

## 30 – Shelach – Outline

### Shelach Summary

- “shelach” = “send” or “send for yourself”
- the “evil report” of the 10 spies and ensuing rebellion
- laws regarding the korbanot
- one law for the Israelites and the sojourners among them
- the requirement to give part of every batch of dough to the priests
- the laws pertaining to offerings that atone for the sin of idolatry
- the incident of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath
- the commandment to affix tassels (tzitzit) to the corners of garments

### On Criticizing Israel

- we are in the middle of a series of Israel’s missteps regarding the sin of lashon hara, evil speech
  - lashon hara: negative speech that is true but the hearers have no pressing need to hear it
  - last portion: Miriam, Aaron
  - this portion: evil speech against the land
  - next portion: Korach
- we simply have no business undressing people in front of others
- we, especially Gentiles, have no business speaking against Israel – besides the prohibition on speaking lashon hara, there is a special gravity to speaking against Israel

### Encouragement from the Progression of Topics in Shelach

- after God pronounces the death sentence of the wilderness journey, the next section reads, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, WHEN YOU COME INTO THE LAND YOU ARE TO INHABIT, WHICH I AM GIVING YOU, and you offer to the LORD from the herd or from the flock...” (Numbers 15:2-3)
  - after such a severe stumble and sentence, God turns right around and continues preparing them for a higher level with further commandments related to successfully entering and living in the Land; He’s renewing His commitment to bring the nation in (this generation’s children)
  - God doesn’t leave us without a red cord of hope; over and over again in Scripture, descriptions of His punishment are followed by, “but after your punishment and refining, I will bring you back to Me”

### On Death and Tzitziyot

- next comes the story of the stoning of the Sabbath breaker
  - understand it this way: the Sabbath is a time of intimacy between God and His people, and even though these people are under a death sentence, they are still the people He wants to draw near to every Sabbath; the day must be protected
- next comes the commandment regarding tzitzit

- this is God the Great Teacher instructing us in how to take advantage of the visibility and solidity of the material world to speak to us, to remind us, to keep us from falling away, encouraging us that we don't have to stumble all the time
- tzitzyot are more than just reminders
  - they are spirituality and light and healing flowing from us everywhere we go, in all directions
    - blue – the color of the sky, the heavens (the spiritual), and the color of water
    - they are like water flowing to a dry and thirsty land, wherever we go
    - from the morning prayers, upon putting on the talit (and tzitzyot): “How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them **drink from the river** of your delights. For with you is the **fountain** of life; in your light do we see light.” (Psalms 36:7-9)
- taken together, all these topics in the parsha are saying: “Yes, you messed up. But let's look a bit further down the road. There will be a time when you harvest grain. And you will use this grain in your holy offerings to Me. And there will be a time when you are a great light to the nations in the Land and will lead them to draw near to Me. And you will honor my day of rest and connection. And you will remember my commandments. And you will take the water of truth with you wherever you go

### Placing Shelach

- Fight Fear Now
  - in this quadrant of the year (summer), we are being specially empowered to work on our emotions, especially fear
    - the emotions are said to be centered in the heart, though they are influenced by the mind and the gut; they are connectors of the whole body, like the blood that is pumped by the heart
  - the tzitit commandment is a means of gaining mastery of the heart: “And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, THAT YOU NOT FOLLOW AFTER YOUR OWN HEART and your own eyes, after which you go astray” (Numbers 15:39)
    - it's this moment in the text and at this moment in the year that God enables us to craft a protection for the heart
  - the main problem for the people as revealed by the evil report of the spies is an emotional one – fear, especially fear of death
    - in Grant and Robin's discussion of Shelach this week, they focus on fear (<https://torahtodayministries.org/lesson/shelach-2/>)
    - we need to be courageous now to press in according to the path God has already revealed to us
    - Robin: the spiritual life requires risk
      - the spiritual path is going to look dangerous, even deadly sometimes

