

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation
(Under same management for over 5785 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

**June 21st - 10AM, Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Discussion**



"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.

Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 11

**Parashat Sh'lach-I'cha
Bamidbar (Numbers) 13-15**



וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,

שְׁלַחְלֶכֶּה אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 שְׁלַח לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Sh'lach-l'cha anashim v'yaturu et-erets K'na'an asher-ani noten li-v'nei Yisra'el

Send out for yourself men, and they may spy out the land of Canaan,
 which I am giving to the sons of Israel;

אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטָּה אָבוֹתָיו תִּשְׁלַחוּ כֹל זְשִׁיא בָהֶם:
 אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטָּה אָבוֹתָיו תִּשְׁלַחוּ כֹל זְשִׁיא בָהֶם

eesh echad eesh echad l'mateh avotav tish'lachu kol nasee va-hem.
 you will send one man, one man from his fathers' tribe all leaders among them.

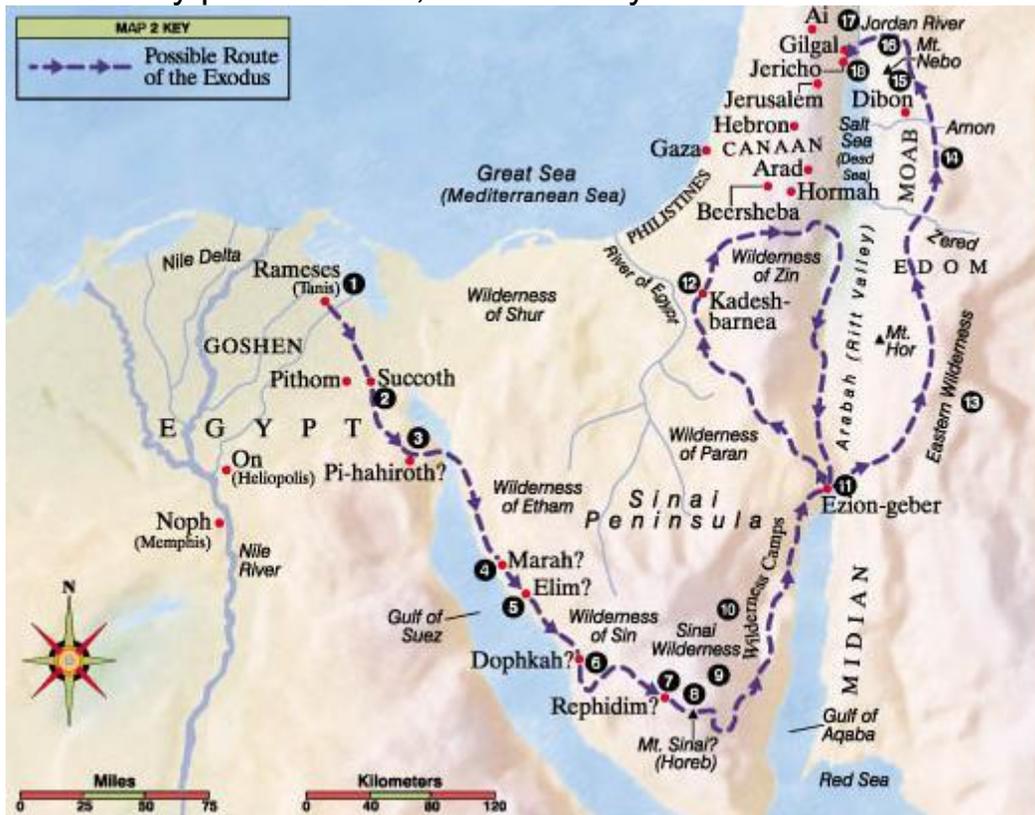
Haftarah — Joshua 2:1-24

Then Joshua, the son of Nun, sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim saying, "Go view the land, especially Jericho." So, they went and came into the house of a harlot, whose name was Rahab and lodged there. (9) And [she] said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you."

1.

B'rit Chadashah – Hebrews 3:7-8

Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,
 as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trail in the wilderness...



