

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

STEPPING INTO ADULTHOOD: EMBRACING THE JOURNEY AHEAD!

The Jewish people were now ready to enter the land of Israel.

They had suffered for hundreds of years as slaves in the land of Egypt but had witnessed supernatural miracles; how G-d had sent a series of plagues that brought Egypt, the strongest and longest-lived of all the empires of the ancient world, to its knees. They had seen the Egyptian army with its innovative military technology, the horse-drawn chariot, drown in the Reed Sea while the Israelites passed through it on dry land. They had heard G-d's Voice and received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Now they were seemingly ready to enter the land of Israel.

Moshe chose twelve spies of the highest calibre to spy out the land and bring back a report.

The spies return and whilst only two (Caleb and Joshua), remained faithful, the other ten spies reported that the country was unconquerable. The Jewish people, they said, would be unable to enter the land, since "The inhabitants of the land are mighty."

The spies went as far as to say that even G-d would not be able to wrest the land from its inhabitants. Their words caused great consternation among the Jews, who feared that they would be unable to enter Israel. The people panicked and cried, and their belief and faith faltered.

The commentators are perplexed and ask a powerful question: How was it possible that the prominent spies that Moshe chose stooped so low? How was it possible for the spies to mislead the Jewish people and convince them that even G-d could not help them, when the Jews themselves had

constantly witnessed the miracles performed on their behalf. Surely, they internalised the daily G-dly Blessing in the wilderness where G-d provided food and drink in a miraculous way – Manna from heaven and water from Miriam's well?

The Siftei Tzaddikim (Rebbe Pinchas Madinovitz zt'l) presents a beautiful interpretation wherein he explains that following the Jewish people's sin with the golden calf, they felt unworthy and doubted that G-d would perform miracles to lead them into the land of Israel. They believed they had exhausted their merits and concluded that conquering the land would only be possible through natural means. However, this perspective was incorrect. On the contrary, G-d intended for them to send spies to observe and report on the strength of the land's inhabitants. Despite their strength, the purpose was for the Jewish people to ultimately triumph and wholeheartedly recognize G-d's unwavering love, even considering their past sins.

Lesson number one. Even if you err in life, there is always a way back. Do not despair because of your past mistakes. If understood correctly and worked on, they serve only as a springboard to bring you to even greater heights.

According to the Chiddushei haRi"m, the reason the Meraglim (spies) had reservations about entering the land of Israel was because they were righteous individuals who cherished the spiritual existence they had in the wilderness. In the wilderness, they experienced a completely spiritual life, where their needs for food, drink, and comfort were met miraculously. It was an unparalleled experience of spirituality akin to the world to come (Olam Habaah). They believed that once they entered the land of Israel, they would have to abandon this intense and continuous spirituality and engage in the mundane activities of earning a living.

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However, the Chiddushei haRi"m explains that this perspective was incorrect. The Almighty does not want the Jewish people to live solely in a spiritual realm. The life of a Jew is meant to encompass both spiritual and physical dimensions. It is essential to engage in the physical world, worrying about making a living and tending to the needs of this world, while simultaneously maintaining holiness. The Sefas Emet adds to this notion, stating that the Torah introduces three specific commandments in Parshat Shelach as a response to the Meraglim's philosophy. These commandments are the mitzvah of Nessachim (wine libations), Challah (separating dough for the Kohen), and Tzitzit (fringes on garments). These mitzvot contradict the Meraglim's belief that spirituality and physicality cannot be intertwined. The Torah teaches that it is possible and necessary to merge

both aspects in our lives. The act of planting a vineyard, toiling under the sun, and worrying about the crops, followed by offering the wine as an offering on the holy altar, demonstrates that physical efforts can lead to sanctification and spirituality. Similarly, the process of sowing seeds, growing wheat, making flour, and baking bread culminates in the mitzvah of separating Challah, transforming the physical into the spiritual. Likewise, raising sheep, shearing wool, spinning yarn, and making clothing concludes with the attachment of fringes, representing the infusion of holiness into the physical. This is the essence of Judaism - to bridge the gap between spirituality and physicality. G-d desires human beings, with their flaws, desires, and laziness, to become holy. The Belzer Rebbe also notes that Moshe blessed Yehoshua by adding

