

שְׁלַח-לֶחָךְ

SHELACH LECHA/SEND FORTH Bemidbar (Numbers) 13:1-15:41

This week our Parsha begins with the **sending out of the spies** and the **unfortunate report** which they brought back. **Shelach Lecha** (שְׁלַח-לֶחָךְ) literally means “send for yourself”:

*Bemidbar 13:1 And יהוה² spoke to Moses, saying, **"Send for yourself** (שְׁלַח-לֶחָךְ) men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them."*

From the above verse, it appears that יהוה (Yahwey) is doing the **sending**, but in Devarim (Deuteronomy) we read of what appears to be a **different perspective**:

*Devarim 1:22 "And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'²³ **The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.***

In Devarim, it implies that **the idea** for sending the scouts did indeed come **from the people of Israel, not יהוה**. After the scouts came to Moses, it would make sense that he would **consult with יהוה** who in turn said to Moses “**Send for yourself....**” Therefore His **implied disapproval** could be paraphrased, “**Send them if you want. I am NOT telling you to do it. Do whatever seems right in your own mind.**” Thus the mission, while receiving the go ahead from יהוה, came about as a result of the **desire of the people**, though it also had **the support of Moses**.

The word translated as “**spying out**” in Bemidbar 13:2 is from the Hebrew word “**tuwr**” (תוּר) and is better defined as “**seeking out**”, “**touring**”, or “**exploring**”, rather than “**spying out.**” Moses’ idea was to send them as “**tourists**” charged with “**seeking out the Land**” in order that they might **report their findings to the people**. But the “**tourists**” turned their mission into one of “**spying out**” the Land in order to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses as a **military target**. This kind of an **evaluation was NOT necessary** since יהוה had **promised them the Land**, and their **victory** over anyone who might challenge their right to it (Shemot/Exodus 23:20-23).

Moses’ support in sending them was to give the people of Israel a view of the Holy Land which would **motivate them** in the process that was taking them **from being slaves in Egypt** to a people being transformed in the desert, **to a people being a light to the nations living in the Promised Land**.

Chapter 13 continues on to list the **names of the leaders** who were chosen to “tour” the Land. Now through the years, most of us have probably skipped over verses like these without much thought. However, now we are learning that these **Hebrew names usually tell a story by themselves**. These verses list, by tribe, the name of the tourist along with the name of their father. Now I want you to notice that the names of the tribes that are listed are **NOT given in their birth order**. This should be a clue that the names were written **to tell a story**.

First let us examine the names of the **tribes** and their **meanings**:

Hebrew	Tribes	Meaning
רֵאוּבֵן	Reuben	Behold a Son
שִׁמְעוֹן	Simeon	Hear Him
יְהוּדָה	Judah	Give Him praise
יִשָּׂשכָר	Issachar	He brings reward
אֶפְרַיִם	Ephraim	Doubly blessed
בְּנִימִן	Benjamin	Son of my right hand
זְבוּלֹן	Zebulon	Dwelling with us
מְנַשֶּׁה	Manasseh	He will cause you to forget
דָן	Dan	Judge
אַשֶׁר	Asher	Happy and blessed
נַפְתָּלִי	Naphtali	Strife
גָּד	Gad	Fortune/wealth

So, in the order written, with very few words added, you can see יהוה telling you to “Behold a Son (Messiah), hear him (shema), give Him praise for He brings reward and you will be doubly blessed. He is the Son of My right hand and He will dwell with us. He will cause you to forget your troubles when He returns as judge. Happy and blessed are those who believe, though we will have strife in this world. He is our fortune and wealth.

