

# Stollen Moments – Sh’lach L’cha – June 25, 2022

## PARASHA SUMMARY FROM WWW. REFORMJUDAISM.ORG

- Moses sends twelve spies to the Land of Israel to report on the inhabitants and the country. Despite the positive report of Joshua and Caleb, the people are frightened. (13:1–14:10)
- God threatens to wipe out the Children of Israel but relents when Moses intercedes on their behalf. To punish the people, God announces that all those who left Egypt would not enter the Land of Israel except for Joshua and Caleb. (14:11–45)
- Moses instructs the Israelites regarding setting aside challah, the observance of the Sabbath, how to treat strangers, and the laws of tzitzit. (15:1–41)

---

## Numbers 13

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one man from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them.” 3 So Moses, by the Lord’s command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all the men being leaders of the Israelites. 4 And these were their names:

From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur. 5 From the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori. 6 From the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh. 7 From the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph. 8 From the tribe of Ephraim, Hosea son of Nun. 9 From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Rafu. 10 From the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi. 11 From the tribe of Joseph, namely, the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi. 12 From the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli. 13 From the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael. 14 From the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi. 15 From the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi.

16 Those were the names of the men whom Moses sent to scout the land; but Moses changed the name of Hosea son of Nun to Joshua. 17 When Moses sent them to scout the land of Canaan, he said to them, “Go up there into the Negeb and on into the hill country, 18 and see what kind of country it is. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many? 19 Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified? 20 Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not? And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” — Now it happened to be the season of the first ripe grapes.

21 They went up and scouted the land, from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, at Lebo-hamath. 22 They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron, where lived Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the Anakites. — Now Hebron was founded seven years before Zoan of Egypt. — 23 They reached the wadi Eshcol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes — it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them — and some pomegranates and figs. 24 That place was named the wadi Eshcol because of the cluster that the Israelites cut down there.

25 At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land. 26 They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them

and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land. 27 This is what they told him: “We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there. 29 Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan.”

30 Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, “Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.” 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we.” 32 Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, “The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size; 33 we saw the Nephilim there — the Anakites are part of the Nephilim — and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.”

## Numbers 14

1 The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. 2 All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in the land of Egypt,” the whole community shouted at them, “or if only we might die in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord taking us to that land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be carried off! It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!” 4 And they said to one another, “Let us head back for Egypt.”

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of the Israelites. 6 And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes 7 and exhorted the whole Israelite community: “The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the Lord is pleased with us, He will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; 9 only you must not rebel against the Lord. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey: their protection has departed from them, but the Lord is with us. Have no fear of them!” 10 As the whole community threatened to pelt them with stones, the Presence of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.

### Ramban on Numbers 13:2:1

Moses acquiesced to them to satisfy their desire, and when he said "I approved of the plan" (Deut. 1:23) what he means is, "I put up with this bad idea and instructed that it should be done. Here in our passage, God's telling him to "send scouts" is akin to what what God stated in Samuel (1 Sam. 8:7): "Listen to the People to all that they say to you; for it is not you that they have rejected, but it is Me that they have rejected from reigning over them." Notice that these men were not specified by names according to the Word of God as they were in chapters 1 or 34; for with the commandment of God – no mishap may befall its followers, and "the keeper of a commandment shall know no evil outcome" (Ecclesiastes 8:5); but God merely commanded Moses that the scouts should be made up of one of the leaders of each tribe. It was Moses who selected and sent them; they brought the disaster on themselves.

Rashi on Numbers 13:2:2

2) שלח לך SEND THEE (more lit., for thyself) — i.e. according to your own judgement: I do not command you, but if you wish to do so send them. — God said this because the Israelites came to Moses and said. “We will send men before us etc.”, as it is said, (Deuteronomy 1:22): “And you approached me, all of you, [saying, We will send men, etc.]”, and Moses took counsel with the Shechinah (the Lord), whereupon He said to them, I have told them long ago that it (the land) is good, as it is said, (Exodus 3:17): “I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt ... [unto a land flowing with milk and honey]”. By their lives! I swear that I will give them now an opportunity to fall into error through the statements of the spies, so that they should not come into possession of it (the land) (Sotah 34b; cf. also Rashi on Sotah 34b:8 מדעתך and Midrash Tanchuma, Sh'lach 5).

Rashi on Numbers 13:6

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ וְגוֹ' AND MOSES CALLED HOSHEA [THE SON OF NUN JEHOSHUA] — By giving him this name יהושע which is a compound of יה and שׁע “God may save”, he in effect prayed for him: “May God save you from the evil counsel of the spies” (Sotah 34b).

Sforno on Numbers 13:6

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן נֹון יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, the Torah means that this man was known as a man of valour by the name of Hosheah among the members of his tribe. The fact that he has been referred to as “Joshua” already in Numbers 11,28 is because in his capacity as Moses’ personal valet Moses had changed his name in the form of a prayer asking that he be the instrument of his own salvation and that of others.

Sforno on Numbers 13:27

וְגַם זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ הִיא; not only is it a good land, but it deserves the superlative “a land flowing with milk and honey.” The land yields its bounty without man having to engage in backbreaking labour. It produces abundantly in all areas of agriculture and cattle breeding.

### Ramban on Numbers 13:27

AND SURELY IT FLOWETH WITH MILK AND HONEY. Since Moses had commanded them to see what the Land is, whether it is fat or lean the spies reported to him that it is fat, and surely it floweth with milk and honey. And in answer to his question whether there are trees therein or not they reported to him, and this is its fruit for so he had commanded them, to show it to him. Now in all this they said the truth, and gave a report about those matters which they had been commanded [to find out], therefore they should [indeed] have said [as in fact they did] that the people that dwell in the Land are fierce and the cities are fortified;<sup>53</sup> for it was their duty to bring back words of truth to them that sent them, and Moses had commanded them [to see] whether they are strong or weak, [and what cities they are that they dwell in], whether in camps, or in strongholds. But the wickedness of the spies consisted in saying the word ephes [“nevertheless” — ‘Nevertheless’ the people that dwell in the Land are fierce], which signifies something negative and beyond human capability, something impossible of achievement, under any circumstances, similar to the expressions: ‘Ha’aphes’ lanetzach chasdo (Is His mercy ‘clean gone’ forever?); and there is none else; ‘ephes’ (there is no other) G-d. Thus the spies told Moses that the Land is fertile and surely it floweth with milk and honey and the fruits are good, but it is impossible to fight against the people because they are fierce, and the cities are fortified, and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

### Rashi on Numbers 13:31

ממנו חזק הוא ממנו [FOR] THEY ARE STRONGER ממנו — They said this, — if this were at all possible (i.e. if one may be permitted to say so of God) — with reference to the Omnipresent (ממנו, stronger than “He”, they thus uttered blasphemy) (Sotah 35a; Arakhin 15a).

### Sforno on Numbers 13:32

ארץ אוכלת יושביה, even though the people living there are strong, this is not a compliment to the land; rather it means that it is only due to their exceptionally hardy constitution that they were able to survive in that land. Ordinary people would die there because the climate is so hard to take.

### Sforno on Numbers 14:7

טובה הארץ, concerning what you have charged us to investigate the land, we testify that it is a good land, exceptionally good, without drawbacks. We do not agree with our colleagues who, although testifying that the land was good, added the reservation that the “land consumes its inhabitants.” Concerning what my colleagues have said: about the land “consuming its inhabitants, we can testify כי לחמנו הם, “they are our bread,” they will not even have the courage to frontally face us, the very opposite of our colleagues’ saying that they are a “tough people.”