

# SHELACH L'CHA – “SEND FOR YOURSELF”

## NUMBERS (BE'MIDBAR 13:1 – 15:41)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. In this portion, Israel is at the threshold of crossing into the land of Israel.
2. Some scholars contend that Israel's victory over the king of Arad (Numbers 21) had already taken place.
3. They called the place of their victory *Hormah* (literally “complete destruction”).
  - a. That is why Moses felt the time was right to begin conquest of the land.
  - b. At that point, according to Deut. 1:22, Israel came to Moses requesting to send men.

**“Then all of you came near me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may explore the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities into which we shall come.’ The thing seemed good to me, and I took twelve men from you, one man from each tribe.” – Deut. 1:22-23**

4. The result of this tour is the demoralizing report that caused the people to lose faith in ability to possess the land.
  - a. This was the turning point for those who had been born in slavery.
  - b. They were destined to die in the wilderness.
  - c. The conquest of the land was delayed for 39 years.
5. Those born in wilderness, who didn't know Egypt, were the ones who possessed the land.
6. Why was it necessary to send the spies?
  - a. In my opinion, Moses' objective and that of the ten spies was different.
  - b. They went to see “if,” Moses sent them to see “how.”
7. But if he succumbed to the wishes of the people, it is in concert with God permitting the people their will.
  - a. Many times, He gives them what they want to teach them it was not what they needed.
  - b. They wanted a king and He gave them Saul of Kish.

### CHAPTER 13: MISSION OF THE SPIES

1. God says *shelach l'cha* which is to say, “You send for yourself.”
  - a. Which is to say, “if you want to send them, it's up to you.
  - b. The decision was left to Moses, knowing what was going to happen.
2. Interestingly, the word translated “spy out” or “search out” is תור *“tur.”*
  - a. Thus, they were sent to “tour” the land to see how to take not if to take.
  - b. It is also possible that the objective was to see if “now” was the time.
3. Everyone that was sent was prince or leader of the tribe.
  - a. Moses chose people he trusted obviously or who had gained respect.
4. Of them, Caleb represented Judah, Oshea (Joshua) for Ephraim.
  - a. Another notable name is Sethur or, in Hebrew, סתור - “hidden.”

- b. Interestingly, his name contains the word “spy.”
  - c. It is also the only name in Hebrew text that totals 666.
5. Verse 16: “Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua” – יהושע *Yehoshua*.
- a. “He will save” as opposed to Y’shua – “salvation (present tense).”
  - b. The word נון *nun* is associated with fish and means “perpetual, to resprout.”
6. Verse 17: Moses sent them to the “south” (Heb. נגב *Negev*) first and on into the north country.
- a. They were to travel as far as Mount Hermon.
  - b. Interesting to me that 12 Israelites did go into the land soon after the Exodus.
  - c. They traversed the land for forty days.
  - d. The land is about 180 in length and about 40 miles in breadth.
7. Verse 20: Moses encourages them to be “of good courage” and bring fruits of the land.
- a. The timing was “first ripe grapes” which is probably late July to early August.
8. Verse 22: They ascended...he arrived at Hebron” – insinuating only one came to Hebron.
- a. It is taught that this was Caleb who went to cave at Machpelah.
  - b. Later, he will be given this land.
  - c. This is where the children of Anak (lit. “neck”) were.
  - d. Their appearance gave rise to tradition they were descended from *nephillim*.
9. Verse 23: Cut a cluster of grapes as Eshchol (lit. “cluster”) and carried it on a double pole.
10. Verse 27: They began their report with “it is a land of milk and honey.”
- a. Every slander (lie) must contain a measure of truth.
11. Notice they didn’t go directly to Moses but to Moses and all the people.
- a. But if Israel went to Moses demanding a spying mission, they would expect report.
12. Verse 28: “howbeit” – it’s a great place but...
- The people are fierce.
  - The cities are big, many and fortified.
  - The children of Anak (giants) are there.
13. The message was, even though it is a great place there is no way we can possess it.
- a. How did they know they were children of Anak or giants?
  - b. Verse 29: mentions Amalek as if to say, it is impossible.
14. Deuteronomy gives further detail as to the people’s interpretation of these statements.