Disaster at Kadesh - Barnea



"Sh'lach l'cha," "send out for yourselves..." perfectly described the spiritual condition of the first generation of the Jewish people, who left Egypt. God's people, themselves, decided to send out **their own, self-appointed emissaries** to reconnoiter the land promised to them by God. Although this plan was allowed by Moses, and **Deuteronomy 1:23** states that the people's plan "pleased him;" nothing in the text suggested that either God or Moses was consulted about this plan of the people. The usual protocol was that God spoke to Moses, giving Moses His plan, which Moses then told to the people. **At Kadesh - Barnea, there was a clear departure from God's protocol. The people came up with their own plan, independent of God and Moses.** We can receive insight on the peoples' alternative plan to assess the land from the commentary of Moses in **Deuteronomy 1:19-23**. They had just traversed a "great and terrible wilderness" before arriving at Kadesh - Barnea. One can imagine that the focus of the people was on their own hunger and thirst and the uncertainty of continuing on further. While Moses was enthusiastic about continuing on to take possession of their promised land, the people were not so sure they wanted to continue to follow Moses (and God). Their stated objective was to ..."send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter" (vs.22). Ostensibly, their plan was to decide for themselves what direction to take to enter the land. Their hidden agenda was really that they wanted to return to Egypt, rather than continue to trust God to lead them into the land He promised them.

Disaster at Kadesh-Barnea did not arrive "out of the blue." It was a disaster in the making. From the time the people left Egypt along with the "rabble," the "mixed multitude," God's people (like many of us today) exhibited a cyclical history of failing to trust Him, receiving punishment, repentance, and then faith.... for a while. Then, when physical circumstances caused them to switch their focus from following God in faith onto themselves and "their predicament," God's people again showed that their "faith" had only been superficial, easily swayed into disbelief. At this point it should be noted that this was the first generation of God's people, who had left Egypt. Their leaders were the very people, who witnessed God's mighty miracles delivering them from

Egyptian slavery and destroying the world's mightiest army. Thus, there was no excuse for their disbelief in God's leadership!

The Kvetcher (kvetcherkeh - feminine) Complainer



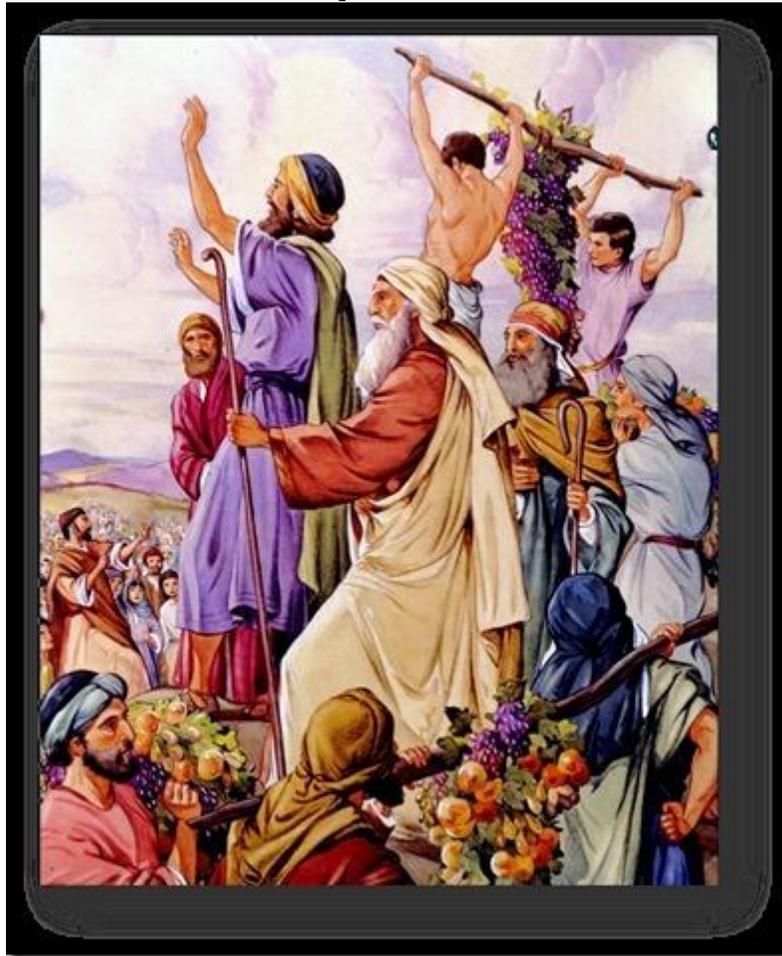
Perhaps it can be said that **the world's oldest profession** is **kvetching**. One has only to look back to the Garden of Eden to find Satan's influence, changing the focus of Adam and Eve from God onto themselves and their own desires. Of course some might say that **kvetching** is not really a profession. Yet **there are those who seem to make a profession out of kvetching**. These are the ones **whose focus is always entirely on themselves**. They have found that others get tired (annoyed) of their constant complaining, and some willingly give into their desires, just to maintain sanity. A good example of the results of **kvetching** can be found in last week's Parsha, in **Numbers 11:1-26**. The people began complaining of their desire to return to "the good old days" of slavery in Egypt, where they were "well-off," having abundant fish, cucumbers, melons, garlic, leeks and onions to eat. (One can just imagine that the Egyptians gave their slaves everything they wanted to eat.) The people wept and complained, showing their "greedy desires" (vs.4). Their complaining angered both God and Moses (literally, "in the eyes of Moses evil"). Yet the result of their complaining was that Moses also was infected, complaining to God for help saying, "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me" (vs.14) (notice the emphasis on self.). God acquiesced to the entreaty of Moses, gathering 70 elders "to take their stand there with you." One can understand that the direct will of God had been for Moses to lead the people. However, He permitted elders to be appointed due to the debilitating influence of the complainers on Moses.