- we're not going to accomplish powerfully in this world according to God's design for us if we are afraid that we're going to die; fear derails us accomplishing anything worthwhile
  - Grant and Robin: fear distorts our perception of reality and even creates AN ALTERNATE REALITY where the enemy HAS BEEN INVITED IN TO MAKE OUR FEARS ACTUALLY COME TRUE when they wouldn't have before
- What Does It Mean to Enter the Land?
  - that they will enter the Land is the word previously spoken to them consistently starting with the patriarchs
    - they won't reach their greatness and accomplish powerfully on earth if they don't go up to take the Land
  - what is "taking the Land" to us?
    - it is taking control of our own flesh – body, nephesh, even parts of the intellect that lean toward the flesh
      - when we take control of the flesh, we kick out the uncleanness there, and we become a home for God on earth
        - as Israel kicks out the squatters in the Land and builds a permanent home for God in Jerusalem
- Two Paths
  - Israel failed. What happened?
    - the generation that came out of Egypt was a very young one, still filled with Egypt; they were going to struggle no matter what
    - they could struggle in the Land (more comfortable) or out (less comfortable)
      - these two paths are like the two brothers in the parable of the prodigal son
        - prodigal son: rejects the wisdom of the father and goes the way of the world
          - returns penniless with nothing to show for all that time, but because he is shown much grace, his love for the father is very great
        - obedient son: stays with the father
          - deepens their relationship, works for years alongside the father, hasn't cause the father to worry over him, doesn't experience the pit, will inherit everything
          - has to grow by coming to terms with the father's embrace of the prodigal son
        - both paths have their difficulties, but one path is bumpier than the other; one path is better, but God's grace is big enough for both
  - The Torah, the Trumpets, and the War

- growing up feels like battle, war
- the war is there from the beginning but flares up greatly in adolescence, when we are asked to step up to accept responsibility for our decisions
  - Torah causes the battle to flare up into an all-out war
    - Torah brings clarity for truth and the right way, and this clarity ups the ante for us
  - in parsha Beha'alotcha, we can see a subtle allusion to this flaring up of the war in that just before Israel goes off the cliff in that portion, we read the commandment to make silver trumpets; one reason given to blow the trumpets is when Israel goes to war
    - the text being placed there, just before the movement away from Sinai (after receiving the Torah) and just before the fall of Israel, is a readying of the nation for war and a calling of Israel before the Father
- A Season of Illumination
  - connection between the natural season of the year and the spiritual season: intense illumination
    - next Wednesday is the summer solstice – longest day of the year
    - spiritually, it's the season to see inward, leading to repentance
      - to especially see into our emotions – how fear of death is robbing us of stepping up to be the fullness of who we are made to be
      - important mention of “fear of death” in Hebrews: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH WERE SUBJECT TO LIFELONG SLAVERY” (Hebrews 2:14-15)
        - fear of death is the source of lifelong slavery; we can almost say fear of death = Egypt
      - in this season of light, expect to experience testing that brings out into the open the fear of death by which we are enslaved
      - the “chush” (bodily ability) anciently associated with the month of Tammuz: sight
      - “shelach” more deeply means “send spies inwardly, into the flesh to see what God would illuminate at this time, leading to repentance”
    - the specificity of what the spies reveal
      - 12 are sent in to gauge all of Israel's heart, representatives from every tribe (except the Levites)
      - they reveal that Israel has a split heart: 10 to 2
        - 10 swayed to fear
        - 2 filled with courage
          - these 2 are preserved

- so we are not only seeing what is “off” during this season, but what is good, what needs to be preserved and fed, even as we are eliminating the bad
- in the season of illumination, we need to be looking past the surface and into the heart
  - haftarah in Joshua 2 – the spies sent in under Joshua don’t see the surface; their report is focused on the spiritual work God has done to undermine the Canaanites: “And they said to Joshua, ‘Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us’” (Joshua 2:24)
    - the 12 spies in Shelach see the outside, the purely physical