Now let’s also take a look at the names of the chosen tourists to see if there is a story within the meanings of their names:

Hebrew	Sent One	Meaning
שָׁמוּאֵל	Shamua	Hear
שָׁפַט	Shaphat	To judge
כָּלֵב	Caleb	Like the heart
יִגָּאֵל	Yigal	He redeems
הוֹשֵׁעַ	Hoshea	Salvation
פַּלְטִי	Palti	My deliverer
גַּדְיָאֵל	Gadiel	El is my good fortune
גַּדִּי	Gadi	My good fortune
עַמִּיאֵל	Amiel	El of my people
סְתוּר	Setur	Hidden, concealed
נַחֲבִי	Nakhbi	I hide/conceal
גְּאוּאֵל	Geuel	El is magnified/exalted

Again, here is the story with only a few added words:

Hear Him for He will judge the heart. He will redeem me with salvation for He is my deliverer. My El is surely my good fortune. The El of my people has been **concealed**. Though He is **hidden**, He will be magnified and exalted!

Certainly both of these groupings of names speak of the **Messiah**. It is interesting that Yeshua also spoke about **hidden things**:

***Matthew 11:25** At that time Yeshua answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Adonai of heaven and earth, that **You have hidden these things** from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.*

Now **Hoshea** is quickly singled out for a **name change**:

***Bemidbar 13:16** These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called **Hoshea** the son of Nun, **Joshua** (**Yehoshua**).*

We saw above that **Hoshea** means “**salvation**”. By adding the letter **yud** (י) to the beginning of his name, it becomes **Yehoshua** (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), meaning “**Yah saves**”. The rabbis teach that Moses **anticipated trouble when he sent the spies** and that he knew it would be **Hoshea who would deal with it**. Moses wanted to make sure that Hoshea would **understand where his power and strength comes from**, so he gave him a name that **reflected** this.

Okay, let’s take a look at exactly what Moses instructed the tourists to do:

***Bemidbar 13:17** Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains,¹⁸ "and **see what the land is like**: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many;¹⁹ "whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds;²⁰ "whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.*

In verse 18, Moses tells them to “**see what the land is like**”. Another word for “**see**” is “**to perceive**”. This becomes more than just the sense of seeing something with our eyes. The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament expands the word to mean, “**to regard, feel, understand, learn, and enjoy**.” Being able to “**see**” beyond the limits of just what our eyes take in is implied by another word translated as a “**prophet**”...a “**seer**”, which suggests being able to “**see**” or “**to take in the divine**.”

Yeshua referenced this sort of “**seeing**” several times in the Gospels:

***Luke 8:10** And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Elohim, but to the rest it is given in parables, that '**Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand**.'*

Therefore, the **mission** of the tourists was “**to see the Divine**” in the Promised Land. Moses was not sending them to merely gather data, but **giving them an opportunity to exercise their spiritual eyes**. Sadly, **they failed this test**. They did **trek** through the Land, however **they failed to “see” the Land** and to bring back a **vision** to the people.

Note the concept of “**seeing**” later in Devarim, and notice the **grace** of יהוה in a response to Moses:

Devarim 3:25 'I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.'

יהוה did not allow Moses to “**cross over**”, but He did give him “**eyes to see**”:

Devarim 3:27 'Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan.'

Now concerning the **report** that the tourists brought back, **they interspersed truth with fear**:

Bemidbar 13:27 Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit."²⁸ "Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there."

Their implication is that **militarily**, they would **not be able to conquer the inhabitants**. This is where Caleb jumps in and speaks with faith:

Bemidbar 13:30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

Caleb understood the **strength of יהוה**. Rather than looking at the situation **physically** (the greatness of the inhabitants), he chose to focus on what their **spiritual strength** was capable of. However, look at how his **fellow tourists** answer:

*Bemidbar 13:31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for **they are stronger than us**."³² And they gave the children of Israel an evil report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature."*

There's something here in the Hebrew worth noting. It is in the ending phrase of verse 31...**for they are stronger than us**. The Hebrew word for “**than us**” (בְּזַמְנוֹ) is the same as the Hebrew word for “**than him**” (בְּזַמְנוֹ). Let me repeat verse 31 for you with that change:

*Bemidbar 13:31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for **they are stronger than Him**."*

That changes the meaning a lot, doesn't it? The tourists were **insulting the power and strength** of יהוה. They were **unbelieving and faithless**. Now we can read these verses in the book of **Hebrews** and find much more meaning in them:

Hebrews 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief** in departing from the living El; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Messiah if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, ¹⁵ while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." ¹⁶ For **who, having heard, rebelled?** Indeed, **was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?** ¹⁷ Now **with whom was He angry forty years?** Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that **they could not enter in because of unbelief.**

The children of Israel **respond** to the bad report **with pitiful crying throughout the night.** They **murmur** against Aaron and Moses and **yearn for Egypt.** Not a good response on their part. Continually throughout history, the Israelites have attempted **to lean on Egypt** despite the warnings of the prophets:

Jeremiah 42:15 "Then hear now the word of יהוה, O remnant of Judah! Thus says יהוה of hosts, the Elohim of Israel: 'If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, ¹⁶ 'then it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die.

Isaiah 30:1 "Woe to the rebellious children," says יהוה, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin; ² **Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!** ³ Therefore the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and **trust in the shadow of Egypt shall be your humiliation.**

Because Torah principles operate in **cycles**, things that have **gone around** will again **come around.** **Not trusting in the promises of יהוה** to take us to the **Promised Land**, and instead desiring **Egypt (picture of this world)** could again **prevent us** from entering the **Promised Land.**

Joshua and Caleb attempt to turn the situation around:

Bemidbar 14:7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ "If יהוה delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'

Verse 8 contains the Hebrew word for bring (בָּרַךְ) in the hiphil verb form that literally means "cause us to come." Do you see what He's saying? He not only will lead us into the Land, but **He will cause it to happen.** In other words, **it's a promise!** Since these things are all written down as **warnings to us (1 Corinthians 10:11)**, what can we learn from this? Are **we** willing to leave our **Egypt** (this world)? Do we believe that He is **strong enough to defeat the evil forces that surround us** and **take us to the Promised Land?** Do we **believe in His promises?** Friends, do we even **KNOW** what His promises are?

Now there are so many things to talk about, and they are truly all connected this week. But we shall skip all the way over to the commandment for the **tzit-tzit** (תִּצִית), and spend the rest of our time there.

***Bemidbar 15:37** Again יהוה spoke to Moses, saying,³⁸ "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels (תִּצִית) on the **corners of their garments** throughout their generations, and to put a **blue thread in the tassels of the corners.**³⁹ "And you shall have the tassel, that **you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of יהוה** and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,⁴⁰ "and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your Elohim.⁴¹ "I am יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: I am יהוה your Elohim."*

The **tassels**, or the **tzit-tzit**, were attached to the **corners of their garments**. Through literature and art of the ancient Near East, we gain information that tells us that **the hem of the outer garment was ornate** in comparison with the rest of the garment. The **symbolism of the hem** was that it was seen as **an extension of the wearer's reputation and authority**. This gives meaning to an incident that happened in the Judean hills with **David and King Saul**. King Saul was pursuing David with the intention of killing him. Saul entered a cave and **removed his outer garment** to relieve himself, unaware that David and his men were hiding in the cave. **David sneaks up on Saul and "cuts off the hem of his garment."** The text then tells us how David feels about his action:

***1 Samuel 24:5** Now it happened afterward that **David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.**⁶ And he said to his men, " יהוה forbid that I should do this thing to my master, יהוה's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of יהוה."*

And when **King Saul** realizes what David has done, **he responds with:**

***1 Samuel 24:20** "And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand."*

What's going on here? It's all about the **hem of the garment**. Remember that Saul's hem was an **extension of Saul's power and authority**. **David felt remorse** in cutting off the King's hem because יהוה **had not ordered it**. But when Saul finds out what happened, **he sees it as a sign that יהוה has taken his authority and transferred it to David**.