Their **lack of faith in God** caused them to become frightened and to **constantly complain**. Even after they received God's judgment, they fell back into their habit of grumbling and complaining. Finally their unchecked divisiveness fomented into open rebellion against the leadership of Moses and therefore against God. In this Torah portion, God will hold His people accountable for the ten times they did not "listen to My voice." Just as Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his heart, did not obey God's instructions, and reached a **"point of no return,"** incapable of hearing God's voice, so God's people of the first generation to leave Egypt had reached their "point of no return" at Kadesh-Barnea, after which God's judgment would fall.

The Low-point of Jewish History

Many Rabbinic commentators consider the events at Kadesh-Barnea, when my Jewish people turned their backs on God, preferring Egyptian slavery to freedom in their promised land under God's leadership, the lowest point in Jewish history. Because many other calamitous events are said to have occurred on the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av, these commentators consider that the day the spies returned and gave their evil report also had to have been the 9th of Av, a day of calamity.

The Spies Return



Chapter 13 begins with God acknowledging the request of the people to send out 12 tribal leaders to reconnoiter the land. **Deuteronomy 1:22** expands on our knowledge of this event. God told Moses to acquiesce to the desires of the people to give the men permission for the trip. However, Moses specified certain things for the men to find out: the population and strength of the people that occupied the land; whether the cities are fortified; whether the land was good for crops. The names of the men are listed; most important were Caleb and Hoshea. Hoshea's name was changed to Joshua (Hebrew: "Salvation" to "God is salvation").

Discussion Questions: **1) Why was this spy trip necessary?** Since God has been providing direction and sustenance, there was no question that God would lead them into the land He promised to give them and would protect them during the trip, like He had protected them since the time they had left Egypt. **2) Since God knew that sending spies would only lead to disaster, why wouldn't He protect His nation from this**

disaster? Does God allow, and even give permission for men and women to follow their own follies to their ultimate ruin? **3) What was the basic sin of the people, and what caused it?** **4) How should we ascertain God's plan in our every day lives and keep from trampling upon it?** **5) Can we also reach a "point of no return," after which God's judgement will fall?**

My Answers: (if yours differ, that's OK, we will all have our opportunity for interactive discussion)

1) Yes, the trip was necessary, but only due to the hardness of their hearts. The people had lowered their spiritual level and the level of trust they had in God. God certainly must have been disappointed that His Jewish people could not raise themselves to the level of complete trust in Him. If only they had followed God's leadership and fully trusted Him to perform what He had promised, their trip to the land would have been accomplished without incident. Then they would have seen God fighting for them to subdue the land, overcoming "giants" and fortified cities.

