them to keep God's commands. It is okay to wear tzitzit, but we now have the Holy Spirit to remind us to keep God's commands. Wearing tzitzit at times would be appropriate.

Most people spend their lives trying to survive. In the jungle, they build a shelter, usually a stilt house for when the rains and flooding comes. They have some tools and at the very least a canoe. They make clothes or trade for clothes in the jungle town and when they are hungry; most often, they go fishing. It's a lot different in the United States. We get a job, pay for our place to live, and buy our food and supplies. What comes after that? In the jungle, there is less opportunity so they don't have much incentive, but where there is more opportunity, people can make more money to get the things they want.

There must have been opportunities back in Yeshua's time to make money. Shaul talks about how loving money produces evil (1 Timothy 6:10). It's not wrong to have money and things to enjoy. Why is it wrong to love money? That's because money can then become your god and obtaining it is then your life's goal; sometimes, no matter how you may get it. In contrast to that, Shaul (Paul) said, "Focus your minds on the things above, not on things here on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God." Colossians 3:2-3 CJB.

Our focus first of all needs to be set on the things God wants us to set our thoughts on. That would be keeping God's commandments and doing what is right and good. After I finish thanking God for a new day, I often continue praying that I will do what is right and good. So much in life depends on doing what God wants us to do. It's even good in the business world. If you go to a store and the people are rude and impatient with you, you're not likely to go back. They didn't learn to love others like it says in Leviticus 19:17-18, "Do not hate your brother in your heart, but rebuke your neighbor frankly, so that you won't carry sin because of him. Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any of your people; rather, love your neighbor as yourself; I am ADONAI."

When you think about it, a happy life depends so much on how we treat others. Loving others involves being honest with others, not taking vengeance, not keeping grudges, and treating others well with love. Have you ever known someone who was out of control with the way they treated others? Their bad treatment sticks out and no one wants to be the next one they mistreat. On the other hand, someone who is kind, thoughtful, and patient is easy to get along with and we would rather be with those kinds of people than the people who take no thought how they affect others. God's commandments teach us to do good; we vote for doing what is good. It's a better way to live.

Without believing in God, the person who tries to be good does what they think is right on their own terms. They define what is right and good and it may not be good at all. Hitler thought he was helping the

world by killing people. I was just reading an article about a group of environmentalists (those who value nature) who feel that mankind is a scourge to the world and they think we need to get rid of mankind.

When we put anything over God, we can end up with destructive and incredibly insensitive and cruel beliefs. We are better keeping our focus in the right place and being the solution to the world's problems instead of the problem. When I was in the jungle, the missionaries told me that Green Peace would put ropes across the small rivers. Suppose that you are with your family of 3 children and a baby. All of a sudden, your boat capsizes into the river and you all end up in the river. I was told they have killed people putting those ropes across the rivers.

Where are we headed in life? Wherever we are going, we need to stay in God's light. Light is another way to say understanding. We are to develop our abilities to understand what is right. We don't develop our own values, but we apply God's commandments in a thoughtful way. "Walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good;" Deuteronomy 10 12-13 NKJV. Applying God's commandments is for our own good. The word for love (oo'la'ahavah, and to love) according the Strong's Enhanced Dictionary means to have affection for as a friend. Do we want to be friends with the creator God? That would be a good choice. Yeshua said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments;" John 14:10 NKJV. Since Yeshua is God, He gave us the commandments at Mt. Sinai.

Perhaps someone thinks that one political party helped them better so they will always vote for them. Well, what if that political party is turning its back on the people and are causing great suffering. Millions of helpless babies are being killed through abortion in the United States because people don't want to be inconvenienced with children. Would you vote for someone that supports killing helpless children? Watch where you are headed. What's next, eliminating the population because some think mankind is a scourge to the planet? That's murder.

The people of Israel were ready to stone the man who had miraculously brought them out of slavery because of the negative report of some men. It boggles my mind how they could so quickly turn toward doing wrong. We need to consider God's ways and God's commandments in both the Old and New Testaments as holy and value them deeply.

Also, look to God and trust in Him to help you. Most of what we accomplish relies on our own abilities, what we learn, and how well we apply ourselves. God can help us in all we do. My cousin used to pray before he went out to work on computer equipment for businesses. This one time, two guys had been working 24 hours straight trying to get a computer system running. They called my cousin in to help out and it was fixed in 10 minutes. When he first became a believer in the Messiah, he told me that he had lugged his tools for 2 years across this one parking lot to work on their equipment. When he became a believer in the Messiah, he prayed for a parking spot and he ended up right next to the door. He was so thrilled.

God helped me get through college. The Holy Spirit encouraged me and gave me the strength to do it. There is nothing too small or too great for God. God healed my shoulder. Yeshua said, "I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you;" Matthew 18:20 NKJV. Yeshua is saying this to mean that all things are possible with God. In fact, Yeshua said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible;" Matthew 19:26 NKJV.

Sometimes just doing what we know can accomplish great things. I got a prophetic word for someone and just said that God is telling me about a death and the guy I was talking to, began weeping out loud. I was incredibly surprised, but someone he cared about deeply had just died. God wanted him to know that God knew the pain this man was going through.

Don't be discouraged. God can do the impossible. One time I asked for the rain to stop and it started snowing. Well, the rain did stop. Whatever you are going through, whatever you need, God is in the business of helping us; maybe not in the way we would expect it, but keep walking with Him, keep praying, and keep serving Him. Shaul tells us not to be weary. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart;" Galatians 6:9 NKJV.

In Jewish thought, doing good means to follow God's commandments in the Torah. There was no New Testament, so they relied on the Torah and the Old Testament portion to follow God. We are not to grow weary keeping God's commandments both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.¹ What will we reap if we do not lose heart? Heart often refers to our thoughts. Keeping our thoughts on God produces peace. Isaiah 26:3-4 NKJV says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever." Perfect peace sounds great to me. The Bible also says God will bless us for keeping His commandments (Deuteronomy 11:27).

Keep doing what is right and good and do not lose heart in all you do. There may be some who will quit, but don't you quit. It may get difficult at times and you may wonder what's going on, but God is still there; don't give up. I have seen people walk away from the true God for almost nothing; for some it was because their feelings were hurt. People are not perfect. Do what is says in Leviticus; do not hold a grudge and do not get back at them. Forgive them; if there is something that needs to be done to restore the relationship, do it if you can. Don't hate others, don't hold onto bad feelings. Keep living for the Lord and do what is right. The devil is trying to make you quit. Often, people are at a point of making a spiritual breakthrough when they decide to quit.

Don't just be a survivor, but set your heart on living for God, serving God, and keeping His commandments. Israel was about to stone the man who had led them to freedom and who was helping them to be blessed by God. Don't turn your back on God. Grow and stand faithfully in God's light and look to where you are headed in life. Doing things God's way is for our own good. It is a good thing to apply ourselves well in all we do, but also apply yourself well spiritually. Do not grow weary, keep living for God, serving Him, and keeping His commandments; don't be a quitter.

¹ Some 1,050 commandments have been properly applied from the Old Testament portion in the New Testament. Misapplied laws are not to be followed. Yeshua set us free from the misapplied laws. Adding and following misapplied laws to the Torah bring a curse. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you;" Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV. "Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law;" Deuteronomy 27:26 NKJV.