The tzit-tzit is to include a **blue thread**. This blue thread is known as the **Shamash (servant)**, the same word for the **taller, center light on the menorah which speaks of Messiah**. Traditionally, **this blue thread is wrapped around the other strands, 7, 8, 11, and 13** times with double knots in-between. To understand the significance of this, we must know that every Hebrew letter has a numerical value. **Seven and 8** add up to **15**, which is equivalent to the added values of the first two letters of יהוה. **Eleven** is the equivalent of the vav and hey, the last two letters of יהוה. **Thirteen** is equivalent to the Hebrew word "echad" (אֶחָד) which means "one" or "unity." So, from a traditional point of view, to look at the tzit-tzit is to remember יהוה echad (יהוה is one).

Our Biblical text in Bemidbar 15:38 says that the tzit-tzit is attached to the **corners** (קַנְפֵי) of the garment. Does this garment have corners? Some of the **ancient artwork** shows that the tzit-tzit are the **extended threads of the embroidered vertical bands**, which, **instead of being cut off at the hem, are allowed to hang free**. These bands **terminate at quarter points of the hem**, thereby **forming four “corners.”** Another piece of artwork shows **scalloped skirts with the tassels hanging where the scallops meet**. Now **kanaph** (corners - קַנְפֵי) does not necessarily mean corners, but can mean the “**extremity**” or “**wing**”. A scalloped hem is the **winged extremity of the garment**. A fancy scalloped hem was the sign of **nobility**. Yeshua chastised the Pharisees for their **pride** reflected by the **hem of their garments**:

*Matthew 23:1 Then Yeshua spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."³ "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do."⁴ "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."⁵ "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and **enlarge the borders of their garments**.*

The **blue thread** (Bemidbar 15:38) is thought to be from the **dye of the murex snail**. The evidence of the industry based on the dye of this snail has been found recently in a few port cities along the coast of the Mediterranean. **Lydia, a seller of purple**, probably was in the **business of selling this very expensive dye**:

*Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. **She was a seller of purple** from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped Yah. Adonai opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.*

Threads dyed with this blue color were **used in the weaving of the inner curtain of the Tabernacle and of the garments of the High Priest**:

*Shemot 26:1 "Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with **ten curtains of fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread**; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them.*

*Shemot 28:6 "and they shall make the **ephod** of gold, **blue, purple, and scarlet thread**, and fine woven linen, artistically worked.*

When a Hebrew saw the **blue thread in his tzit-zit**, he was immediately reminded that he was a part of that “**kingdom of priests**” that יהוה had called him to:

*Shemot 19:6 'And you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation**.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

Now we also, as **believers** who have been made **kings and priests**, wear the representative sign of the tzit-tzit with the **blue thread (Messiah)**:

*Revelation 1:6 and has made us **kings and priests to His Elohim and Father**, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*

A very powerful **Messianic prophecy** related to the **tzit-tzit and the corners/wings to which it is attached**, is found in Malachi:

*Malachi 4:2 But to you who fear My name **the Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings (corners - **אזן**)...***

The **brightness of the Messiah** is, in fact, a **bright light** that makes all other lights pale in comparison. He is **the light that existed with Elohim** before the creation of the world. He was the **light that existed during the first three days of creation before the sun, moon, and stars were called into being**. Yes, Messiah is the **radiance of justice and righteousness**.