2) Yes, God allows men and women to exercise their free will, even when it means that they choose against His wishes. Some of us have to "learn the hard way." Some never learn and continue in their foolishness.

3) Disbelief in God's ability and desire to keep His promises. Their belief in God was superficial at best. Although they saw first-hand God's miracles performed on their behalf, perhaps they only believed in the miracles, rather than in their God of miracles. **Distrusting God, they focused on themselves and their own desires and fears.** Naturally then, it would follow that they made their own plans.

4) Know and trust God as our provider and leader. "Knowing" means to have intimate knowledge. We obtain this intimate knowledge by reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures. Once we have established a relationship with God, through the sacrificial atonement for sin He provided, we communicate with Him through prayer. We ask the **Ruach Hakodesh** (Holy Spirit) to guide our prayers, so that the "words of our mouths and the meditations of our heart" are acceptable to God and in-line with His will for us. **Before we over analyze and then take our own action, we might consider inquiring of God, adhering to scriptural principles, and taking time to listen for His answer.**

5) I'm going to leave this question open for our discussion on Shabbat.

Hidden Agenda of the Spies - Return to Egypt

Moses sent out 12 men, leaders from every tribe that would go out to battle, to "spy out the land." We will soon see that ten of these men were obviously dissatisfied with God's direction and wished to return to Egypt. Perhaps before they left camp, but most certainly after they returned, their conclusions about whether to go possess the land of their inheritance were colored by a hidden agenda.....to return to Egypt. A return to Egypt most probably meant a return to slavery, but the spy leaders convinced their people that it was better to be a live slave than to succumb to hunger, thirst, or to the fierce inhabitants of Canaan. Perhaps a hidden agenda of the leaders was that in Egypt, they would be **the leaders** of slaves, rather than **the followers** of Moses. **Do we know politician leaders today with the same hidden agenda?**

Spies enter Canaan through the wilderness of Zin



They traveled North all the way into what is now Lebanon to Rehob. They returned South through parts of what now are the countries of Syria and Jordan, crossing the Jordan River from the Eastern side and passing through Hebron. After 40 days, the 12 tribal leaders returned, bringing with them the fruits of the land: a huge cluster of grapes, pomegranates, and figs. **(Remember that their mandate was fact-finding; not to draw conclusions.)**



However, **they also brought back a report that slandered the land.** The word used to describe the sin of the spies, is "**dibbah**", which implies slander, "**dibbah ra'a al Ha-artez**", slander of the land; literally, "evil speaking about the land." Or we might say it was "**lashon ha-ra**" (evil speaking) against the land.

Note 1: Today, there are those who would slander the land of Israel. They emphasize terror attacks, saying "you've got to be crazy to want to live there!" The slander of the land only serves to perpetuate what was maybe the second greatest communal sin in the history of the Jewish people, after their sin of disbelief in the risen Messiah. Jewish and Gentile believers in Messiah, Yeshua, must embrace Israel with the faithful attitude exhibited by Caleb and Joshua. **God will keep His promise to Abraham and will preserve His people and His land!**

Note 2: Considering the infectious nature of lashon Ha-ra, we would do well to blunt the evil words before they are even finished speaking. For it is not just the speaker of lashon Ha-ra that is effected by the evil words. **Those who listen passively, without objecting, fall prey to the infection.** There will be many, if allowed to hear **lashon Ha-ra**, who will **accept the "bad report" as truth** - as did the Jewish people in this parsha. The Sin of the spies was **not restricted to only 10 people**. Thousands of those who heard what was said and **accepted it, panicked** because of it, **became guilty of disbelief** in God, and **were punished**. **Lashon Ha-ra** must be stopped before it infects anyone else! The example of blunting the words of **lashon Ha-ra** would benefit both those who might hear them and also the perpetrator. The example of Caleb, who rose against the other 10 spies, illustrates that one should never remain passive in the presence of evil speaking!