the letter Yud to his name, representing the synthesis of the next world (symbolized by Yud) and this world (symbolized by Hay). This fusion of the two worlds is the key to understanding the correct philosophy and avoiding the erroneous mindset of the Meraglim. Lesson number two: Although achieving spirituality in a physical world is challenging, it is the purpose of our existence. The Almighty created us as physical beings and placed us in this world, but our task is to elevate the mundane and transform it into the holy. As you might be getting ready to eat, drink, sleep, schmooze, or study after this article, remember the words of the Midrash; "Make a dwelling for G-d in the lowly realms!" You came to this planet to imbue you're eating and sleeping, your commerce and daily activity, with a holy and G-dly purpose. Let's do this!

Shabbat Shalom.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT SHELACH LECHA

וַיֵּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְבִּים וַיִּרְאוּ הַיִּינוֹ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם - "And there we saw the Nephilim... and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them."

In this verse, the spies reveal to us the root of their error and the beginning of their downfall. The spies, who were the leaders of Bnei Yisrael, the leaders of the desert generation - who together witnessed the miracles and wonders that God made - lost confidence in the ability

of the Jewish people to conquer the promised land. Their self-esteem was affected; וַיִּרְאוּ הַיִּינוֹ בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְבִּים - and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, as we saw ourselves as grasshoppers, small, weak, and unimportant. And because of this, וַיִּרְאוּ הַיִּינוֹ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, 'And so we must have looked to them', the giants also saw us as incompetent and weak. Because when a person does not value themselves, others will not appreciate them either. Now we can appreciate why God had to eliminate that entire generation, even though He forgave them for their sin. Naturally, if that generation had fought,

they could not have won any war due to their lack of faith in themselves. They were destined to die in the way of mercy and honour, not in a plague, not in war, but bit by bit throughout the forty years they were in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The path to personal redemption for every person can be achieved only through faith and recognition of their own power and ability given to them by the Creator. We have the strength; we are able to overcome every obstacle in our lives if only we believe in ourselves.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

APPROPRIATE CONFIDENCE

The Jewish People had been redeemed from Egypt in order to receive the Torah, and then to enter the Holy Land. The scenario was to be the ultimate possible until the coming of Mashiach (who we so eagerly await.) The Land of Israel would

be populated by all the nation, the Bet Hamikdash would be standing and we would have a ruling king. However, en route, whilst travelling through the desert, there were those who doubted G-d's guarantee that our Promised Land was divinely-destined and tailor-made for our nation. They wanted to see for themselves whether the land was conquerable, manageable, fertile and

compatible to their needs. They therefore beseeched Moshe Rabbenu to allow them to send messengers to spy out the land. Our Sages explain that although the spies who were sent were men of stature and princely positions, yet, due to their vested interests in the outcome of their mission, their vision was distorted. They knew that when they would enter the Land they would lose their prestigious

posts, that were only required in the desert. This perverted their attitude towards the land, and on their return they painted a pessimistic picture to the Jewish People. They succeeded in slandering our Holy Land and causing the nation to rebel against G-d's wish that they enter it. The spies who were involved in portraying a bleak future died an uncanny death for their part in leading their brethren astray. The Jewish People, on their part, took the forecasted destruction very much to heart, to the point that they spent that night weeping. Conversely, the two spies Yehoshua and Kalev, tried convincing the people that Hashem is on our side and that we (the Jewish People) will consume them (the nations of Eretz Yisrael) like one eats bread.

We are all confronted occasionally with situations where it is difficult to know how to proceed in the best possible way.