**“Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, ‘The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.’” – Deut. 1:28**

15. Moses response to this is also recorded in Deuteronomy:

**“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be in dread or afraid of them. The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ Yet in spite of this word you did not believe the LORD your God.” – Deut. 1:29-32**

16. Verse 30: Caleb, inspired by Moses’ comments tries to silence the people who were yelling at Moses with the declaration:

**“We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able (lit. ‘we shall certainly’) to overcome it.”**

17. But the other ten spies refuted Caleb’s attempt to inspire the people.
  - a. The people end up listening to the majority report.
18. Verse 31: Essentially say, even with God’s help, they are stronger than we are.
19. Verse 32: They **spread** an evil report about the land itself.
  - a. That they “spread” suggests they didn’t do this in the presence of Moses.
  - b. When the people returned to their tents unsure, they sent evil word through the camp.
20. They said:
  - It is a land that devours its inhabitants; doesn’t produce enough (yet brought fruit).
  - All the people are of great stature.
  - And we saw *nephillim* – giants.
21. These were the “sons of Anak (a word also rendered “giant) who was of the *nephillim*.”
  - a. This was to recall the giants of Gen. 6:4 (would they have known?)
  - b. “We were in our own sight as grasshoppers.”
  - c. They went by sight instead of hearing.
22. Hearing as opposed to seeing.
  - a. Ear is the center of balance.
  - b. Hear O Israel – Let him who has an ear, hear.
23. That they slandered the land so soon after witnessing Miriam’s punishment for slander is surprising.
  - a. The people were overwhelmed with fear of the inhabitants.

## **CHAPTER 14: REBELLION OF THE PEOPLE**

1. Verse 1: The people heeded the slander of the spies and wept.
  - a. Begin to consider it better to die in Egypt or the wilderness.
  - b. They concluded that their wives and their little ones would die.
2. Therefore they felt it best to return to Egypt with someone else as their leader.
  - a. End up making the same mistake they had before when they lusted for food.
  - b. Felt that bondage in Egypt was better than what God intended for them.
3. They raised their voice in lament and set their minds to return to Egypt.
  - a. Tradition says that this day was 9 Av.
  - b. Thus, Israel was destined to lament on this day again and again.
4. In the midst of this, Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes.
5. Verse 7: They spoke to the people and admonished them “not to rebel against the LORD.”
  - a. “they are bread for us” is to say, “we can easily defeat them.”
  - b. “their defense is removed” is literally “their shadow is removed.”
6. One scholar renders it this way – “bread” refers to manna; “shadow” refers to the melting of manna at noonday.
7. Thus, they are saying, “they are like the manna that melts away when the sun comes out. The LORD will cause them to melt away.”
  - a. Footnote: Job had lived in the land but was now dead (Rashi).

8. Had it not been for the glory of the LORD appearing in the *mishkan*, they would have been stoned.
9. Once again, the nation is on the brink of annihilation when Moses intercedes as on the mount.
  - a. God was willing to make Moses a second Abraham.
10. Moses claims that the nations will say, God couldn't bring them into the land.
  - a. Moses argues that God should forgive them again for the sake of His honor.
11. Verse 17: He continue that God's attribute of mercy and slow to be angry should prevail over His attribute of justice.
12. Moses relates back to God what was spoken to him in Sinai when He forgave of Golden Calf.