The spies described the apparent strength of the inhabitants (in an attempt to scare the people). They mentioned **Amalek** and other nations (knowing it would have a discouraging effect). Rabbinic commentary in the **Zohar** painted a picture of **leaders who were more concerned with their own position of power than with the welfare of their people.** (Do we have politicians and leaders like this today?) The 10 spies felt that they would be needed if they went back to Egypt, but if they went into the land, they would be replaced as tribal leaders, (**Zohar Sh'lach 158a**). We know that the 10 spies were pursuing a hidden agenda because they exaggerated and lied about the people of the land of Canaan, and because they did not give their report just to Moses, who sent them, but they also went directly to the people in an attempt to frighten them. **Do we today hear politicians trying to frighten us in order to receive our votes?** Their report was "good news/bad news." They acknowledged that "the land does flow with milk and honey..." (in other words, it was good for grazing and agriculture). Then they listed a series of lies designed to scare the people. **1) The land devours its inhabitants.** Ironically, in the next Parsha, we will see the earth devour some of the people in the rebellion of Korah, but this incident occurred outside the "promised land." **2) All the people they saw in the land were very large, and some were giants.** Actually, of all the Canaanite tribes, only the Anakim were known to be tall, but not giants. It might also be noted that under God's leadership, Joshua killed

most of them, when he led the 2nd generation into the land (**Joshua 11:21,22**). Also, **the spies did not do their homework about the attitude of the “giants” towards them.** If they had interviewed some of the people, they may have heard the same as Rahab later told the spies of Jericho: **When we heard you were coming, “our hearts melted.”** 3) **They claimed to have seen Nephilim**, a super human race that supposedly were the product of fallen angels and humans. They said that **they felt like grasshoppers in the sight of the Nephilim**. Actually the Nephilim lived and died during the time of Noah (**Gen.6:4**). No mention of them is found after the flood. In fact, there were only 8 survivors of the flood and none were Nephilim. 4) They named **all the Canaanite tribes inhabiting the land** and declared that they **lived behind fortified walls**. Joshua found that only some cities were walled cities, and he easily overcame them. **The spies said that the Canaanites were too strong for them**, and that they "are not able to go up against the people" inhabiting the land. But wouldn't one expect a land "flowing with milk and honey" to be populated and fortified? **While the people of the land truly might have been too strong for them (ex-slaves without much military training), were they too strong for God, who had just recently given the Egyptian army "a bath?"** Caleb answered them, **exhorting them onward to take the land!** **Where had their faith in God gone that brought them into such despair?** As we said last week, **their faith was shallow and their spiritual preparation was poor.** Since they were God's people, **would their distrust and disbelief in God's leadership cause them to die in the wilderness without receiving God's promises in the land?** **Hebrews 3:7-19:** "And so we see that **they were not able to enter because of unbelief**" (verse 19).

The spies reported to Moses and directly to the community. In a special military mission initiated by their commander, **the mission leader should report directly back to his commander.** It would be up to the commander whether to share the mission results. Here, **the spies shared their opinions directly with all the people.** They gave a good report of the fruitfulness of the land, but also said that the people were many and strong and living in fortified cities. Then their report went beyond what was asked of them. They reported **their fear** in **Chapter 13, verse 31:** "We are not able to up against the people, for they are too strong for us. . . . (verse 33), and **we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.**" They gave an **independent judgment and opinion, slandering the land**, which was **not** what Moses asked. **They spread negativity and fear in the camp** with this report.

In **Chapter 14:1-4** the **congregation responded to the evil report:** "Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people **wept** that night. And **all** the sons of Israel **grumbled against Moses and Aaron;** and the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt? Or would that we had died in this wilderness! And why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? **Our wives and our little ones will become plunder;** would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt. Why is the Lord taking us to that land to fall by the sword?'" They knew that God had given them the land, and they knew that under God's leadership they were to go and fight for it. But due to the fear instilled by the evil **lashon hara** report, they concluded, "it would be better for us to go back to Egypt."

