

Drash on Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

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Parashat [Shelach](#) (שלח), meaning *send*, is the fourth parashat of the Book of [Bimidvar](#), meaning *in the desert*, although the common name, *Numbers*, comes from the Septuagint which named the book [ar-ith-moo-ee] *Ἀριθμοί* (from which we got the word *arithmetic*). This weekly portion includes the story of the [twelve spies](#) sent to assess the [promised land](#), many commandments regarding sins and their offerings, the story of the [Sabbath](#) violator, and the commandment of the [fringes](#).

Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read chapter 15 verses 30 through 31 [CJB]:

³⁰ “‘But an individual who does something wrong intentionally, whether a citizen or a foreigner, is blaspheming ADONAI. That person will be cut off from his people. ³¹ Because he has had contempt for the word of ADONAI and has disobeyed his command, that person will be cut off completely; his offense will remain with him.’”

Thank you, my bride.

First notice, unlike the preceding offenses addressed in this parashat, there is no sacrifice that may be offered for *this* transgression. Next consider the significance that this contempt carries high punishment—not merely “cut off from his people”, but also “cut off completely; his offense will remain with him.” The Hebrew word is [karet](#) [S3772] which is the same word for *covenant* but in this context it infers tearing asunder any underlying covenant. Rabbis have many opinions about what “cut off completely” entails. [Maimonides](#) declared the “soul that left his body is completely destroyed and he dies the death of animal”.^[20] This is a significant verse supporting of the reality of afterlife. Also, notice it is one of the spiritual laws expressly pertaining to non-Jewish people as well, suggesting Gentiles, too, may or may not live in the hereafter. All the rabbis agree, the stakes are high for transgressing this commandment. Of course, they generally disregard what the New Covenant teaches on the subject, particularly the Book of Revelation.

Let’s look closely at the description of this sin. The Complete Jewish Bible chose “*does something wrong intentionally*” but Bible Hub’s interlinear offers “*does presumptuously beguile*,” which, as you would expect of an interlinear translation, corresponds one-to-one to the Hebrew *asah* [S6213] *yad* [S3027] and *ramah* [S7411].

Asah straight-forwardly translates as *does*, so both translations do so. However, the second word, *yad*, has many meanings and is thus complicated. [Bible Hub’s Topical Lexicon](#) notes:

The Hebrew word “yad” is a versatile term that appears frequently in the Old Testament. It is used to describe the hand, [both human and Divine], [...]. Beyond its literal meaning, “yad” often conveys the concept of power or authority [...]. The term can also imply possession or control [...] In legal and covenantal contexts, “yad” can signify the means by which agreements are sealed or actions are taken, as in the phrase “by the hand of” to indicate agency or authorship. The word is also used in expressions of divine intervention or support [...]. The concept of “yad” extends into various idiomatic expressions, such as “lifting the hand” to swear an oath or “putting one’s hand to” a task to indicate commitment or effort. The term is integral to

understanding the cultural and theological nuances of the biblical text, reflecting both human and divine actions.

The Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon associates *this verse's* usage with its definition e. of hand as strong, helpful, etc. Of this verse, it specifically says "boldly, defiantly; presumptuousness (against)." So *yad* is being used here to describe someone behaving *at minimum* in an entitled or overfamiliar way and therefore coming across as rude or arrogant or worse. Also, the translations are rendered as an adverb showing this word clearly modifies the next.

Ramah is a verb because the *something* being done must be an *action*. The interlinear translated *ramah* as *beguiled* though the fundamental meaning is *throw* (something like a rock) or *shoot* (something like an arrow). Now the Serpent beguiled Eve, but that is the verb *nasha* [S5377], which describes an oh-so-friendly and gentle con job rooted in persuasive speaking. It is different from Laban's bait-and-switch regarding Jacob's first wife, about which Jacob not so gently accused Laban of *ramah* against him. This is the word The LORD chose for the beguiling against Him that is strongly banned with formidable consequence in this verse. It seems mild, but there's more description coming.