The circumstances may be complicated by pressures of a financial nature, relationships or health issues, child-rearing or even baseless pessimism. In all these situations, we must try to weigh up the various solutions, taking the appropriate professional or rabbinical advice wherever possible, and praying for divine assistance and guidance to decide upon the best course of action. Then, once we have reached a decision, we should move forward optimistically. Since we have included G-d "in the picture", after having planned the necessary steps of action, we may move forward with the faith that He will assist us to do what is best for us. G-d will help us overcome any hurdles, obstacles or hindrances, when we take the appropriate steps with a positive mind-set. We must explain, though, what correct confidence entails. If a person is oblivious to the possible obstacles on the

path that he is taking, or he just does not care about them, then we would say that he just lacks sense and responsibility. We would not say that faith is driving him and enabling him to have a positive outlook, and even if he is successful, it is only by default. The correct outlook however, is to understand all the possible difficulties, obstacles or drawbacks that may evolve, but nevertheless do what needs to be done, while trusting in G-d. Then, with a positive and optimistic drive, he may hope for success, as the verse says in Tehillim(37:3): "Betach bahashem va'ase tov" – "Trust in Hashem and take the correct actions." When you are next in a dilemma, stop and assess the situation, determine your motives, and if necessary, take advice to plan your course of action. Then, placing your trust in G-d, move forward optimistically, hoping for success.



OUR CHAHAMIM

Rabbi Moshe ben Machir

Rabbi Moshe ben Machir was among the great men of Sefat who lived some 400 years ago. He was a good friend of Rabbi Shemuel de Uceda, the author of Midrash Shemuel on Perkei Avoth. He is best known for his work Seder HaYom, printed for the first time in Venice in 5359 (1599). He also founded a yeshiva in the village of Ein Zeitoun, near Sefat.

For many years, Ein Zeitoun had been known as a place of Torah and holiness. The Tanna Rabbi Yehudah (the son of Rabbi Ilai), Rabbi Kruspedai, and Rabbi Yossef Sargossi (known as HaTzaddik HaLavan ["The White Tzaddik"]) are buried there. In his book Chachmei HaSefaradim B'Eretz Israel (Sephardic Sages in the Land of Israel), Rav Shraga Weiss recounts that the Arizal was particularly fond of Ein Zeitoun, and he would normally go there to pray by the gravesite of the Tanna Rabbi Yehudah. He also directed his disciples to go there and recite special kabbalistic prayers that he had taught them. Rabbi Eliezer Ezekri, the author of Sefer HaChareidim, would normally travel to Ein Zeitoun on the eve of Rosh Hashanah to shed tears over the exile of the Shechinah and to pray for the salvation of body and soul. In Sefer HaChareidim, in the chapter that deals

with mitzvot connected to the land of Israel, he writes that the people of Ein Zeitoun had the custom of reciting Rabbi Yehudah Halevi's Shir Yedidot, which begins with the words: "The Holy Land will be called favored ... in beseeching G-d not to chase them out" from this holy place that was filled with ancient glory, where Jews had poured themselves out in prayer for hundreds of years. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir built a yeshiva there, which very quickly earned a great reputation throughout the Diaspora. There he also wrote his very specific work Seder HaYom. Written on the first edition's flyleaf, we read: "A work entitled Seder HaYom: An exquisite explanation of the prayers according to the four types of wisdom known by the acronym PARDES. Written by a man of G-d, entirely wise and pious, Rav Moshe ben Machir of Sefat."

The book was truly well named. It shows every Jew how to organize his day according to the ways of Torah and the fear of G-d. It is designed for every segment of the population, and it deals in particular with the course of the day, from morning till night, during the week and on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and the holidays. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir wrote in his introduction: "This is why every man should push himself, day and night, at all times and at every instant, not to lose even a single

moment of time with the vanities and charms of this world. From the time he arises in the morning until he goes to bed at night, a man should manage his time in such a way that he seeks only to accomplish G-d's will. As for his own desires, they should be the same as Heaven's: Correct and pure."

