

Drash on Parashat D'Varim

AYMC Service

July 29, 2017

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With Parashat D'varim we have left the fourth Book of the Torah, Bah-meed-bahr (Numbers in most Bibles), and arrived at the fifth and final Book of the Torah, Deh-Vah-reem (Deuteronomy in most Bibles). The name of the parashat and the book are the same and are derived from of the first Hebrew words therein:

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה

"El-leh ha-Deh-vah-reem ah-sheer dee-behr Moe-sheh"

which in English (and in the same order as their Hebrew counterparts) are:

"These the words which spoke Moses"

so the title literally means *The Words*. That is quite a name for any book of the Bible to be saddled with, the whole compendium being God's Word to us. It might make you wonder what makes this book deserve such an honor. Jewish people to whom the Torah was given but have not believed in Yeshua's Messiahship would say, "Are you kidding? These are the words of Moses! Case closed!" and they have an excellent point.

In many ways this Book summarizes the preceding four and is understood to contain speeches made by Moses near the end of his time leading Israel through the desert. The first two parashat are a speech that reviews Israel's history starting with the departure from Mt. Horeb (aka Sinai), where the Covenant was established. Then comes a "repetition of the Law," which is what the word Deuteronomy means. Moses is guiding the renewal of the Covenant with the children of the generation that received the Covenant originally. Lastly the transferal of leadership to Joshua and Moses' death are chronicled.

This parashat sets the stage for the Book, then Moses begins his history lesson, focusing on the delegation of most of his judging work to a hierarchy of judges, the spy mission and its short-term consequences, the wanderings in the desert, the

judgments on the Heshbonites and the Bashanites, and the dividing of the land between the tribes along with the charging of the Eastern tribes to participate in the remaining military actions beyond the Jordan River.

Our first reading is Deut 1:20-26 (TLV) which recounts the scouting mission:

20 I said to you: 'You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which Adonai our God is giving to us.

21 See, Adonai your God has set the land before you—go up, take possession, as Adonai God of your fathers has promised you. Do not be afraid or discouraged.'

22 "Then all of you came near to me and said: 'Let's send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring us back word about the way we should go up and the cities we will enter.'

23 "The idea seemed good to me, so I took twelve men from among you—one man for each tribe. 24 They turned and went up into the hill country, and they came to the Wadi Eshcol and spied it out. 25 They took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us. They also brought back word to us and said, 'Good is the land that Adonai our God is giving to us.'

26 "Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of Adonai your God."

If you consider this section in isolation from the rest of the Torah, it is reasonable to infer the idea of sending scouts into the Promised Land originated with all the people and was approved by Moses. It leaves out God's point of view entirely, only mentioning He commanded the mission after the spies have returned. Am I the only one here that doesn't remember it that way?

The entire chapter of Numbers 13 seems to chronicle the story differently. While it tells the tale with a great deal more detail, it begins with God's words to Moses that we presume Deuteronomy merely references as a command:

1 Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 2 "Send some men on your behalf to investigate the land of Canaan, which I am giving to Bnei-Yisrael. Each man you are to send will be a prince of the tribe of his fathers, a man from each tribe."

3 So according to the word of Adonai, Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran.

Was Moses having a serious senior moment in the D'varim telling of the story? If you only consider the Numbers account, it is reasonable to think the mission was entirely God's idea. Do you feel like letting out a hearty, "Oi, vay!"? If so, you are not alone. This apparent inconsistency has been considered by a lot of people, both before and after Yeshua. Recently, Dr. Louis H. Feldman, who passed last March at the age of 90, wrote about this in a lengthy scholarly paper with 27 footnotes entitled *Josephus on the Spies (Num 13-14)*. Professor Feldman was a devout Jew who was recognized by just about all of Dr. Michael L. Brown's peers as the world's foremost authority on Flavius Josephus, the first century Jewish historian. In evaluating what Josephus wrote about the history of this event he draws not only on the Torah but also other sources contemporary to Josephus such as the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and an unknown source called Pseudo-Philo. At the end of it all, he offers no insight into the actual historical source of the inspiration to scout the land, only states what the sources wrote about the moment in history and noting they do not agree with each other. It would have been improper for him to insert his own opinion, unfortunately, or even to facilitate discerning it by reading between the lines. He makes cases for how and why the Biblical accounts were revised by the historians. It seems historians cannot help us with this question.

