

Shelach Lecha**Send for Yourself****His Purposes Are Unstoppable****Torah:****Numbers 13:1-15:41**

(1). 13:18-20. Check it out for yourselves to see what it is like, both the advantages and the challenges, so that you know what G-d has got in store for you and what has to be done (resolved, fought, accomplished) in order for what was promised to be given. He wants us to go into things with our eyes wide open, fully aware of all that is in store for us, the good, the bad and the ugly - fully aware that His purposes are unstoppable, no matter who rises up against them (obstacles or the stubborn lack of faith of the people).

(2). 14:2-4. The people said that they were not able to face the challenges which the L-rd has set before them, and should have died in Egyptian slavery or in the wilderness. They wanted to name a new leader and return to Egypt (and throw themselves on the mercy of those whom they asked the L-rd to deliver them from). We will come face to face with some big challenges and some seemingly insurmountable obstacles, but nothing which can stop the purposes of G-d, even if it means that one generation or group fails to grasp that greater is He who is in us than whatever we encounter in the world. How great is He in you? In us?

(3). 14:20-23. They are forgiven, but none of those who saw the (greater) deeds He performed in Egypt and in the wilderness will ever see the Land. 14:29 those 20 years and older, your cadavers will drop in the wilderness (because this is what they chose). Forgiveness insures the survival of the generations, so that the sins of the fathers do not thwart the blessing of the L-rd or prevent them from being made available to the children's children, until the Kingdom comes forever. Disobedience disables our participation in the fulfilment of the promises, and while forgiveness means that we do not face annihilation, it sometimes means the promises bypass us, because His purposes are always unstoppable.

(4). 15:1. When you (the next generation of the people) shall enter the land to establish your dwelling, this is how you need to worship. The people shall always have a hope and a future in their generations. 15:16. There shall be one Law and one ordinance for you and the stranger who dwells among you. He never intended to establish a two tiered spirituality, one higher for the Jew and one reduced (bargain basement) for the Gentile. We are all called to the same level and kind of spirituality, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Right after the people encounter their first military catastrophe, they receive the assurance that they shall still go into the Land in the next generation. Judaism has always been about the generations, because one day all the generations of all mankind shall stand before the King, because His purposes are eternally unstoppable. Are they unstoppable in you?

Haftarah:**Joshua 2:1-24**

(5). 2:1. Rahab may have been morally compromised, but she was spiritually astute and she wanted to escape from both the immorality she was condemned to and the false religion which obliged her to practice the abominable profession she was forced into.

(6). 2:21. After making a solid profession of faith, she becomes exempt from the destruction of Jericho, provided she fulfils two requirements. First she must not reveal anything about the

spies (she was one of the first people in the Bible who hid Jews from those who wanted to kill them) and she was to remain under the protection of the scarlet thread (like those who were protected from the angel of death by the blood). She realized the purposes of G-d were unstoppable and placed herself under their protection, with her entire family (first converts in the Land).

Brit Chadashah: Hebrews 3:7-4:11

(7). 3:8, 9. We are warned not to harden our hearts and not to believe that His purposes are unstoppable, even in the face of Isis and the rising deluge on evolutionary humanism and materialistic relativism. None of the opposition of this world can thwart His purposes, from the folly of Big Bang, to monkeying around with dinosaurs and looking for life on other planets as we slaughter babies in the womb and promote sexual deviance of all kinds. In the midst of the unrelenting jihad of political correctness, there is a Sabbath rest for us in our beloved Messiah, for the purposes of G-d are unstoppable. He is our Sabbath and in Him we have a Sabbath rest - He is not our Sunday and there is no Sunday rest in Him for us because the package deal remains non-negotiable, with no substitutes, additions or omissions - His unchanging purposes remain unstoppable and those who try, will wander around in a wilderness of their own making or be shattered on the rock that will not be moved, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Shabbat shalom, not Sunday Shalom!

Sermon: Snatching Defeat From the Jaws of Victory: the "Yes, But" Approach.

I want to base my meditation this morning upon the Torah portion, both as an encouragement and as a warning, because each of us and all of us stand on the verge of victory or of defeat. We have to learn from the unnecessary loss of an entire generation just a few years after our people's glorious exodus from Egypt and their amazing encounter with the G-d who promised to meet all their needs and give them the land which was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We do not want to experience the same loss in our lives or in the life of our shul.