During the time of Yeshua, those familiar with the prophecies of Malachi would have been waiting for a **Messiah** who would bring with Him, **healing**. Malachi informs us that the **healing** that the Messiah brings will be “**in His wings**”, the same word used for the **corners of the garment**. King David also points to the **wings**:

*Psalm 36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O Elohim! Therefore the children of men put their trust **under the shadow of Your wings**.*

Now picture **Yeshua...the Messiah...the Sun of Righteousness...wearing His garment with the tzit-tzit hanging from the four corners of His hem**. It's not too hard to imagine that people who believed Him to be the Messiah, the One who would redeem Israel, would **look for healing in the hem of His garment**:

*Matthew 14:35 And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick,³⁶ and begged Him **that they might only touch the hem of His garment**. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.*

There also is the familiar story of the woman with a bleeding disorder who was **healed by touching Yeshua's hem**. Afterwards, He commends her for her **faith!**

*Matthew 9:20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment.²¹ For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well."²² But Yeshua turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; **your faith has made you well**." And the woman was made well from that hour.*

History recounts to us that because tzit-tzit marked its wearer as an **Israelite**, that person was singled out for **persecution**. Thus it was ordained by the rabbis that the tzit-tzit should be transferred to an **inner garment**. However many believe that the tzit-tzit should be **worn in a visible sense**, in fulfillment of the commandment “**and you shall see them**”:

*Bemidbar 15:39 "And you shall have the tassel (tzit-tzit), that you may **look upon it and remember all the commandments of **אשר**** and **observe them**, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,*

Notice the **verbs** in this verse:

- **Look**
- **Remember**
- **Observe**

Thus a **common teaching technique** of the Almighty is illustrated by the **tzit-tzit**. We **see** them (it affects the senses), it causes us to **remember** (it affects the brain), and it is translated into **action** (good deeds – keeping of the commandments).

According to Bemidbar 15:40, the ultimate goal of the wearing of tzit-tzit is to cause the wearer to achieve **holiness**:

Bemidbar 15:40 "and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your Elohim.

What is it about the wearing of tzit-tzit that would **connect** the wearer with **holiness**? The earliest rabbinic sources taught that tzit-tzit are a **mixture of wool (blue thread) and linen (white threads)**, a **forbidden mixture** to the common Israelite. In fact, wool and linen tzit-tzit, from the 2nd century have even been found in caves.

Vayikra/Leviticus 19:19 ' You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

However, we also know that **the mixture of wool and linen was reserved exclusively for priests**. The **priestly garments** were made from a **blend of linen and wool**. In fact, the **High Priest's linen turban** is bound by a **blue woolen cord**:

Shemot 28:37 "And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban.

So what we see is that the **tzit-tzit is an exception to the Torah's commandment against wearing garments of wool and linen**. But, it is a **paradox with a purpose**. It is an attempt to encourage all Israel **to aspire to a degree of holiness comparable to that of the priests**:

Vayikra 19:2 "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I אלהים your Elohim am holy.

Israelites who are not allowed to wear the priestly garments, are still **commanded to strive for a life of holiness** and this is **demonstrated by the wearing of tzit-tzit**:

1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

The tzit-tzit is the **uniform of all of Israel!**

Okay, I have “one more thing” on the tzit-tzit. Remember the word, often defined as “**spying**” (Bemidbar 13:2,16) which we defined as “**touring**”? That same word is found in the verse on tzit-tzit:

***Bemidbar 15:39** "And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of **יהיה** and do them, and that you may not go spying after your own heart and your eyes that you went astray after them."*

The same word for **spying** occurs in the opening and closing verse of the Parsha, highlighting the importance of the theme of **vision** throughout. **The tzit-tzit are the remedy for faulty and sinful vision.** The tzit-tzit surrounding us on all four sides, are a **visual reminder** of יהיה's **presence** in all places.

Now let's end with this final thought about **Jehoshua** (Joshua). Yehoshua **entered the Promised Land twice**. This week we read about **the first time, when he came to tour the land**. The book of **Joshua** details the **second time**, when he came **with power to conquer the land**. Yehoshua becomes the picture of **Yeshua**. The **first time He was on earth**, His visit only lasted for a few years, and He did not establish a kingdom. **When He comes again**, however, He will come as **the leader of all armies in order to establish His kingdom** in the **Promised Land!**

Baruch Hashem, יהיה!

Shabbat Shalom,
Ardelle