In b. Sotah 34b, the Talmud offers a possible explanation. Within the web page at <http://thetorah.com/whose-idea-was-it-to-send-scouts/> we find a translation of this passage and a commentary upon it. But first let us note that few English translations of the Bible translate the first words of Numbers 13:2 as the Talmud translation does. The TLV rendition we heard, however, is very similar. This translation into English of the Torah quotation is crucial for the Talmud passage to make any sense. The Talmud passage starts by quoting the Torah: "Send for yourself men" which were God's words to Moses. The Talmud then starts a rabbinic commentary: "Resh Lakish said:" Next the rabbi focuses on part of the verse by re quoting just that part: "'Send for yourself'" and offers a paraphrase of the prepositional phrase: "of your own volition." Now he asks a rhetorical question and begins its answer: "Would a person really choose something that seems bad to him? This is what is written:". And here he quotes Deuteronomy 1:23, Moses' words after the people petitioned him to send the scouts: "'The matter seemed good in my eyes.'" Now the rabbi re quotes a piece of that verse and comments: "In my eyes' - but not in the eyes of God."

That translation of Talmud is followed by this commentary:

Resh Lakish combines the two stories by creating a multi-step process.

- 1.The people requested to send scouts, as Moses says they did in Deuteronomy.**
- 2.Moses likes the idea, as recorded in Deuteronomy.**
- 3.Moses then asks God for permission. This is not recorded anywhere but assumed.**
- 4.God agrees to send scouts, albeit reluctantly.**

Thus, Numbers only records the final part of a process whose beginning parts are recorded only in the preamble to Deuteronomy.

It should be no surprise there are other opinions within Jewish thinking about this matter. According to a recent drash at <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/freedom-needs-patience-shelach-lecha-5777/> we read:

“According to Maimonides, then, it was irrelevant who sent the spies.”

Could that be right? If so, is that irrelevance only within this context, or is it a general principle? Does God approve or disapprove of countries spying on each other? Does it make a difference to Him who is doing the spying? Doesn't spying inherently involve deception and lying at a minimum?

I could go on. We need to resolve questions like these without opening the door to doubt and unbelief that can shipwreck our faith. Also consider these questions are not merely academic for believers who must be undercover to live and cautiously do God's work in many parts of the world having governments hostile to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—governments that hold the power of the sword. Determining what is sin for undercover agents operating within hostile countries is not straight-forward. Or is it?

Our second reading is II Kings 6:8-23.

8 Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel. He consulted with his officers, saying, “In such and such a place will be my camp.”

9 But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, saying, "Be careful not to pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there." 10 So the king of Israel sent word to the place the man of God told him and warned him about, and so he was on his guard there—more than once or twice.

11 His heart upset over this matter, the king of Aram summoned his officers and said to them, "Tell me, which one of us is on the king of Israel's side?"

12 But one of his officers said, "No, my lord the king. Rather, Elisha the prophet who is in Israel keeps telling the king of Israel the very words that you speak in your bedroom!"

13 So he said, "Go, see where he is, so I may send and seize him."

Then it was reported to him, "Behold, he is in Dothan."

14 So he sent horses, chariots and a great army there. They arrived at night and surrounded the city.

15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was surrounding the city. So his attendant said to him, "Alas, my master! What are we going to do?"

16 "Fear not," he replied, "for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "ADONAI, please open his eyes that he may see." Then ADONAI opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

18 When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to ADONAI and said, "Please strike this people with blinding light." So He struck them with blinding light according to the word of Elisha. 19 Then Elisha said to them, "This is not the road, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man whom you seek." So he led them to Samaria. 20 Upon their arrival in Samaria, Elisha said, "ADONAI, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So ADONAI opened their eyes, and they could see—behold, they were in the middle of Samaria.

21 When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "Shall I surely strike them down, Avi?"

22 "Don't strike them down," he replied. "Would you strike down those whom you have captured with your own sword and bow? Set before them bread and water that they may eat and drink and go back to their master." 23 So he prepared a great feast for them. After they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went back to their master. Ever since, the marauding bands of Aram stopped invading the land of Israel.