Why the Promised Land? Geologists have surmised that all the continents of the earth once formed a single land mass which they called **Pangaea**, but just as our L-rd split all mankind up into the nations and families of the earth at Babel, during the flood, He separated the earth into continents, for the protection and survival of the species. If you were to reconstruct what this continent may have looked like, almost smack dab in the middle is the land of Canaan and mount Zion. He called our people back to the land, so that we could call all mankind back to the Garden from which our first ancestors were excluded. This is the only agenda which our L-rd has through the ebb and flow of that great unfolding of incredible folly and cruelty which people so glibly name history.

Nonetheless, the calling of the people, Jew and Gentile, is to both faith and to obedience and all and any spiritual failures we cause or experience will only affect our participation in the fulfilment of the purposes of G-d, because as I said in my Torah Meditation, they are unstoppable. May we never snatch defeat from the jaws of victory or say "yes but" to the L-rd. Our people were brought out of Egypt to enter the Promised Land so that the generational purposes of G-d could have their fulfilment in the life, death and resurrection of our blessed Messiah and hasten the day when His eternal kingdom shall be established over all the nations and generations of mankind. Nothing more, nothing less, l'olam va'ed.

Our people saw the mighty land of Egypt crumble and submit to G-d and if the ones whom the

L-rd defeated had conquered Canaan, then those whom He set free should have seen their call to conquer a land conquered by those whom the L-rd had conquered as a sure thing. Right from our people's entrance in Egypt, they were told that G-d would visit them and bring them and the bones of Joseph back into the Promised Land. And even though it is nowhere recorded when the bones of Joseph were laid to rest with those of his fathers, even though it was a generation later, we may be certain that they were indeed laid to rest, because G-d always fulfils His purposes, with or without our participation.

Our people saw the waters of the Reed Sea retreat before them and return to drown their enemies. They received daily manna as they dwelt under the cloud and rested at night by the light of the flame of His presence. They had witnessed both the provision and the protective miracles of the L-rd and were provided with a Spirit filled leadership and a priesthood which would guarantee continual access to the Presence which they were to follow into the Land.

From one of their early camping places, they were arrayed in celebratory order around the ark of the Presence and were told to send twelve of their best and most able leaders into the Promised Land as spies so that they could see for themselves how good it was and take stock of their opponents whom they would watch fall and the fortresses which they would see crumble before the unstoppable purposes of G-d.

They were in their second year out of Egypt and they had in their possession the Tablets of the Law, the Books of the Law and the ark and the tabernacle and the victorious Presence of G-d which promised to never leave them nor forsake them. The land they were called to enter was a possession of the Egyptians whom the L-rd had already defeated and they could have completed the conquest of the Land and celebrated their first Passover in the Land before the end of their third year out of Egypt. Nothing could stop them except themselves.

However, the L-rd wanted them to know what they were getting into. This good, healthy land was occupied by people whom the L-rd had given over 400 years to repent and they were to undertake a one-time non-repeatable police action to kill and drive the inhabitants out of the Holy Land and retake possession of the original site of the Garden of Eden and become a generational beacon to the nations in preparation for the Messiah's Kingdom which would also reunite all the tribes and nations and generations of mankind under His eternal kingship.

When the spies got back, they had one of the worst cases of buyer remorse in history. When they saw all the work which had to be done, they wanted to retreat into the known safety of Egyptian slavery or remain in permanent exile in the wilderness - two options which were totally unacceptable to the L-rd to whom they now belonged; lock, stock and barrel.

The Joy and exhilaration of the exodus and the wonder and majesty of the mountain were suddenly forgotten by the partial, selective truth which ten of the spies brought back with them. They called the Promised Land a country which devoured its inhabitants, meaning that the land was filled with fragments of peoples who were regularly displaced by an endless stream of newcomers. The older inhabitants were constantly being pushed into the highlands, away from the best land and no one group of conquerors seemed able to hold onto the land for very long and taking possession of the land would mean exposing them and their children to the constant threat of invasion.

And what a neighbourhood - there were giants in the land - tall, strong people who, while they

did not or could not conquer the land, were left alone by those who came in to conquer the land. The fortress of Jericho had never fallen in its long history and there were dozens of other places as equally well fortified and apparently unassailable.

