

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

Moses certainly knew that the enemies of God were everywhere, and that they hated everything that His people stood for and represented. Should we not internalize this same reality as Messiah followers today? By faith, just prior to moving the Ark of the Covenant, Moses declared **“Rise O LORD”**—summoning the Most High to take note that Israel was preparing to move. Then he exclaimed, **“and let Your enemies scatter, and Your foes flee before You!”** (Numbers 10:35, Alter). With great authority, Moses calls upon God to establish who He is, as he prepares the people to follow the cloud. The Lord then clears a path for the movement of the Ark of the Covenant so that the enemies of Israel would not be allowed to disrupt its transport.

The inverted *nuns* seen in the Masoretic Text of Numbers 10:35-36 certainly do set these two verses apart, so that readers can take notice of them. Likewise, Numbers 10:35 is canted in the traditional liturgy of the Synagogue as the Torah scroll is removed from its ark during the *Shabbat* service, a practice also adhered to in much of the Messianic community.<sup>34</sup> But might there be something more for us to realize?

Born again Believers, with God’s Instruction written on their hearts by His Spirit, do make up a kind of “ark.” Do we ever personally pray the protection of Numbers 10:35-36 as we move from location-to-location or place-to-place? We certainly know that we will be hated for being Messiah’s followers. Should we not know that the enemy and his minions often lie in wait for us? In going out into our sinful world, do we go out with the confidence of Moses who appealed to the Lord for His power to strike down Israel’s enemies? Or, either forgetting or being ignorant of words like Numbers 10:35-36, do we just go out into the world unprepared and forgetting to appeal to the Holy One for His protection?

Perhaps if we thought of ourselves as a kind-of ark, we might be more mindful of the responsibility we have to protect ourselves from the schemes of the Devil. Then, in God’s faithfulness toward us, He will truly be able to return to us, *and shower us with His blessings*, after the enemy flees! I simply encourage you to walk by the Spirit, and be confident in the Lord that He does go before us, protecting us from all those who would seek to harm or destroy us.

## ***Shelakh-Lekha***    שְׁלַח-לְךָ

### **Send on your behalf “One Law?”**

Numbers 13:1-15:41  
Joshua 2:1-24

*Shelakh-Lekha* is best known for the account of the twelve spies who are sent into Canaan to scout out the opportunities for the Israelites, so they can occupy the Promised Land.<sup>35</sup> We

<sup>34</sup> Consult “A Traditional Morning Shabbat Service” in the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* by Messianic Apologetics (forthcoming paperback edition).

<sup>35</sup> Numbers 13:1-24.

witness the classic scene of how two spies, Joshua and Caleb, came back with a good report—and the ten spies who reported negatively.<sup>36</sup> Our Torah portion for this week records a critical part of Ancient Israel's history, which must be studied properly today. Great lessons on faith can be *contrasted* with an inherent lack of faith—and negative consequences which can ensue for not believing the promises of God.<sup>37</sup> While the messages seen in *Shelakh-Lekha* have been the substance of much theological and spiritual reflection for over three millennia, I think we can also see how it likely inspired many in the Zionist movement of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries to want to return to the Land of Israel. **For this, we must be very grateful!**

Now after over a half-century of existence, the modern-day State of Israel is a viable country, uniquely existing as a testimony to the validity of the promises made by God contained in the Holy Writ. We all know that the Scriptures are replete with statements and prophecies which indicate that Israel would eventually be reconstituted, as a fulfillment of the promises given by the Lord to the Patriarchs.<sup>38</sup> Many of the promises seen in the Tanakh were used to inspire the original Zionist settlers to make the necessary sacrifice, and perform the hard work and labor, required to establish a Jewish homeland in the Middle East.

As you read our *parashah*, I would urge you to not exclusively reflect on some of its positive aspects as they concern the Promised Land and the vibrancy of Israel today. Consider the reaction of Moses when he hears that God is planning to wipe Israel out because of rebellious attitudes toward Him (Numbers 14:11-12). Will God be known as being cruel and despicable, who led His chosen people out of Egypt only to slaughter them mercilessly in the desert (Numbers 14:13-16)? Even with the promise of Moses' seed being made into a nation mightier than the Israelites set before him (Numbers 14:12), Israel's humble leader intercedes on their behalf, appealing to God as One who is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness:

"But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*. Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.' So the LORD said, 'I have pardoned *them* according to your word; but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD'" (Numbers 14:17-21).

*Shelakh-Lekha* is an appropriate point in our Torah readings where we should reflect upon the humility of Moses as Israel's leader. Not only do we see Moses plead before God on behalf of the people, but the burden of service he carries for Israel cannot be denied. Moses is willing to stand as an advocate for the people before the Lord, even when they might prefer to stone Him to death (Numbers 14:10).

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<sup>36</sup> Numbers 13:25-33.

<sup>37</sup> Numbers 14:1-38.

