



Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat July 14, 2007 / Tammuz 28, 5767

Parashah #42: *Mattot* (Tribes), *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 30:2(1)-32:42
& #43: *Masa'ei* (Stages/Journeys of) *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 33:1-36:13
Haftarah: *Yirmeyahu* (Jeremiah) 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2
Suggested *Messianic Writings* reading: *Ya'akov* (James) 3:1-18

Shalom,

Back in the mid-sixties, in my pre-teen and early teen years I was a fan of the Monkees. They recorded a song by Boyce & Hart that was more "mystical" sounding than their other songs, entitled *Words*. The lyrics to the chorus were: "Words that never were true, spoken to help nobody but you; words with lies inside, but small enough to hide, 'til your playin' was through." [From a Google search, not my memory!] Albeit it was a boy-girl love song of sorts, the lyrics are about speaking truth, and are applicable to the opening lines of this week's first Parashah: "Moshe...said, 'Here is what ADONAI has ordered: "When a man makes a vow to ADONAI or formally obligates himself by swearing an oath, he is not to break his word but is to do everything he said he would do.'" (B'Midbar 40:2(1)-3(2)). Rabbi Hertz wrote in his Torah commentary from 1936 that, "a vow is usually made in a time of distress with a motive of securing Divine help... There is a tendency in human nature to forget in health and security the vows that were made in sickness and danger..." Distress or security, vow, white lie or honesty, our words carry weight, affecting both the emotional and spiritual realms.

The words that come out of our mouth can have a great affect upon those around us – our words can bring healing, joy, pain, fear, discomfort, love, joy, peace, on and on – there is power in our speech. Yeshua expounded upon this thought in *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 5:33-37, saying that the simpler and more honest we keep our words the better, without speaking unnecessary vain oaths and vows, which would also include profane utterings. All too often I have heard a believer in the truth of Heaven using the gutter language of earth, proclaiming a "freedom in the L-rd to do so," when underneath there was more than likely a bitterness or pain or pride that provoked such speech, rather than the *Ruakh HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit). *Ya'akov* (Jacob, mis-named James) 3:5-12 tells us that the tongue, although a tiny part of the body, can cause great trouble – with the tongue we can start a fire of destruction, for it is an unstable and evil thing... with the tongue we bless our Father and turn around and curse people. *Ya'akov* continued and said that we need to live a good life, controlled by wisdom from above – this includes control of the tongue. I dare say that every one of us has or has had such issues with our words.

In *Perkei Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*), an ancient Jewish book of wisdom, the following thought is related: "Seven traits characterize a learned person. A learned person does not begin speaking before one who is greater than he in wisdom or in years; he does not interrupt the words of his fellow; he does not answer impetuously; he questions with relevance to the subject and he replies accurately; he discusses first things first and last things last; about something he has not heard he says, 'I have not heard'; and he acknowledges the truth" (*Perkei Avot* 5:9).

Chofetz Chaim, a Jewish Rabbi and Scholar from Eastern Europe who lived in the 1800's, spent his lifetime teaching of the evils of *loshon hara* (evil speech), and the guarding of the tongue. He had much to say on the subject: "*Loshon hara* kills three: the speaker, the listener, and the person being discussed... One should use his power of speech to arouse his brethren to strengthen their commitment to Torah and mitzvah observance, and he should strive to bring peace... *Mishlei* (Proverbs) 18:21 declares, 'Death and life are in the tongue's power.' The tongue can cause harm in a way that the sword cannot. The sword can kill only through direct contact with its victim, while the tongue can bring about the ruination of someone who is miles away. Man was created with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, but only one mouth, to indicate that he is obligated to limit his speech, for transgression through speech can occur quite easily, and with far-reaching consequences."

Sha'ul says in 1 Timothy 3:8 that, "the *shammashim* (generally translated as *deacons*, the word also means *attendants*, *care-takers*, *servants*) must be of good character, people *whose word can be trusted*" [my emphasis]. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 71:24 states, "All day long my tongue will speak of Your righteousness."

Here are some various thoughts from *Mishlei* (Proverbs): "The speech of the righteous is a fountain of life" (10:11); "On the lips of the intelligent is found wisdom" (10:13); "He who observes discipline is on the way to life" (10:17); "The tongue of the righteous is like pure silver" (10:20); "The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom" (10:31); "Idle talk can pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise can heal. Truthful words will stand forever, lying speech but a moment" (12:18-19); "He who guards his mouth preserves his life" (13:3); and so on and so forth.

Near the end of the second Parashah, ADONAI commands, "You are not to defile the land in which you live and in which I live; for I, ADONAI, live among the people of Israel" (35:34). Our speech can defile, our speech can heal. It is our choice. *Sha'ul* says in Romans 14:12 that, "every one of us will have to give an account of himself to G-d."

Now lest anyone think that I might be upset by someone or something, that is not the case as I write; these are simply the thoughts the *Ruakh HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) has placed on my heart as I read through this week's portions.

And so we finish up the book of *B'Midbar* (Numbers). I leave you with this blessing, recited at the completion of reading each book of Torah:

חֲזַק! חֲזַק! וְנִתְחַזַּק!

Kha-zakh! Kha-zakh! V'nit'kha-zehk!

(Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!)

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah (Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi (Marc) & Yisraela Carmela (Teresa)

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1:11 CJB)