"This is why I felt the need – I, Moshe the son of Yehudah from the family of Machir – to write this book that I have named Seder HaYom [literally 'Order of the Day'], because in it I deal with how a man should manage his days and nights, his Shabbats and holidays, during the entire year – be it at home or away – when going to bed and when arising."

Seder HaYom spread throughout the entire Diaspora, and it has been cited by all the Poskim of previous generations that dealt with laws concerning daily life. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir made substantial promises to whomever studied his book and followed its advice in their daily life: "I am certain that by adopting this daily regimen, one will be loved by G-d and man. He will succeed in everything he undertakes, he will conduct himself faultlessly, he will attain an advanced age, he will see children and grandchildren, and he will succeed in accomplishing G-d's will. This is the right path for all to follow."



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

RECITING A ZIMUN IF A THIRD PERSON ARRIVES AFTER THE FIRST TWO FINISHED EATING

If two men ate a meal together, they obviously do not recite a Zimun, which is recited only when three or more people ate together. The question arises, however, whether a Zimun is recited in a case where a third person comes and joins these two people after they had finished eating, but before they recited Birkat Hamazon. If this

third person now eats something, can he be considered part of the meal eaten by the first two men, such that the three of them can recite a Zimun?

The Halacha in this case is that the three men recite a Zimun if all the following conditions are met:

- 1) The first two men are prepared to wait for the third person to finish eating. If they are rushing and do not want to wait, then they recite Birkat Hamazon without a Zimun.
- 2) The first two men had not washed Mayim Aharonim and did not even say to one another, "Let us say Birkat Hamazon." Once they made either of these preparations for

Birkat Hamazon, their meal is considered finished, and it is thus too late for a Zimun even if a third person joins before the actual recitation of Birkat Hamazon.

3) They would be able to eat a food that they enjoy if it would be served. If they have eaten to the point where eating anything else would constitute "Achila Gasa" (gluttonous eating), then they cannot recite a Zimun with the third man, as their meal is considered finished. If, however, they would still have room to eat a food they enjoy, then they may be regarded as having yet to complete their meal and may thus join with the third man to recite a Zimun.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Shelach Lecha

At the insistence of the Bnei Yisrael, and with G-d's permission, Moshe sends 12 scouts, one from each tribe, to investigate Canaan. Anticipating trouble, Moshe changes Hoshea's name to Yehoshua, expressing a prayer that G-d will not let him fail in his mission. They return 40 days later, carrying unusually large fruit. When 10 of the 12 scouts state that the people in Canaan are as formidable as the fruit, the people are discouraged. Calev and Yehoshua, the only two scouts still in favour of the invasion, try bolstering the people's spirit. The nation, however, decides that the Land is not worth

the potentially fatal risks, and instead demands a return to Egypt. Moshe's fervent prayers save the nation from Heavenly annihilation. However, G-d declares that they must remain in the desert for 40 years until the men who wept at the scouts' false report pass away. A remorseful group rashly begins an invasion of the Land, based on G-d's original command. Moshe warns them not to proceed, but they ignore this and are massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites. G-d instructs Moshe concerning the offerings to be made when the Bnei Yisrael will finally enter the Land. The people are commanded to remove

challah, a gift for the kohanim, from their dough. The laws for an offering after an inadvertent sin, for an individual or a group, are explained. However, should someone blaspheme against G-d and be unrepentant, he will be cut off spiritually from his people. One man is found gathering wood on public property in violation of the laws of Shabbat and is executed. The laws of tzitzit are taught. We recite the section about the tzitzit twice a day to remind ourselves of the Exodus.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com



- 1 Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's tzara'at?
13:2 - To show the evil of the megrlim (spies), that they saw Miriam punished for lashon hora (negative speech) yet failed to take a lesson from it.
- 2 To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land?"
13:20 - Were there any righteous people in the land whose merit would "shade" the Canaanites from attacks?
- 3 Who built Hebron?
13:22 - Cham.
- 4 Which fruits did the meraglim bring back?
13:23 - A cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig.
- 5 How many people carried the grape cluster?
13:23 - Eight.