**“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ ” – Exodus 34:6-7**

13. Obviously Moses was motivated to ask forgiveness again because of this understanding.
  - a. Compare with our hesitation to ask forgiveness repeatedly of fellow man.
14. Verse 22: God alludes to “ten times” Israel has tested Him.
  - a. Now it was determined these people would not see the land promised to them.
15. Rabbis list those ten times as:
  - When they were at the edge of the sea (Ex. 14:11).
  - At the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:24).
  - When they ran out of food (Ex. 16:3).
  - When they allowed manna to remain (Ex. 16:20)
  - Gathering manna on Shabbat (Ex. 16:27).
  - When they had no water at Refidim (Ex. 17:2).
  - Worshipping the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:4).
  - When they rebelled against God's commands (Num. 11:1).
  - When they complained about the manna (Num. 11:4).
  - When they believed the spies report (Num. 14:1).
16. Yet, God distinguished Caleb from among them – “another spirit.”
  - a. Courageous and faithful to believe God's promise.
  - b. Verse 24: “has followed me fully” is literally, “fulfilled to walk behind me.”
  - c. Caleb received as an inheritance Hebron and surrounding hill country (Josh. 14:6-15).
  - d. This was where he had gone and where he would defeat the giants that Israel feared.
17. It seems that Israel would continue to fear the giants and would require “another spirit.”
  - a. David went to face Goliath when all the armies of Israel would not.
18. Verse 25: Tells them to turn away from the land inhabited by Amalekites.
  - a. Would not be able to defeat (as they said) because, now, God was not with them.

## **CHAPTER 14: GOD'S DECREE AGAINST THE PEOPLE**

1. Verse 27: “How long shall I bear” is, “How long shall this evil congregation continue to be?”
  - a. “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.”
  - b. That generation did not recognize the signs Y'shua had already provided.

2. Likewise, Israel did not regard what God had already done and fell into unbelief.
  - a. God determined to do to them what they said – that we would have died in wilderness.
  - b. All 20 yrs and up who murmured against God would die.
  - c. Verse 31: Yet, their little ones that they feared for would enter the land.
  - d. The other exceptions were Joshua and Caleb.
3. Verse 33: “Your children shall be wanderers” – literally “will graze.”
  - a. Negative connotation is connected to Cain who was to be a wanderer.
  - b. Positive is that “grazing” they are being protected by their shepherd.
4. The punishment of the people was to be spread out over years.
  - a. The punishment of the spies was immediate (verse 36-37).
5. The sin of the spies was more than not thinking they could take the land.
  - a. They convinced others that they could not take the land – infected the nation.
6. Verse 40: The next morning they wanted to go into the land.
  - a. They said, “We have sinned” but only after punishment had been handed down.
7. Verse 41-42: Moses tells them to do so now would be transgressing against the LORD.
  - a. He was not with them and they would die by the sword.
8. Nevertheless they went (without Moses and the ark) and were defeated at Hormah.
  - a. Hormah is “utter destruction.”
  - b. Their victory there set the stage for the spies to go into the land.
  - c. After the spies, they were defeated there.
  - d. Their march north is not definitely blocked.

## CHAPTER 15: MISCELLANEOUS COMMANDS

1. Verse 2: “When you are come into the land” – if this spoken after these other events, this would have been a welcome message.
  - a. They were being promised that He would bring their children into the land.
2. Verse 20: “of the first of your dough” – “dough” is חֲלָה *challah*.
  - a. This was to be given to the priests in time of *mishkan*.
  - b. Today this observance is alluded to when bread is placed upon the Sabbath table.
3. This portion also acknowledges another possibility of national error that could result in disaster – mass idol worship.
4. If this were to happen “in error” (as opposed to willful defiance) the whole community were to bring a common sacrifice.
  - a. Verse 26: “all the congregation shall be forgiven” – the entire nation forgiven.
  - b. This is interesting because of what Y’shua acknowledged hanging on the tree:

**“And Y’shua said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’” – Luke 23:34**

5. They did it in ignorance of what they were doing – he is the national sacrifice.
  - a. If Y’shua prayed “forgive” did the Father honor His prayer?
6. Verse 30: A distinction is made with intentional idolatry – “with a high hand.”
  - a. Publically defying God’s law is equivalent to blasphemy.
  - b. No sacrificial atonement . This possible.
  - c. Which brings us back to Y’shua – could person truly understand what he was doing?
  - d. Was “cut off” from his people.
7. Rambam argued that this command had ramifications for other commands.