Slave mentality

The spies still had a slave mentality, afraid to be free. They wanted to be free, but they are used to being told what to do. They heard... "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." Their response reflected **the fearful voices of slave mentality**, who seemingly had no memory of their past bondage in slavery. They longed to return to Egypt. They **forgot about the cruelty, bondage, and their lack of freedom of choice**. They forgot the demonstration of miracles that God performed through their God appointed leader, Moses, freeing them from bondage to Egypt. It was the sin of **forgetfulness** and the sin of **faithlessness** in their God. Their **memory failed them**, and their **eyes failed them**. They forgot the ten miracles of the Passover. They forgot what God had done for them in the recent past in the face of Egyptian chariots about to overrun them. They forgot the parting of the Reed Sea. They forgot the drowning of the Egyptian army. They forgot the manna, and the tree thrown into the bitter waters of Marah, making the bitter waters sweet. They forgot God's pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day leading them. They forgot the voice of God from Mount Sinai. Their report illustrated a **lack of memory and a lack of faith**. They still were operating in the past, as if they were slaves content to be in bondage. They assumed that the Egyptians, whom they had despoiled, would simply and cheerfully welcome them back. **Fear overcame their faith**, and **faithlessness clouded their memory**.

Thought Question: Do we today allow fear to overcome our faith in God's leadership, leading us to make unwise decisions?

Moses was on God's mission to get his people to the Promised Land. Yeshua had an appointment to meet them there, where in the fullness of time, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (**John 1:14**)."
Yeshua is the reminder for all generations of the faithfulness of God. **He will fulfill what he has promised**, and He will also do so collectively for Israel. And the message from God through his Son, Yeshua, is that **His promises are not only for Israel collectively, but for all of us individually as well**. And **His promises were not only in the past and for the future, but also for us now**. Within His will, He will bring us to the "Promised Land" of our hopes and our desires. **He will set us free from the slavery to which we have been in bondage**. He will help us **remember** to do what is right in the sight of God. **He will give us the courage and the boldness to attack Satan in prayer relentlessly and without fear**. He will give us the **ability to live our lives here on earth in contentment, serving Him**. And when we lift up Yeshua, we will remember what happened in the wilderness in **Sh'lach L'cha**, and at Jericho, and on the crucifixion stake. **And the decisions we make will be ones that are "sanitized" by the Lord through prayer and good counsel**.



Monique Beadle Brumbach

Former Executive Director Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations

Dining on Giants

In this week's portion, *Sh'lach L'cha*, we meet the Jewish people at the very threshold of the Land of Promise. We have very recently been liberated from generations of slavery through a dramatic series of miracles and plagues. God has dried up a sea, rained manna and quail upon our heads, met face to face with Moses, and given us laws to set us apart as a holy nation. And now, barely two weeks since the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, we stand at the threshold of the Promised Land, just as God promised we would . . . quaking in our boots.

Ten spies return from a reconnaissance mission to report that we've hit a dead end. "The cities are fortified. The armies are large and well organized. Worse, there are giants everywhere! We looked like grasshoppers in comparison." Only two spies offer hope. Joshua and Caleb report that "God has made good on every single promise. We will dine on these giants!" (**Num. 13:31-14:9**).

This "minority report" falls on deaf ears. The ten faithless spies have already aroused fear in the hearts of the people, who suggest that it might have been better if they had all died in Egypt or in the wilderness. Moses, Joshua, and Caleb fall on their faces before the community of Israel, who pick up stones to hurl at them. Just as the riot is reaching a fever pitch, God's *Shechinah* appears at the Tent of Meeting, where Moses retreats for a poetic bargaining session with the Master of the Universe (Num. 14:10-24). Why did our people choose fear over faith? Surely the prospect of besieging walled cities is no more terrifying than being squeezed between the Egyptian army and the sea. Why does God choose a generation that never witnessed those miracles to run headlong into battle?