### Seeing Growth Even in the Stumbles

- first: we need to cut this generation some slack
  - Sages: “All beginnings are difficult.”
  - they were chosen to be the souls to walk this difficult beginning, which is an honor
- we need to be able to see the positives in our stumbles and to grow from them; this helps to keep us from becoming disheartened and sliding deeper and deeper
- some positives of the wilderness punishment:
  - the nation becomes a pretty tough group of people, capable in living in the desert
  - they will come to appreciate their solid homes more when they finally do get into the Land
  - they become deeply unified – camaraderie of “making it through” the wilderness experience
  - they grow to be unified in their submission to God’s leader, Moses, then Joshua
    - somehow harder for a single leader to keep allegiance when everyone is living their separate lives on their own land in the Land; here, they’re marching in step with each other
  - it’s a special time of being near to God, literally walking with Him, receiving His miraculous provision daily – a time like no other in Israel’s history
  - they learn that even in the midst of God’s punishment, there is life

### A Message in the 12 Names

- the list of 12 spies tells the story of salvation
  - name meanings:
    - Shammuah: renowned/be desolate/appalling
    - Shaphat: judgment
    - Caleb: dog
    - Igal: He redeems
    - Hoshea: salvation/deliverer
    - Palti: my deliverance

- Gaddiel: God is my fortune
- Gadi: my fortune
- Ammiel: people of God
- Sethur: hidden
- Nahbi: hidden
- Geuel: majesty of God
- Yehoshua: salvation of God
- the names take us from a very low place of infamy and judgment, through re-connection to God, then a spiritual outpouring of God (fortune), a knitting together with God (people of God) a physical manifestation of salvation (hidden = physical), and, in looking back on the whole journey, a view of the majesty of God
  - the name that sums up the list: “Yehoshua,” “God’s Salvation”
- what we meant for evil, He meant for good
- from beginning to end, it was salvation for Israel; Grant: “You just can’t lose with a God like this.”

## Yeshua

- Yeshua is the greatest example of a “stumble” that leads to life – at least the appearance of a stumble
  - through Yeshua’s death, the whole world is brought back to life
- the Brit Chadashah reading is the story of Yeshua sending out the 12 apostles to heal and announce the kingdom
  - in contrast to the 12 spies focus on what they could see, the physical, Yeshua tells the 12 apostles to focus on the spiritual work before them and allow the physical to follow – a very different emphasis, showing a great maturation has happened in Israel
    - praise the Lord that He brings us along this same path of maturation that He brings Israel along

## 30 – Shelach – Tanscript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and the Spiritual Seasons series. In this series, we are fitting each Torah portion into the larger context of the year and God’s pattern of salvation. This week we are in parsha Shelach, Numbers 13-15.

Shelach means “send” or “send for yourself.” The word is used in God’s command to Moses to send men into the Land to spy it out. This leads to the story that makes up the majority of the portion, the evil report of the 10 spies. God tells Moses to send in 12 spies, each a chief from his tribe, so these aren’t just average men; these are the tribal leaders. They are charged with going in to see if the people in the Land are many or few, strong or weak, what the fortifications of their cities are like, and what the land, itself, is like. They spend forty days on their mission.

Then they return and report that the Land is, indeed, very good, but that the Canaanites are strong and the cities are fortified and large and there are giants living in the Land. Caleb speaks up immediately to quiet the people and encourage them to go in at once. But the other spies speak up to say that the land devours its inhabitants and giants live there. The people cry in their tents that night. The next day the 10 spies discourage the people, and Joshua and Caleb urge them to not rebel, but when the people are ready to stone Joshua and Caleb, at the glory of the Lord suddenly appears at the Tabernacle. God announces to Moses that He will wipe them out, saying He will raise up Moses to be a nation to replace them, but Moses intercedes for them. God spares them, but He delivers a sentence upon the adults of the generation, that the nation will be forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all the land of the wilderness swallows their bodies, which is what they feared the Land of Israel would do to them.

Upon hearing this sentence, the people mourn and admit that they have sinned, saying that they will now go up to fight against the inhabitants of Canaan. Moses tells them the Lord is not with them and that they will not succeed, but they go anyway and are defeated.

The rest of the portion begins with a number of laws regarding the korbanot, the sacrifices, including the requirement to bring grain and wine offerings with animal sacrifices, the commandment that there is to be one law for Israel and the sojourner with Israel, the requirement to give part of every batch of dough to the priests, and laws pertaining to atoning for idolatry. Lastly, we have the incident of the man who is caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath and is stoned and the commandment to make and wear tzitzitot.