Now *that's* how to conduct espionage! Did you notice how Elisha finessed the redirection of the enemy's army without technically lying? The King of Aram was persuaded to cease his hostility non-violently. We can safely presume Elisha did this God's way in every particular. Therefore, we can hypothesize an undercover believer may be able the thread the needle of Godly spying by unfailingly keeping in step with the Spirit and praying into manifestation the power of The Almighty as needed.

Our third reading is from Matthew 19:23:26 (TLV):

23 Then *Yeshua* said to His disciples, "Amen, I tell you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

25 When the disciples heard this, they were utterly astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

26 And looking, *Yeshua* said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Is a rich man entering God's kingdom more difficult than what we just heard Elisha accomplished? Who cares? Either is miraculous! Properly done, most unbelievers have to admire what God can orchestrate, and He clearly gets all the glory when it is undeniable something was impossible with men.

If we are of a mind that God doesn't usually work like this, we need to immediately look within ourselves for the possibility we are harboring doubt, lack of faith, or unbelief. If so, we must be immediately agree with the Holy Spirit's point of view, most sincerely repent, and ask forgiveness. It can be dangerous to wait to get back in step with the Spirit! There are situations in life, especially in hostile countries, when a single second of getting out of step with the Spirit will open the door for the

enemy to eliminate you or people you really care about. Be ever vigilant. Train yourself to do this before you find yourself in a hostile country.

The next parashat is Vah-eht-chah-nahn and covers Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11.

Source <http://www.qbible.com/hebrew-old-testament/deuteronomy/1.html>

Hebrew OT - Transliteration - Holy Name KJV

Devarim / Deuteronomy 1

1 Moses' speech in the end of the fortieth year, briefly rehearsing the story, 6 of God's promise, 13 giving them officers, 19 of sending the spies to search the land, 34 of God's anger for their incredulity, 41 and disobedience.

מֹשֶׁה דִּבֶּר אֶל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּמִדְבַר מוֹל סוּף בֵּין־פָּאָרָן וּבֵין־תְּפֵל וְלָבָן וְנַחְצֹרוֹת וְדִי־זָהָב

1:1 ēLeh haD'väriym ásher DiBer mosheh el-Käl-yis'raël B'ëver haYar'Dën BaMid'Bär Bääräväh môl šûf Bëyn-Pärän ûvëyn-Tofel w'lävân wachátzërot w'diy zähäv

1:1 ¶ These 428 [be] the words 1697 which 834 Möse 4872 מֹשֶׁה spake 1696 28765 unto 413 all 3605 YiSra'el 3478 יִשְׂרָאֵל on this side 5676 Yardën 3383 יַרְדֵּן in the wilderness, 4057 in the plain 6160 over against 4136 the Sûf 5489 סוּף [sea], between 996 6290 פָּאָרָן and Töfel 8603 תְּפֵל and Lävân 3837 לָבָן and Çaxërô± 2698 נַחְצֹרוֹת and Di Zähäv 1774 דִי־זָהָב.

Source <http://www.qbible.com/hebrew-old-testament/numbers/13.html>

Hebrew OT - Transliteration - Holy Name KJV

BaMidbar / Numbers 13

1 The names of the men who were sent to search the land. 17 Their instructions. 21 Their acts. 26 Their relation.

וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְרוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֵּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלָחוּ כָל־גִּישׁא בְּהֵם

13:1 way'daBër y'hwäh el-mosheh Lëmor 13:2 sh'lach-l'khä ânäshiyim w'yäturü et-eretz K'naan ásher-ániy notën liv'nëy yis'raël iysh echäd iysh echäd l'ma'ëh ávotäyw Tish'lächü Kol näsiy vähem

13:1 ¶ And Yähwë 3068 יְהוָה spake 1696 28762 unto 413 Möse 4872 מֹשֶׁה saying, 13:2 Send 7971 28798 thou men, 582 3376 that they may search 8446 28799 2853 the land 776 of Cænä'an , כְּנָעַן 3667 which 834 I 589 give 5414 28802 unto the children 1121 of YiSra'el 3478 יִשְׂרָאֵל of every 376 4294 of their fathers 1 shall ye send 7971 28799 a 259 man, 259 3376 every one 3605 a ruler 5387 among them.

We look at the Hebrew at the beginning of Num 13:2 with vowel points:

שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים

The interesting letters are in yellow and green (which are clickable links on the website) that are translated as *for yourself* in the Talmud commentary.