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that the ten spies were afflicted with confirmation bias. “If they came back with evil counsel, they must have gone with evil counsel, too” (**Sotah 35a**). In his view, the ten spies had made up their minds before they left on their mission. Everything they saw in the Land only confirmed their suspicions. Indeed, **Nachmanides** observes that Moses asked them to come back with troop numbers, which the spies never gave him. Furthermore, instead of delivering their report to him privately, they present it publicly to the people. Clearly these men never intended to fulfill their mission. But why would they anticipate failure, in light of the great miracles they had already witnessed?

The answer lies in the text itself. The ten spies say “we felt like grasshoppers” in comparison to giants, betraying a deep insecurity about their identity. They are a people too recently delivered from slavery to imagine themselves as conquerors.

We see what we want to see. As leaders of Messianic congregations, we think of ourselves as underdogs, and are well practiced in the art of describing our own limitations. Most of our Baby Boomer leaders came to faith in the 70s, a time of rapid social ferment. They faced extreme hostility to Yeshua faith from their Jewish relatives, alongside broad suspicion from Christian friends. From this paradigm of intense alienation, they built the Messianic Jewish congregations that form our Union today. What has emerged from our communities is a common refrain: “There’s not enough people, not enough money, everyone hates us . . . and the world is filled with giants!”

The Millennial children of the Boomers, however, are coming of age in a rapidly changing world. Very few of us still experience overt hostility from the mainstream Jewish community. Most of my American Jewish peers are either the products of intermarriage (like myself) or are intermarried themselves. As a result of intermarriage, and attrition from the Jewish institutions that once rejected us, there is limited (but growing) openness to our unique brand of “Yeshua Judaism.” This presents a remarkable opportunity to lead the Jewish community from the center, rather than its fringes. But we could miss this opportunity, or misinterpret it, if we continue regarding ourselves as grasshoppers. How easily we forget that we are the remnant of Israel. Israel! An idea, people, land, and faith that has real power today.

Sh'lach L'cha reminds us that our ability to trust God depends as much on our regard for ourselves as it does our memory of God’s miracles. And that we see what we want to see. I want to bless us that we should see ourselves as God sees us – as children of a remarkable promise. Is the world filled with giants? Sure it is. But as Joshua and Caleb reminded us centuries ago, “We will dine on giants!”



Self Image

Man's perspective ----- God's perspective

We became like grasshoppers in our own sight -- They were like grasshoppers in our sight

The occupying Canaanite tribes might have been fierce looking. They might have been well equipped for war with metal weapons. Some of them might have lived behind walled cities. What the spies saw frightened 10 of the 12 tribal leaders, but not Caleb and Joshua. They saw the same people and fortifications as the other 10 leaders, but they saw them **through the eyes of faith in the God of Israel. Faith in God, based upon scriptural underpinnings and being in God's will, creates a self-image that is a God-empowered self image.** "I can do all things through Him, who strengthens me" (**Philippians 4:13**) was the attitude of Caleb and Joshua.

In **Chapter 14**, there was a national rebellion against Moses and Aaron, God's appointed leaders. As was stated above, traditionally, some Jews believe this rebellion occurred on the 9th of Av, the day when other disasters in Jewish history have occurred. The people lifted up their voices, **cried, wept**, and (of course) **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron. Their declaration to Moses and Aaron (**and therefore to God**) was, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!" **Ironically**, while they had not died as slaves in Egypt, **they would get their wish and die in the wilderness outside the "promised land."** They cried that their wives and children would become plunder, if they did not return to Egypt. **Ironically**, **their children would inherit the land instead of them.** Caleb and Joshua tore their clothes in mourning because of the disbelief of the people. They told the people that God was able to bring them into the "promised land,..." "only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their enemies' protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." The Hebrew word translated "**protection**" means "**shadow**." It's as if **what looked to be their enemies' protection was really only a shadow, which God would**

remove....if they just had the faith to follow Him. Isn't this also true in our lives? **What seems to be insurmountable is easily overcome, as we trust God to give us strength and follow His leadership.**