### **On Criticizing Israel**

Before we get very deep into the portion, let me just make a couple of quick observations. First, we are in the middle of a series of missteps regarding the sin of lashon hara, evil speech. Lashon hara is negative speech that is true and there's no good reason for saying it. The last portion ended with Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses in this way. Here we have what is considered to be lashon hara spoken against the Land, itself. And in the next portion, we will see the rebellion of Korach, which is not a violent rebellion but one of words.

We all know the grave seriousness with which the Jews look upon lashon hara. We simply have no business undressing people in front of others, even if what we're saying is true, and ESPECIALLY if what we're saying is true. Lashon hara divides people.

The point I'd like to emphasize here is that we have no business speaking against Israel, period. That's not our place, particularly if we are Gentiles. Here we have 10 spies speaking lashon hara against the Land, and the consequences are absolutely dire, deadly. The root there for their punishment goes deeper than the lashon hara, the idea that the people doubted God. But that doubt was clothed in speech, and that speech was lashon hara. We must be absolutely vigilant to not speak lashon hara, and this is especially true of Israel – the Land and especially the people. We need to be able to analyze how Israel steps and missteps in the Torah, and we need to be able to talk about that, but let's always do that analysis with as much grace as we can

muster, knowing that Israel is a picture of us. And let's also purpose to not speak badly against modern Israel and the Jewish people. That's not our place, and the consequences are serious.

### **Encouragement from the Progression of Topics in Shelach**

The second point I'd like to make here is in regards to the progression of topics in the portion. Right after God uses a large number of verses to pronounce a kind of slow death sentence on this generation, the next idea reads, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, WHEN YOU COME INTO THE LAND YOU ARE TO INHABIT, WHICH I AM GIVING YOU, and you offer to the LORD from the herd or from the flock..." (Numbers 15:2-3). What? God had just said to them, "your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness," and then He turns around and says, "When you come into the Land..." Now maybe the chronology is out of order and these commandments were actually given at another time. But the order of topics we have today in the Torah is the order that God chose. Here is this order of a death sentence followed by, "When you come into the Land..." That generation knew THEY weren't getting into the Land, but that these commandments would be observed by their children in the Land. But still, it's an encouragement to us, and maybe it was an encouragement to Israel at the time, that after such a severe stumble, after such a severe sentence, God turns right around and continues preparing them for a higher level with further commandments related to successfully entering and living in the Land. This is God, in His kindness, renewing His commitment to bring the nation in.

God doesn't leave us without hope. That is not the kind of God He is. He will never leave us without a red cord of hope. And over and over again in the Scriptures, when we see God bring down the hammer, we inevitably read, "But when this punishment ends, when this cleansing ends, when this forging in the fire ends, I will take you back to Me, and I will bless you."

### **On Death and Tzitziyot**

Then we come to the story of the stoning of the man who was caught collecting wood on the Sabbath. It feels a bit like whiplash. But let's look at this story in this way: the Sabbath is a time of intimacy between God and His people, and even though these people are under a death sentence, they are still the people He wants to draw near to every Sabbath. And that time of intimacy must be guarded at all costs.

This story is followed by the commandment regarding tzitzit. Here we have God saying, "You are apt to stray like this one who neglected the Sabbath, so let me give you a gift that will help you to remember." He is showing us as an expert teacher does how to use the stuff of this physical earth as reminders, how to take advantage of the concreteness and consistency of this material stuff to speak to our minds and hearts. "Make these tassels as reminders of how we connect to each other through the commandments. Be savvy. Be creative. You can do this. You can walk the path of life with consistency and victory, and in the end, we will be walking together, day-by-day."

The tzitziyot are more than just reminders to us, though. They are spirituality and light and healing flowing from us everywhere we go. The blue thread that God commands be woven into the tassels is the color of the sky. It's the color of the heavens, the color of the spiritual realm.



It's also the color of water, which reflects the sky. The way I think of the tzitzit is that the blue thread is like water flowing out through our actions wherever we go, water to a thirsty world. And this connection of the tzitzit to water is made explicit in the morning prayers. Upon putting on the talit with its tassels, the following is recited (and listen for the references to water): "How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light." (Psalms 36:7-9)

The word "wings" in this verse from Psalm 36 is "kanaph," which is same word used here in Numbers for the corners of the garments where the tassels are to be affixed: "The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your corners," we could say. We take refuge under God's tzitziyot, and there we drink of the river; we drink from the fountain of life.

