

Shelach Lecha**Send For Yourself****On Your Marks are you Ready?****Torah:**

Num. 13:1-15:41

(1) **13:31** – *we cannot go up against this people because they are stronger than us.* Of course they are (I Cor. 10:13 and I John 4:4). The tasks in the L-rd Are always bigger than us, but never bigger than Him. Who and what is the biggest thing in your life?

(2) **14:2** – *Oh that we had died in Egypt or that we had perished in this wilderness.* Beware of the spiritual version of buy remorse. Faith is not for cowards who are more afraid of life than they are of G-d and His word. Who and what are you most scared of in your life?

(3) **14:4** – *Let us name a leader and return to Egypt.* This world is full of believers who have chosen Egypt and the wilderness because they wanted to write their own ticket with G-d and turn G-d loose on their problems, instead of learning to let Him turn them loose on the challenges He wants them to face and to conquer. Are your monsters chasing you lout of His way or are you chasing them out of your way to walk with Him?

(4) **15:41** – *I am the L-RD your G-d who delivered you out of Egypt to be your G-d.* Right after their useless defeat and their return to the wilderness, they continue to receive instruction about what it means to walk with the King. It will always only be about walking with the King. If you lose sight of your walking with the King, you will lose sight of the purpose of your life. He delivered you to serve Him, and not to make Him serve you. Do you know why he delivered you? Are you letting Him work on what you need to be delivered from, or are you just wandering around without a definite, declared spiritual purpose?

Haftarah:

Jos. 2:1-24

(5) **2:11.** *We have heard and we have lost courage before you.* There are many spiritually discouraged people in the world and while I have some difficulty with her deception when she was protecting the spies, she moved beyond the spiritual discouragement and did the only sensible thing – she changed sides and joined the winning team. Which team are you own? Are you hiding in your spiritual discouragement, even though you should know better? Rahab not only knew better, she acted on it and saved her family.

(6) **2:21.** *She attached the scarlet thread to the window of her house.* Have you attached the scarlet thread to the window of your life? Are you invested in this world or are you invested in the world to come? When push comes to shove, where do you stand? Do you even know where you stand? Do you really want out of the futility of life in this world? Change sides on the inside and on the outside.

Brit Chadashah:

Heb. 3:7-4:11

(7) **3:13.** *Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* It is all about rest and conquest and about moving on to new levels of both conquest and rest. If our life is not based on spiritual challenges He addresses to us and if it ceases about learning to rest in Him in the midst of these challenges, then we have stopped being victorious pilgrims and we have lapsed into wilderness wanderers.

Are you on your marks and ready to go? Israel lost her readiness when she first came to the frontiers of the Holy Land. Rahab found her readiness when she changed sides. The only enduring rest we will ever find in this life is the rest of conquest, where we are all about learning to rest in Him as we face the endless parade of spiritual challenges He will continue to bring into our lives. How about you?

Ps. 5**Jewish Hero: Samantha Esther Alexandra Terrett**

In Today's Torah Portion we learned about the rebellion of the House of Israel when they arrived at the frontiers of the Holy Land. They knew from the moment that they left Egypt that they were going to Canaan and until they found out how difficult the task appeared, they were prepared to go through with it. When they discovered the alternative – wandering in the wilderness, they repented, because their idea of obedience was to take the path of least resistance – the easy or the easier way out.

This morning I would like to talk to you about what it means to hear from G-d, so that we do not fall into the same trap of only **hearing selectively** from G-d – of editing our calling as if we were given several options to choose from, like going out shopping for the best deal.

We either have to acknowledge that the L-rd and His Word – His Kingdom and His call – are the best deal or we are not really prepared or equipped to hear from G-d. Many believers believe that hearing from G-d is a crisis response or an intense response that involves an extraordinary encounter similar to what our people encountered on the mountain or what the patriarch's experienced when they encountered G-d in dreams and visions or through angelic epiphanies.

I am not underplaying **crisis encounters** with G-d – my own conversion experience was a crisis encounter, but too many of my friends who also had crisis encounters only seemed to want to hear from G-d when they were in crisis and did not move on from a crisis experience to **actually listening** to how G-d wanted them to live – they never really learned what it means to hear from G-d.

There are many ways to hear from G-d, but learning to recognize His voice is an important spiritual discipline if we do not want to develop the same selective spiritual hearing that caused the generation of the Exodus to perish in the wilderness, instead of making it into the Promised Land.

How do you hear from G-d? In order to understand what this means you have to understand that there is the **general call** of G-d (Ps. 19:1 and Prov. 1:20-23), which He addresses both to all humanity and to each person – sort of a universal call to all mankind, followed by one or more personal calls to each member of mankind – and to me this is the greatest tragedy of abortion, because while I do not worry about the eternal destiny of those murdered in their mother's wombs, they are being deprived of the privilege and trauma of responding personally to the L-rd of all Creation.

When you think of it, I am amazed that the One who holds the entire cosmos together actually wants to get to know me and one of the first things I have to realize is that He does not reach out to make our lives easier or to give us an edge over the competition, like some kind of celestial coach trying to build a winning team. ***In other words He does not want to become part of our lives as much as He wants to become our lives and show us what we should be living for and indeed, how we should be living.***

I know we live in a world which is trying to avoid the universal call of G-d and that there are any number of **sidetracks** and **rabbit trails** out there looking for people to dupe and brain wash. And this is both a fair and an interesting way of describing both the various weird and wonderful forms of **evolutionary New Age nonsense** which are endlessly spouting off their silly theories about the origin of the universe and the meaning of life – and the **various religious hybrids** which twist and pervert the simplicity of the Bible, coming up with an endless array of books like the book of Mormon and the Koran and the Zohar (book of Jewish mysticism).