But even with the exhortation of Caleb and Joshua, **the people did not repent. They had passed their "point of no return."** **They had so hardened their hearts with all their complaints and grumbling that they were now incapable of trusting God.** The people would have stoned Moses and Aaron to death, if the Shekinah Glory of God had not intervened. God ostensibly was ready to destroy the people. But Moses intervened, calling on God to remember His promise to Abraham and Abraham's descendants to give them the land. **Would God have really broken His promise to Abraham by destroying His people and not giving them the promised land? Absolutely not!! The land of Israel belonged to God's people from the time he promised it to them through their father, Abraham.** But here again like last week, we see that **it pleases God to accomplish His plans through men. Moses intervened with God..."**Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy (covenantal) **loving-kindness,** just as Thou also has forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now"..... seemingly changing God's mind. By the way, the Hebrew word for "**loving-kindness,**" **chesed,** used in verses 18 and 19 **indicates the covenant keeping, faithful nature of God. Since God wants us to interact with Him to accomplish His wishes, shouldn't we also want to interact with Him in a way that emphasizes His loving-kindness for us?**

While God kept His promise to bring into the land the 2nd generation descendants of Abraham, He judged the 1st generation, "this evil congregation, who are grumbling against Me." **Having "past the point of no return," all that remained for them was God's judgment.** Almost all of those numbered in the census would die in the wilderness. Notice that **the punishment of God's people,** who had "put me to the test these 10 times and have not listened to My voice," **was physical death.** This passage was important to the Messianic Jews in the period just before 70 AD. They were considering returning to non-Messianic Judaism because of persecution and were being told that **spurning God would lead to their physical death,** just as it did for those who died in the wilderness. In fact, many of those, who did return to Judaism, died when the Romans took Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, the Messianic Jews escaped death by fleeing the city earlier. **Bottom line: Once you are truly one of God's people, you always will be....for nothing "can separate us from the love of God in Messiah, Yeshua" (Romans 8:39).**

Interestingly, **Chapter 15** begins with...."**when** you enter the land." Obviously ownership of the land by the descendants of Abraham was a promise God intended to keep, even if His people exhibited disbelief and didn't obey His commandments. While awaiting their deaths in the wilderness, did the 1st generation repent? There is no indication that they did. Instead we can find from scripture that they practiced idolatry, did not circumcise their children (a sign of their covenantal relationship with God), probably did not celebrate Passover, and did not observe the Sabbath.

Also from **Chapter 15** we find that **God did not practice favoritism among the people who served Him.** Whether native born or an "**alien**" (Hebrew form of "**ger**" sometimes translated "**proselyte,**" one who obeys God and worships Him alone), **there is only**

God's law for all. For sin, atonement could be made, and sin forgiven. Just so we don't forget the **atonement process**, first there was the **public acknowledgment of sin**, as the individual brought his sacrifice to the priest. Then followed the **identification, confession, and transference** of sin to the animal, illustrated by the individual putting the weight of his hands on the head of the animal. It was only then that the **shedding of blood** (the payment for sin) took place, and **atonement was made**. For intentional, unrepented, premeditated sin done in defiance (literally from the Hebrew "with a high hand") of God, the penalty was death.

Lastly in verses 38-40 is found the law of the **tzitzit**. Tzitzit are the fringes or tassels found on the corners of garments worn by some religious Jews even today. Outwardly they are to show God's people as a separate, distinct people because they keep His law. For the individual, **tzitzit are reminders to obey God's laws**, as one's hand brushes against them while walking. Because for all God's people, both in the days of Moses and for us today, as we remember to do all of God's commandments, we show ourselves to be holy to our God (vs.40). **For believers in the atonement paid through the shed blood of Messiah, Yeshua, our desire to please God through obedience to scriptural principles arises as we realize all that He has done for us. Our reminder is God's law written upon our hearts and prompted to us by the **Ruach Hakodesh**.**

**SHABBAT SHALOM – Let's Celebrate
(See Next Page)**



Cary & Louis will celebrate their **53rd Wedding Anniversary**
& Louis's **56th birthday** on **June 22nd.....**
a tribute to **Jewish arranged marriages**
(Our marriage was arranged when Louis was only 3 years old.)