All of these objections sounded reasonable because the people knew very well that on their own they would not be able to conquer such a formidable land, inhabited by such formidable opponents. They agreed that it was a good, productive land which could easily support their population, but they wanted to exercise seemingly reasonable caution so as not to take on more than they could chew. They doubted the L-rd's ability to give them what He promised.

This does not mean that believers should aim as high as they can and trust G-d for seemingly impossible things on a regular basis. Casting mountains into the sea is a metaphor for the power of G-d to remove obstacles which appear in order to attempt to thwart His purposes. None of the promises of G-d were given to us as examples of the mighty and amazing things which we could do if we believed hard enough or had enough faith, like some kind of super human genes using the power of G-d as our ultimate weapon to smash all and any opposition we encounter, so that we could write our own ticket with G-d to become as strong as Samson or as rich and wise as Solomon. Our faith is not some kind of spiritual super steroid which gives us the ability to harness the power of G-d and use it for our own purposes.

However this was not the problem which the people had who were listening to the "yes, but" disobedience of the spies. They should have stoned them or shouted them down and reaffirmed their ultimate allegiance to the stated purposes of G-d in the mission they had spent over a year getting ready to complete. Believers will always encounter obstacles and difficulties, but instead of seeing them as insurmountable, they should see them as opportunities to experience the mighty deliverance of G-d in the fulfilment of His purposes, both in our lives and in the life of all the nations and generations of mankind.

I would rather be martyred by Isis or mocked and even imprisoned for my faith in an increasingly hostile society than turn my back on the unstoppable purposes of G-d. G-d called this generation out of Egypt to conquer the Promised Land and set things in place for the eventual arrival of Messiah and He wanted them to know what they were in store for. Their serial victories in the land which devoured its inhabitants were only delayed, but it would have been a glorious conclusion to the story of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

In fact, right from the Egypt, they were told that this conquest was their destiny and that the Promised Land was their destination and all of the provision and preparation of G-d had this as its single objective. There were no real surprises in the facts which the false reports of the ten spies communicated to the people. They should have seen themselves as a massive pride of lions being told both where the game was and what work they had to do to run them down and feast on them. The Land of Canaan was ripe for the taking and the people who drove off the rebellious forces of Israel must have been totally surprised. They had probably expected to be driven into the high country to negotiate their surrender from the safety of their mountain fortresses. They were prepared to be conquered, are we prepared to conquer?

When G-d calls us to fulfil His purposes, He provides all the resources we need to accomplish His tasks and He also provides all the protection we need to see all the fortresses crumble before Him and all the opponents fall before Him. We will always be equipped to face anything and everything which rises up against the knowledge of our blessed Messiah. The

question remains threefold: preparation, awareness and commitment.

Are we prepared to seek for and integrate this equipping into our lives and become fully spiritually trained for the task of proclaiming the kingdom in our generation? I have often spoken of the staple disciplines we need to master if we are going to be of any use to our Master (Prayer, Bible Study, Fellowship, Sharing and Worship). I have also said that at every encounter and at every stage of our lives, we need to work through whatever issues and challenges come our way, so that no Egyptian or Canaanite baggage or unbelief robs us of our ability to walk unimpeded with our L-rd, from conception through the grave.

We need to stay on top of all the details of our lives, so that we can seek for both wisdom and strength to overcome these and not repeatedly snatch defeat from the jaws of victory in our lives. The world disbelieves and misbehaves, but that is not our calling.

Secondly, we need to understand what the purposes of G-d are and see how He is fulfilling them in our lives and in our generation so that we do not become mesmerized by all the opponents and the obstacles which will always try and get in our way. His purposes are unstoppable, whether they are unstoppable in us or in spite of us. The Days of Noah are upon us, the hearts of many are growing cold because of the spread of iniquity worldwide and there is a growing apostasy worldwide where belief in the supernatural and the practice of spirituality are being challenged and marginalized. Knowledge is increasing exponentially and the nations of the world are aligning against Israel which is again being increasingly hated by all nations for His name sake (how dare they call themselves the chosen people!).

Lastly, we need to be committed finding ways to fulfil His purposes and not give excuses to return to Egypt or remain in the wilderness. Which spy's report will we listen to? The "yes, but" crowd or the Calebs and Joshuas in or midst? B'nai Chayim will be facing some unique challenges this year and we have to decide whether we will snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory or press ahead with full confidence in the provision and protection of G-d.