And so, taken together, through the topics that follow the stumble of the evil report of the spies – the commandments regarding korbanot and sojourners, the vast consequences for breaking the Shabbat and losing the opportunity for intimacy with God, the tzitzit, God is saying, "Yes, you messed up. But let's look a bit further down the road. There will be a time when you harvest grain. And you will use this grain in your holy offerings to Me. And there will be a time when you are a great light to the nations in the Land, and the nations will draw near to Me through you, and you will put your arm around them and lead them to the Temple and help them to bring their korbanot so that they can also draw near to Me. And you will honor my day of rest and connection. And you will remember my commandments. And you will take the water of truth with you wherever you go, and when people see you, they will be reminded of the commandments because of how your life is ornamented with the clothing of good deeds.

Praise God that He doesn't lay out His Word in a way that a man would. It is far above man's thinking. And it is always life.

## **Placing Shelach**

### *Fight Fear Now*

I'd like to return to the topic of the tzitziyot for a minute as we start now to place Shelach in its larger context of the calendar and the flow of the Torah portions. We mentioned in a previous teaching the idea that this quadrant of the year is a time when mankind is particularly empowered to do a work of correction in our emotions. Hebraically, the emotions are centered in the heart, though they also are influenced by the head and by the gut. The emotions connect the whole being together like the blood that is pumped by the heart. My emotions are influenced by my thoughts, and they're also influenced by whether I've eaten or not, or whether my intuition is trying to tell me something.

When God gives the commandment to affix tzitziyot to the corners of our garments, the verse mentions the heart: "And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, THAT YOU NOT FOLLOW AFTER YOUR OWN HEART and your own eyes, after which you go astray" (Numbers 15:39). So it's at this moment in the

text and at this moment in the year that God enables us to craft a protection for the heart, which is our emotional center. The work of crafting such protections for the heart is the work of this moment in the calendar.

It's clear that the main problem for Israel here with the report of the spies is an emotional one. To be specific, Israel has allowed FEAR to manifest within her members, a base sort of visceral fear that they will die at the hands of the giants in the Land. Grant and Robin's discussion this week is focused almost entirely on the topic of fear, and it's an interesting and helpful discussion that I recommend everyone listen to (<https://torahtodayministries.org/lesson/shelach-2/>). We need to exercise our courage muscles now to press in according to the path God has already revealed to us. In their discussion, Robin points out that the spiritual life requires risk. The people had to be able to risk, and risk everything, really, to go up to attack the Canaanites, and they were unwilling to do it. We are risk-averse, and often that's good. That's a safety mechanism. But when it comes to hearing God and staying on the path He has put us on, we can't be risk-averse because that path is absolutely going to look dangerous, even deadly sometimes. We're not going to accomplish powerfully in this world according to God's design for us if we are afraid that we're going to die. Fear derails us accomplishing anything worthwhile. Grant and Robin point out that fear distorts our perception of reality and even creates AN ALTERNATE REALITY where the enemy HAS BEEN INVITED IN TO MAKE OUR FEARS ACTUALLY COME TRUE when they wouldn't have before.

#### *What Does It Mean to Enter the Land?*

As we continue placing this portion, I'd like to back out for a minute for the thousand-foot view. Israel is being given the chance here in this portion to enter the Land – that they will enter the Land is the word previously spoken to them consistently starting with the patriarchs. They won't reach their greatness and accomplish powerfully in the earth if they don't go up to take the Land.

Let's extend this idea to ourselves for a minute. What does it mean to us to enter the Land? Well, we've talked before in the winter about conquering the Promised Land as a metaphor for taking control of our own flesh, our bodies and souls, especially the parts of the soul that lean toward the body, but the part of the intellect that leans toward the flesh as well. And what happens when we gain mastery of our flesh? We become a suitable home for God, a home for God on Earth. When Israel goes into the Land, which they do eventually do, they purge the Land of the giants and other squatters that don't belong there, and they eventually build a home for God there in Jerusalem. We are making a home for God on Earth in these bodies, and Israel's conquering and building in the Land is a picture of that. When we take our own land and clean it out, God can live in us and work through us.