<sup>38</sup> These prophecies may include, but are not limited to:

Deuteronomy 30:1-5; Isaiah 14:1, 34:16-17, 35:10, 65:9-10; Jeremiah 3:18, 16:14-15, 29:14, 30:2-3, 31:16-18, 50:19; Ezekiel 11:17, 20:41-42, 34:13-15, 36:8-12, 24-28, 38:8; Amos 9:14-15; Micah 4:6-8; Zephaniah 2:7; Zechariah 2:11-12, 8:7-8, 10:8-10.

## One Law?

While the Lord does not wipe out the people of Israel, “starting over” with Moses’ descendants, it is nevertheless decreed that all of those twenty years and over—save Joshua and Caleb—will die in the wilderness. *Only the children of the Exodus generation are qualified to enter into the Promised Land* (Numbers 14:29-31). With this said, the remainder of our Torah portion narrates some of the instructions and laws that are to be observed when Canaan is eventually occupied by Israel.<sup>39</sup> Of particular importance will be how the Israelites will offer various animal sacrifices to the Lord, doubtlessly as an expression of their thanksgiving to Him for His bounty and provision in the Land He has granted them:

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land where you are to live, which I am giving you, then make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering or in your appointed times, to make a soothing aroma to the LORD, from the herd or from the flock’” (Numbers 15:1-3).

The bulk of what is seen in Numbers 15 elaborates upon the various procedures for offering grain, rams, and bulls before the Lord. Within these instructions some specific statements stand out, regarding who they apply to:

“All who are native shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD. If an alien sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he *wishes to* make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD, just as you do so he shall do. *As for* the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns *with you*, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the LORD. There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you...You shall have one law for him who does *anything* unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them. But the person who does *anything* defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Numbers 15:13-16, 29-30).

Here, we see two categories of people referred to, who will exist within the community of Israel: the *ezrach* (עֲזֵרָח) or “native,” and the *ger* (גֵּר) or “alien.” While the instruction here specifically concerns “an offering by fire” and “a sin offering” (Numbers 15:13, 27), it does lay some important legal precedents as they involve the status of the native and sojourner in the Torah. As the NIV renders Numbers 15:16, “The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you.” In other societies contemporary to Ancient Israel, it may have been that natives and those who entered in, in presenting various sacrifices before a deity, were to present different kinds of offerings, or more likely different quantities of offerings, with outsiders having to present more. In Israel, those presenting offerings before God—be they native of Israel or a welcome sojourner—presented the same offerings.

Numbers 15:15 and 29-30, are some passages which can frequently be referenced by members of the One Law sub-movement, often to stress that today’s Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah need to be following the Torah. **I would not be writing this commentary if I did not believe that today’s non-Jewish Believers,**

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<sup>39</sup> Numbers 15:1-41.

**need to tangibly embrace their faith heritage in the Torah.** But, the One Law sub-movement is frequently very rigid, legalistic, and fundamentalist in its orientation to the application of the Torah in our modern, Twenty-First Century times. It cannot go unnoticed how Numbers 15:29-30 directs a uniform punishment of being cut off—most likely by capital punishment—for the native of Israel and the sojourner within Israel, who blasphemes: “One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether he is a native-born Israelite or an alien. But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the LORD, and that person must be cut off from his people” (NIV). While there are principles of Torah jurisprudence to be considered from a passage like this, I would hardly want to focus an entire group of people—like the One Law sub-movement has done—around passages where uniform capital punishment for those in Ancient Israel is an emphasis. *No wonder a common criticism of One Law supporters is that they are “legalistic”!*

Many Jewish *and* non-Jewish Believers today are paying attention to the Torah, by reading the weekly Torah portions, honoring the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, and eating kosher—among other things. But their motivation for doing this, has not necessarily been passages that emphasize “one law,” but instead the educational impetus of a passage like Deuteronomy 31:12: “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.” *God’s people should be paying attention to His Word, and be guided by its instruction for their lives.* For those of us in the Messiah Yeshua, the Holy Spirit is to decisively dictate the enactment of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27) where the Torah can be written on our hearts of flesh. Contrary to some of the fleshly legalism witnessed in the One Law sub-movement, the Torah’s instruction being followed by the redeemed in the Messiah **is to be a major act of the Spirit**—and most certainly involves the conscious obedience to the commands to love the Lord God and love neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). **Is your “Torah obedience” something that begins with a steadfast commitment to loving others, or not?**

## ***Korach*** קֹרַח

### **Korah “Falling on Faces”**

Numbers 16:1-18:32  
1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

When most people think of our Torah portion for this week, the title *Korach* naturally reminds them of the insurrection that Korah initiated when he challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Unsatisfied with their delegated responsibilities, Korah and some two hundred and fifty leaders in the congregation asked Moses and Aaron why they “exalted,” or lifted themselves up, above the rest of the assembly. This accusation came without any known warning. The question in Moses’ mind was so astounding that his initial reaction was **to simply fall on his face before the Lord:**