Following the clause addressing to whom the law applies, those three words, "does presumptuously beguile" are reworded as "*blasphemes*" The LORD in the CJB but in the interlinear it is "*brings reproach on*" The LORD. This verb is from the Hebrew root *gadaph* [S1442] which literally means "*to hack (with words)*" as opposed to, say, an ax. Again [Bible Hub's Topical Index](#) is helpful:

The Hebrew verb גָּדַף (*gadaph*) appears in the Old Testament in contexts that involve blasphemy or reviling, particularly against God. This term is used to describe actions that are considered deeply disrespectful and offensive, often involving speech that is contemptuous or abusive. The act of [*gadaph*] גָּדַף is seen as a serious offense, reflecting a heart attitude that is rebellious and irreverent towards the divine.

It is not hard to accept the anecdote of capital punishment which follows, even though no verbal abuse was involved, as the commandment does not require any words expressing contempt be spoken. Gathering sticks on Shabbat is apparently an action that speaks as loudly as words do. I say apparently because the motivations for the disobedience are not mentioned. However, we can be sure The LORD weighed the motivations before pronouncing His Judgment. He is the only completely just judge we know of. He is also the most merciful judge we know of, who knows our hearts far better than we do ourselves. He knows when we are deceived to the point of not being fully responsible for our actions.

No one may have ever known God's mercy more than King David upon being confronted by Nathan in II Samuel chapter 12 verses 13 through 14 [CJB]:

¹³ David said to Natan, "I have sinned against Adonai."

Natan said to David, "Adonai also has taken away your sin. You will not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this act you have so greatly blasphemed Adonai, the child born to you must die."

Here again there are no contemptuous words—the actions are themselves contemptuous. *This* Hebrew word for *blasphemed* is *na-atz* [S5006], about which, the [Bible Hub Topical Lexicon](#) says:

The Hebrew verb נָאַץ (na'ats) appears in various contexts throughout the Old Testament, often highlighting a profound disrespect or rejection. This term is used to describe the attitude of individuals or groups who scorn divine commands or the messengers of God. It is a term that underscores a willful and rebellious attitude against divine authority.

[...]

The use of [na-atz] נָאַץ often carries with it severe consequences, as it reflects a heart hardened against God. This is evident in passages like [Numbers 14:11](#), where the LORD questions, "How long will this people treat me with contempt?" highlighting the seriousness of such an attitude.

That King David received some mercy for his astoundingly reprehensible actions reflects highly upon The LORD's character as was proclaimed to Moses in Exodus chapter 34 verses 6 to 7 [CJB]:

⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

John chapter 14 verse 9 expresses a foundational truth regarding the nature of The LORD [CJB]:

Yeshua replied to him, "Have I been with you so long without your knowing me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

In Luke chapter 23 verse 34, we see The Father's heart inarguably expressed by Yeshua in the midst of His horribly vicious suffering [NKJV]:

³⁴ [h]Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

So, is there some measure of hope for *all* who transgress Numbers chapter 15 verses 30 and 31? Well, on the one hand, we know that, with God, all things are possible. However, on the other hand, we also know He doesn't *do* all things. Indeed, there are things He *won't* do, though He can. Consider what Yeshua proclaimed, as he rode the donkey into Jerusalem, according to Matthew chapter 23 verse 37 [NKJV]:

How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!

It should be very sobering to realize *your* will can thwart the Will of God, who only wants the best for you. How much more sobering is it to realize, because The LORD so highly respects the free will He gave you, you can will yourself to sin as King David did?

In Hebrews chapter 10 verses 26 and 27 [NKJV], the author does not seem to think Believers can expect mercy for having blasphemed The LORD:

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain

fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," [g]says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This passage rhymes with what Yeshua said in Mark chapter 3 verses 28 through 29 [CJB]:

²⁸ Yes! I tell you that people will be forgiven all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ however, someone who blasphemes against the *Ruach HaKodesh* never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin."

And we must not fail to remember the testimony of Acts chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 [NKJV]:

¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ² And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of *it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

⁹ Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. ¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

We do not know what they experienced after breathing their last. Maybe The LORD completed the good work he started in them, or maybe He never started that work in them. We do not know.

Don't simply be optimistic about the mercy and compassion of The Almighty, though great it is! You blaspheme The Divine at your peril. I urge us all to work out our salvation with highly respectful awe and reverence towards our Abba, His Son, and The Ruach. Taking captive every blasphemous and otherwise ungodly thought that might show up in our trains of thought, and not letting them take root within us—these are not merely good ideas, they may prove to be eternally lifesaving.

The next parashat is *Korach* and spans Numbers chapter 16 verse 1 through chapter 18 verse 32.