#### *Two Paths*

Well, Israel failed to go in. So what happened here? The point I want to make here is that the generation that came out of Egypt was a very spiritually young one. They were spiritually immature because they carried so much of Egypt within them. They had to go through a period of growing up before they could fully inhabit the Land. But here's the thing, they could either

grow up outside the Land, where life is much more difficult, or they could have remained faithful and allowed God to bring them at least partly into the Land, where God could have made provision for Israel's development in a much more comfortable place. Maybe God would have given Israel just the southern portion of the Land until they matured more. But either way, whether in the Land or out, they still had the tough path of growing up in front of them. There's no getting around that. What happened here in this rebellion of the evil report of the spies was that God decided they needed the more difficult path to growth, the path of the wilderness journey outside the Land. He determined that the thorns of the desert were the best way for Israel to grow.

The two paths we're talking about are like the two different journeys the two sons take in the parable of the prodigal son. One son remains obedient to the father, and the other son rejects the wisdom of the father and goes the way of the world. Both of these sons have a path of growth before them. The prodigal son falls hard and is filled with much regret. In fact, he squanders his share of the inheritance. But when he is shown grace by the father who loves him, his love for the father is very, very great. This is the one great benefit of the more difficult path. When grace is extended to the one who has been forgiven much, the love that spontaneously fills him is very great.

On the other hand, the obedient son also has a growth process. The prodigal son is really the story of two sons growing up, not just the one. The obedient son works hard on his father's estate for years while his brother is out spending his share of his father's hard-earned wealth. And in the end, the obedient son is frustrated by the father's warm embrace of the wayward brother when he returns penniless, and this obedient son is given the challenge to grow such that he can come to terms with His father's grace to this brother who made such foolish decisions. When it's all said and done, the obedient son has enjoyed years of deepening relationship with his father, real TIME spent together working side-by-side with him, and he hasn't caused his father to worry over him, and he has not had to experience the pit like his brother did, and he inherits the estate. The obedient son has much to show for his faithfulness and efforts, whereas the prodigal son has little to show for those years, though, like I said, the love the prodigal son has for his father is very great.

Both paths lead to growth and strength and unity with the father. These two paths are constantly before us. We can choose to go into Canaan right away by remaining within the will of the Father, or we can veer off that path. Either way, we will end up with a more mature relationship with the Father. The one path is just much bumpier than the other. The two paths are not equal. The way of the obedient son is better. But I'm so grateful that God's grace is big enough to include both paths.

### *The Torah, the Trumpets, and the War*

Neither path is easy because growing up is not easy. In fact, growing up often feels a lot like war. In a way, the war is there from the beginning, from birth. But in another way, the war really gets going when we enter adolescence, when we are asked to step up to accept responsibility for our decisions and our walk. We give a lot of grace to children because we

know that they usually lack the experience and maturity to make good decisions consistently. But we expect more of a teenager, and so this is when the battle really becomes an all-out war.

It's no coincidence that we are seeing this struggle really flare up just after Israel gets the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Paul explains that it is the Torah that really fans the flames of the war within the members of our bodies. It's the Torah that CLEARLY points out to us what sin is, what hitting the mark looks like and what missing the mark looks like. The Torah is the instruction book that is light, truth, clarity. And once we know, and if we agree to be in covenant with God, we are held accountable to the Torah. There is battle for Israel before Mt. Sinai, but in a way, it doesn't compare to the battle after Mt. Sinai. What the Torah does is bring CLARITY to the truth, to the way of life, to the choices we should make moment by moment, and it is this clarity that ups the ante for us. So on the other side of Sinai, the war is on, and we see that from the very first verses of Israel stepping away from Mt. Sinai.