8. Anyone claiming that a particular command does not apply to him or he has right to pick and choose which commands to obey is blasphemous and worthy of same consequence.
  - a. This is interesting considering that some believers think we can pick and choose.
  - b. This command applied to “home born and stranger.”
9. Verse 32: A specific instance of intentional sin – Sabbath breaker.
  - a. “gathering sticks”
10. The argument is that to profane the Sabbath is equivalent to idol worship.
  - a. One denies the sovereignty of God in deference to another god.
  - b. The other denies His sovereignty by ignoring the day that testifies to Him as Creator.
11. This particular instance is considered intentional because no one could be put to death if they had not been warned repeatedly.
  - a. Those who found him brought him to Moses implies they warned him beforehand.
  - b. The entire congregation witnesses the sentence being carried out.
  - c. Was to demonstrate the consequences of willful sin.
12. Some find this hard to swallow – cancer left unchecked will grow and will kill the body.
13. Verse 38: Gives us the command concerning the **צִיצִית** *tzitzit* – fringes.

**“Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels (*tzitzit*) on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue (*t’khelet*) on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.” – Numbers 15:38-41**

14. First of all, the fringes **צִיצִית** were upon the “corners” or “wings” or “hems” of garment.
  - a. This would be what the woman reached out to touch in the gospel.
15. Later this command was carried out by the *tallit* and the *arba kanfot* – “four corners.”
16. The four corners (where the fringes are) remind us of taking refuge in the shadow of “His wings (corners).”
17. Notice the purpose of “looking” upon **צִיצִית** *tzitzit* is to remember and do the commands.
  - a. The related word **הִצִּיץ** *he’tzitz* means “to peer at something intently.”
  - b. The word **צִיצִית** *tzitzit* has numerical value of 600 + 8 threads and 5 knots (613).
18. Implies that we are to contemplate the commands of God given to His people Israel.
  - a. Without the fringes we may forget “who we are” – our insignia.
  - b. For purpose of not following our heart and eyes to go our own way.
  - c. The heart and eyes are the body’s spies – they will give an evil report.
  - d. Spies’ report convinced Israel they belonged in Egypt rather than land of Israel.
  - e. Consequently, they would forget their identity and behave as Egyptians.
19. James writes:

**“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man **who looks intently** at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.” – James 1:23-24**

20. Likewise, the *tzitzit* serve as a reminder to us “who” we are and how we should live.
21. Notice it is actually the blue cord (*t’khelet*) that one is to look upon – not the others necessarily.
- The blue came from a mollusk called חִלְזוֹן *chilazon*.
  - Rabbinically unsure to the certainty (identity) of color, thus, they don’t use the blue.
  - They do surmise that the blue resembles the heavens, thus the blue reminds of Creator.
  - The Hebrew word “it” is (אֹתוֹ *oto*) and is oftentimes translated “him.”
  - “You shall look upon Him” and remember and do.
22. If the “him” is removed then can they truly “remember” and “do”?
- If Y’shua is the “him” of the command, they cannot peer intently upon him.
  - Consequently, they cannot perceive him in the “remembering” and “doing.”

**“And I will pour on the house of David, and on the people of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers. And they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be bitter over Him, as the bitterness over the first-born.” – Zechariah 12:10**

23. The word “look” means to “gaze intently” in order to “perceive.”
24. It is striking the portion begins and ends with the idea of “seeing” or “perceiving.”
- On one hand it demonstrates being led by our hearts and eyes.
  - The other is to bring our heart and eyes into submission to His will.
25. Hearing vs. Seeing (eyes vs. ears).