Once you have waded successfully through the **minefield of religious counterfeits** (because evolution is just a silly religious counterfeit), you are ready for the next step in learning how to hear from G-d, which involves leaving your own version of Haran and heading out on a pilgrimage to find your place in life. Now this may sound glorious and we may want it to come with bells and whistles, but Elijah learned that there is a big difference between the **fanfare of His intervention** and the still small voice where He begins to dialogue with us about what it is He wants us to do with our lives.

He does not want us all to think that walking with Him involves **fame and fortune and a spiritual version of the rich and the famous** as much as it involves seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first in our inner man – and sorting out all our baggage until the values of His Kingdom become the **heart and life treasures** we are cherishing in our hearts through all the thrills and spills this life has to offer.

What are you cherishing in your heart? What heart baggage are you packing for your forever journey? Once what is important to Him through His Word is important to you, you start having ears which can hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and the message is rarely complicated or hard to understand.

You first have to hear the **universal call** and let Him get your attention (Hey buddy, do you know G-d is real and that His Word is truth?). Then you have build **a relationship with the still small voice** which wants to begin a dialogue about what should be important in your life and about what He wants you to do with your life. Once you have begun to hear from Him, then you are ready to move on to the case by case wisdom He wants us to exercise both in our interactions with others and with the right and left turns which will either make our journey a more direct one or cause us to wander in the **wilderness of spiritual sidetracks and foolish personal decisions**.

Now when you add to this the **persecution** and **resistance** which all of us encounter, distinguishing between the **results of personal foolishness** and the **results of spiritual resistance** becomes a real challenge and I want to close with this. David spent a goodly portion of his early career dodging the attacks of Saul which were not caused by any foolishness on his part. However, later in life, he made some foolish decisions and spent his final years dodging the foolishness which was of his own making. How about you?

Making right, good decisions is no guarantee that you will not have to deal with spiritual and carnal resistance from various **Sauls** and **Jezebels** who want to shipwreck your attempts to walk with G-d and motivate you to take the path of least spiritual resistance, just because of the number of adversaries you are facing or the size of the job you are called to perform.

There will also be **Balaams** and **Balaks** who will want to make you backslide into immorality and idolatry and others who will want you to adopt a lifestyle where you to **bite and devour and argue and fight** and encourage the works of the flesh, instead of growing the peaceful fruit of the Spirit, despite the weather and the seasons of your life you are wandering through.

Hearing from G-d is not a complicated process to understand and this morning I have spoken with you about three basic levels which will determine our ability to walk with G-d and really hear from Him, instead of fooling ourselves and ending up wandering in the wilderness of our folly.

There is first the **universal attention getting call** of G-d, which is constantly calling out to the human race and to every human in the race. Has He gotten your attention and what have you done with that attention?

There is next learning to hear the **still small voice** and developing a dialogue about what He wants you to do with your life and this is not just a onetime visit to a cave in a time of crisis – it is learning to find a cave that you retreat to frequently so you can silence the noise of life and actually learn to hear from Him – many people call it **a quiet time** in the Word or a quiet time of **regular prayer**, but it is a discipline we need to own, if we want to know what our life, with all of its ups and downs and joys and trials is all about.

How is your cave doing or are you on the point of caving spiritually where you allow His voice to be drowned out until you are driven back to the first stage, which is what really happened to Elijah – he got a better light and sound show all alone at Sinai than the one he had with all the people at Carmel. If He does not have our constant regular attention, we are of no regular use to Him. How about you? How is your still small voice listening doing?

The third stage I want to talk to you about this morning involves hearing from Him when you need to know whether to turn to the **left or to the right** in some very practical, directional decisions which we all encounter and have to respond to. The whole community of Israel blew it when they looked at the resistance and the size of the opposition, instead of focusing on the promises and the help which the L-rd will give to those who will stick to their guns when push comes to shove.

I do not know what specific decisions some of you may be facing, but I do know that **we need to measure our choices by the Word and the Kingdom, and not by the number of fortresses which stand in our way or by the size of the Canaanites we will have to deal with.**

Learning to hear from G-d is an essential “art” where we learn to focus on G-d and on His Word in the face of all the spiritual distractions and detours we encounter on our pilgrimage to our Father’s Home in Glory. It is not always a question of visions and angelic epiphanies as much as it is the art of learning to listen until we hear from Him. He will always be able to get our attention. He will always be able to speak to us in a still small voice, whenever we learn to find and claim our personal cave as a regular part of our spiritual walk.

He will also be able to be the voice we hear when we have to choose between two or more directions and this last stage involves **not looking for the way of least resistance** or the easy way out. We may encounter all kinds of spiritual opposition and sometimes we may have to recover from our own folly when we are the author of the spiritual opposition. However, we are called to be those who know what it means to hear from G-d and it is an essential challenge for all believers who do not want to wander in a spiritual wilderness of their own choosing. How about you? I have had your attention this morning, **will He have it during the week and during those moments when you are making choices or encountering opposition?**

He will never stop trying to get your attention, but He wants you to grow beyond Him just getting your attention and you learning to listen and learning to hear. Where are you in your spiritual pilgrimage? Have you learned what it means to hear from G-d?

Let’s pray.