

Can you think of any other examples of so-called “signs” or “miracles” that might occur today, but clearly do not align with the character of the Holy Scriptures, or the testimonies that it gives us of the kinds of signs we should legitimately expect to see? There are probably many supernatural occurrences you have either seen or witnessed, which are “supernatural” *only in the sense* that human beings are not responsible for them—and they actually come from the forces of darkness. It is a sobering and scary thought, but we each need to realize that demonic signs will actually become more treacherous, slippery, and commonplace the sooner we get to the return of Yeshua. The need to know what the Scriptures say about these things is absolutely critical, for discerning what is from the Lord, and *also* what is from the Adversary. Yeshua Himself warned His Disciples that false signs will be prevalent in the Last Days:

“For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go forth, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner chambers,’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:24-26).

This is a stern warning that false messiahs and false prophets “will appear and produce great signs and omens” (NRSV) that will challenge the elect of God to discern from where these manifestations emanate. I would urge you to be warned of many false signs and wonders that do not line up with instruction of God in the Torah, or any part of the Bible for that matter. For those of us who are trying to reestablish a firm foundation for our faith, we should exhibit some skepticism when we hear about many of the “miracles” present throughout Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity today. *Are they genuine, or are they deception?*

We need to all know the Word of God and inculcate it into our hearts and minds every day! Certainly, Moses desired that all would prophesy. But, he also wanted all to be filled with God’s Holy Spirit, as the Spirit through His people would do the prophesying. *This is available today as we submit our wills to His will.* As we seek to be led by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit, we can let all of the Lord’s words come forth from our innermost being. May this be the testimony for one and all!

Shelakh-Lekha שְׁלַח-לְךָ **Send on your behalf** **“Nevertheless”**

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

This week, the Torah continues to discuss some of the challenges that Ancient Israel had with various leadership issues, as the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land proceeded. Having just witnessed a threat to his leadership from his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron,²⁵ 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.

²⁵ Numbers 12:1-16.

This humble servant of the Most High had just survived accusations from his sister that resulted in her temporary bout with leprosy (Numbers 12:10). She was healed after her seven-day quarantine, and then the sojourn continued (Numbers 12:15-16). 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 *Shelakh-Lekha* begins with the infamous incidents concerning the adventures of the twelve spies,²⁶ who were chosen to scout out the Land of Canaan, and return with a report about the prospects for invasion:²⁷

“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).

Moses, as the reluctant leader, realized that he was dealing with a recalcitrant group of people, who were not exactly content with their current status of wandering through the wilderness. *Complaints and murmuring were commonplace*. In spite of the miraculous interventions resolving their food issues, the Israelites constantly find reasons to not be satisfied with their conditions. Base human nature continued to drive the great majority of the people, as the instincts of survival and selfishness prevailed.

Moses, who in his desire to fulfill the unwanted call upon his life to lead Israel, simply wanted to obey the Lord and guide the people to Canaan. So, with the Land on the (near?) horizon, God instructed Moses to choose one leader from among each of the twelve tribes, who would go into the Land and come back with a report to (presumably?) endorse the incursion. Little did Moses know that the resulting report of the spies would not be what he expected. Instead, as we read in our Torah portion, we find that **the opposite result** from what was anticipated, 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 “but,” 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** [Yet, RSV/NRSV; But, NIV/ATS; However, NJPS/ESV]²⁸ 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 to accomplish His word, prevailed. The ubiquitous insertion of the reservations, about the leadership decision to enter the Land, is best characterized by the conjunction “**but.**”

²⁶ Numbers 13:1-24.

²⁷ Numbers 13:25-33.

²⁸ Heb. *ki* (כִּי).

For a further evaluation of this term, and its wide array of usages, consult Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 149-155.

As human beings we each have varying roles as leaders and followers of families, groups, congregations, or even greater responsibilities in business or our communities. 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 “but” as an 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 a subordinate of someone else, you might hear yourself utilize this term when being asked to do something that was not on your personal agenda, or when you feel it is necessary to offer an alternative point of view. The challenge for each of us, regardless of what position we may find ourselves, 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, which 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 deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the contrast that he was *first* a follower of God allowed him to execute his responsibilities *secondly* as a leader. Moses had been chosen from birth to be the one selected for the position he reluctantly received. For the first forty years of his life 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 had to flee into the wilderness for his own survival (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 of Midian. During these long years in the desert, he had a great deal of time to dwell on who he was, but most importantly who the God of the Hebrews was. According to the author of Hebrews, Moses knew that he was a Hebrew, and that he had a destiny upon his life:

“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, being a member of the royal family, to Sinai and shepherding someone else’s herds. This does not seem like a very exciting promotion, and yet through it all, the Lord molded Moses into an able leader, who would be called into an incredible relationship with Him as he guided Ancient Israel. It was during the years of self-reflection in Midian when Moses truly learned how to commune with his Creator, how to hear His voice, and how to follow His will. After all, what got Moses out into the wilderness, and into the role of a shepherd, occurred because he had let his anger overtake his reason, causing him to murder another human being. Certainly, this memory was a vivid reminder of his failings, no matter how often he justified his actions. When the Torah instruction was issued on how to punish a murderer (Leviticus 24:17), what did Moses think?

