

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 36

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SHELACH LECHA

16th Sivan 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 13, verses 1 - 20

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe to send out twelve men, one man from each tribe to spy out the land of Canaan.
- ✚ Moshe chose the leaders of all the tribes for the task, including Hoshea Ben Nun, whom Moshe now officially called Yehoshua, by adding a letter Yud to his name for protection.
- ✚ Moshe instructs the men to report back their findings regarding the strength of the current inhabitants of Canaan and to also bring back samples of the produce grown, which will tell Moshe that the land is good and fertile.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 13, verse 21 – Chapter 14, verse 7

- ✚ After forty days the spies returned. Carrying a giant cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs. They tell Bnai Yisrael that the land indeed flows with milk and Honey.
- ✚ However they also unfortunately report back that the occupying nation is powerful and their cities are heavily fortified. "We look like grasshoppers compared to the giants in the land. Caleb, of the tribe of Yehuda and Yehoshua, are the only spies who believe despite this. Canaan is conquerable and that they should enter the land now and claim it for themselves, but national hysteria breaks out and all they want to do is stone these two honest leaders to death before choosing new leaders to take them back to Mitzraim.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 14, verses 8 - 25

- ✚ Hashem's Shekinah (presence) rests on the Ohel Moed. He informs Moshe that rather than escort Bnai Yisrael into a land they do not want. He will destroy them all now and make Moshe's descendants into his new nation. Moshe implores Hashem not to kill his people, arguing the fact that if Hashem carries out his threat, all the other nations of the world will proclaim Hashem must be weak. He had to annihilate them all in the desert because he was unable to bring his chosen nation into the Promised Land.
- ✚ Hashem allows Moshe to convince him hence sparing their lives, allowing them to live.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 14, verse 26 - Chapter 15, verse 7

- ✚ Hashem makes a decree that those people who have tested him ten times and have not heeded to his word will never enter the land. As punishment Bnai Yisrael are forced to wander the desert for forty years, coinciding with the number of days the spies travelled through the land of Israel.
- ✚ The Ten spies who gave a bad report died from a plague. Some of Bnai Yisrael who realized the grave error they had made by believing the spies, tried to conquer the land by themselves but were struck down by their enemies.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 15, verse 8 - 15

- ✚ Hashem teaches Moshe, upon entering Israel any individual who pledges to bring a Korban (sacrifice) must also bring an accompaniment consisting of a wine libation and a flour offering mixed with olive oil.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 15, verses 16 - 26

- ✚ Hashem also tells Moshe, that every time they want to make bread, they must put aside a portion of dough and give it to a Kohen.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 15, verses 27 - 41

- ✚ A man is found desecrating the Shabbat, by gathering wood and is executed.
- ✚ The mitzvah of wearing Tzitzits (fringes) on a four cornered garment is explained

Haftorah –YEHOShUA (JOSHUA) Chapter 2 verses 1 to 24

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Joshua sent two spies to Jericho, where they lodged at an inn run by a woman named Rahab. Their presence was quickly discovered by the king who sent for Rahab and asked her to turn them in.
- ✚ Rahab told the king that her guests had already departed, when actually she had hidden them on her rooftop.
- ✚ At Rahab's request, the two spies assured her that she and her family would not be harmed when Bnai Yisrael will come and conquer Jericho, providing that she would tie a scarlet thread and hang it from her window as a sign that she helped the men to escape.
- ✚ The two spies returned back to Yehoshua and gave a glowing report of what they saw.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ When Moshe sent out spies in this week's sedra they came back with a negative report about the land of Israel and in doing so convinced the people that its occupants are too strong
- ✚ However the spies in the Haftorah returned back with a positive report which encouraged Bnai Yisrael to begin their attack and reclaim their promised land.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: Were the Meraglim (Spies) entirely to blame?

Every year when I read this sedra I often wonder, who should really be responsible for the 'Meraglim fiasco'? Can you really put all the blame on the spies negative report or were other forces at work here, making sure the mission would fail from the offset.

Don't forget Hashem was actually against the idea of sending them; it was Moshe himself who made that final decision. Hence the reason why the Sedra begins with the words Shelach Lecha 'You! Moshe, have my permission if you so desire but remember I have not commanded you to do this.

Even though Moshe seems to be bullied and coaxed by Bnai Yisrael to send the Meraglim, this is how I understand the situation. Since leaving Mitzraim, Bnai Yisrael had witnessed and had been accustomed to a life filled with countless of Miracles with everything handed out to them on a plate. So when they came to Moshe asking him if they could send a small scouting party to Israel. Moshe thought maybe now is the right time to take a risk and agree to their terms. After all, the Torah had now been received, the Mishkan's construction was completed and dedicated, so it was only natural to complete his mission as their leader by marching Hashem's nation proudly into the Promised Land of Israel to implement the Torah way of life.

Moshe picked the best possible people for the mission; "they were all leaders, the heads of their tribes. He gave them very specific instructions as to what to look for, trying to steer them in the right direction. Yet he had a gnawing suspicion that even with these precautions in place, something might go wrong, because maybe their faith was not strong enough yet, enabling them to become independent and fend for themselves. Yet despite his doubts Moshe did not veto the mission because here was an opportunity to fulfil his destiny but unfortunately for him, the Meraglim lack of faith dug a hole that took forty years to climb out of.

Our sages tell us that the effects of the sin of the spies are still with us to this very day. Perhaps they are saying that we as a Jewish society are being too negative and that too few people today are willing to expend the energy required to put an end to our golus and return us back to our rightful place of setting up a Torah based society where the whole world can live in peace under the guidance of Hashem.

May Hashem grant us with the Emunah to be able to put all our trust in him so that one day soon, the Moshiach will come enabling us to go forth and conquer the land for good.