From the point of him leaving Midian, returning to Egypt, and then leading the Israelites to Mount Sinai—Moses was the primary witness to the finger of God actually inscribing “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). 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 have determined permanent character changes? Is there no wonder why in the previous Torah reading, *B’ha’alotkha* (Numbers 8:1-12:16), 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).²⁹

With this humility came 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 inclinations. When he felt the tendency to say “but” when given various instructions from the Lord, he chose instead to simply repeat what he was told, even when he was probably perplexed about the various things that he was told to communicate to the Israelites.

Is this not also a characteristic of Yeshua the Messiah—sometimes regarded as a kind of Second Moses—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 witnessed when he willfully struck the rock without following the clear instructions to speak to the rock, the consequences were devastating. Moses was ultimately a fallible human being like the rest of the population of Israel (Numbers 20:8-11). Yeshua the Messiah, in stark contrast, was Divine.

Within our Torah portion of *Shelakh-Lekha*, we see Moses steadily leading the Ancient Israelites, in the wake of the Miriam debacle, and on the precipice of the people entering into the Promised Land. God had 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 and trust in Him. The servant-leader Moses follows His instructions and the results are recorded (Numbers 13).

The ten come back with a bad report, and immediately the infection of doubt and disbelief permeated the camp. Insurrection was on the rise, as the people murmured, complained, and asked for another leader to take them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:1-10). Moses and his brother Aaron fell on their faces before God, in prayer and supplication. There is no other place to turn but to the mercy of the Almighty, if Israel was to be spared from potential disaster:

²⁹ Conservative Bible scholars are widely agreed that given the content, this is a remark made by a post-Mosaic editor of the Pentateuch, and not by Moses himself—as the most humble man could never make such a claim.

Consult R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp 614-634; and the entry for the Book of Numbers in *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

“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).

The two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, knew what to do when confronted with the doubts and complaining of their countrymen. They tore their clothes in a physical act of displaying great sorrow for the report of their fellow spies.

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 a humbled heart that He will reveal how each of us should proceed in the circumstances of life.

The example of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb imploring God on their knees, must be taken seriously by anyone who has been given leadership responsibilities in the Body of Messiah. 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. As you do this, you will discover that you begin to emulate the examples of many faithful people who preceded you in generations past.

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 very 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.³⁰ The Apostles learned that becoming servants required one to minister to the needs of the assembly with whatever was necessary. In almost all cases, it required them eventually giving up their physical lives, in order to pass on the blessings associated with pointing people to the Messiah of Israel.

Moses had a great advantage over many others in communicating with the Lord, because the Lord spoke to him face to face (Exodus 33:11). The exchanges between the Most High and Moses, as recorded in the Torah, are a unique description of a person who has been called out by Him for a huge assignment.

Today, as the Lord is molding Messianic Believers as Torah obedient followers of the Messiah Yeshua, He is *surely 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 execute our fleshly

³⁰ Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25.

ways, in order for the guiding power of His Holy Spirit to operate effectively through each and everyone of us. As the Apostle Paul so eloquently said,

“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” we express toward God become fewer and fewer.** This is not to say that we understand all that our Heavenly Father requires of us as we walk out our various tasks and assignments. We do know, though, that He has a desire to use each one of us in the unique circumstances where we are placed. His basic principles do not change. Yeshua taught that if 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—the Father is faithful to give us even greater things to serve:

“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 each 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 the Lord. Leaders in the Body of the Messiah need to be ardent 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, then perhaps Ancient Israel could have 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? Are we going to be people who fall on their faces, or people who follow after the dictates of their own self-centered hearts? The answers to these questions are personal to one and all. Everyone of us has the chance to make the right choice. **Nevertheless, will we?**

Korach קָרַח

Korah

“Budding Leadership Patterns”

Numbers 16:1-18:32

1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

One of the most dependable features of our Creator is that He is a God of order and consistency, who can be relied upon to perform His Word without fail. Lamentably, most of fallen humanity disregards this fact. But even more tragic is the sad testimony that many who claim a relationship with Him are not always aware of His immutable nature. Thankfully, the Almighty is cognizant that humans have a fallen nature and various