And I think in the previous portion, Beha'alotcha, we can see a subtle allusion to this flaring up of the war that comes with the receiving of the Torah. Last week, we said that there is a tipping point in that portion where Israel reaches a summit, then, as I said, as soon as they set foot away from Sinai, they plunge downward with incident after incident of grumbling and rebellion and dying. We said that the summit before that fall was the two verses between the inverted letter nuns, the verses that speak to us about a kind of boldness that is founded on humility, these verses about how Moses would speak to the Lord when the ark went forth and when the ark rested. Soon after that soaring height in Scripture, we come to this falling for Israel. But there's one topic that is between the summit and the fall off the cliff. It's just 10 verses. Do you remember what those 10 verses that follow the inverted nuns are about? It begins like this, "The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them..." (Numbers 10:1-3). The command to make two silver trumpets comes between the summit and the fall. And God gives several ways that these trumpets are to be used. One of these occasions for blowing the trumpets is WHEN THEY GO TO WAR.

And I think this is why the trumpets are inserted at that point in the text. The commandment to make the trumpets is, itself, like the blowing of the trumpets before war, before the war that Israel is about to enter after agreeing to the Torah. It is the war of growing up in the Torah, the war that the Torah brings to life in the members of the body.

### *A Season of Illumination*

I want to spend a minute now to connect this spiritual season of the year to the natural season of the year. We are approaching the summer solstice in the third week of June, this Wednesday. That will be the longest day of the entire year, when we are receiving the most light of any day in the calendar. All of this light is more than just a certain tilt of the planet toward the sun. God has designed this season of illumination for mankind's growth. It is first a spiritual season of the year and the physical is just a reflection of that reality. And the goal of the great illumination of this spiritual season is to reveal what's going on inside of us, leading to repentance, the repentance of the month of Elul and the 10 Days of Awe, 40 days of repentance.

Our earlier discussion helps us to see the specific area that God is especially illuminating now – our fears, especially the root fear of death. I suppose that, in many ways, the fear of death is the root of many if not all of our negative emotions. Fear of death leads to failure to reach up to grab ahold of what God is empowering us to do. Fear of death leads to paralysis, even. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says about the fear of death, speaking here about what Yeshua's death accomplishes for us: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH WERE SUBJECT TO LIFELONG SLAVERY" (Hebrews 2:14-15). The writer of Hebrews here says that fear of death is the source of lifelong slavery! We could almost say that fear of death is the true Egypt, the enslaver of Israel.

And so, in this season of light, God is going to design situations for us that will test us and bring out into the open the fear of death by which we remain enslaved. We are to be seeing inwardly now, and the battles we walk through now will help us to see. This idea of vision is closely connected to the next month, Tammuz, which begins in just a few days. The chush, or bodily ability anciently associated with Tammuz, is sight. In the end, the deeper idea of this word "shelach" is an invitation to send spies inwardly to see the lay of the land within, to see what God would illuminate at this time, leading to repentance.

One striking element of this story of how Israel's heart is illuminated in parsha Shelach is how specific the intel is. It's not that Israel is entirely given over to fear. It's more like Israel has a DIVIDED heart, and the divided heart is swayed to the negative side. God allows representatives of the whole nation to go on this mission so that THE WHOLE HEART of the nation will be laid bare. And while 10 of them come to be controlled by fear, 2 of them are filled with courage. So it's not all bad news. These 2 that are courageous become a foundation for building upon. God keeps these two alive to be great leaders in Israel, especially when Moses is taken from them. So in this season of illumination, we are seeing not only the darkness, but also what is good and right in us, so that we can preserve and feed what the good while we restrict and eliminate the bad.

So in this season of illumination, we need to be looking past the surface and into the heart. In reading through the haftarah portion in Joshua 2, which is the second time spies are sent into the Land, a contrast stood out to me. The 12 sent in under Moses are focused on the physical, the surface – the land flowing with milk and honey, the strong people living in large fortified cities, the giants there. Contrast that with the report of the 2 spies sent in by Joshua. This is their report: "And they said to Joshua, 'Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us'" (Joshua 2:24). They don't say anything about the physicality of the Land. Their message is about how the Lord has prepared the Land for their arrival by doing a spiritual work in the Canaanites, causing their hearts to melt away. The first set of spies see the surface, and the second set see into the heart.

### **Seeing Growth Even in the Stumbles**

While this idea of illumination of the fear of death leading to repentance is the main way we grow in this season, it's not the only way. For my last topic here before we turn focus on Yeshua, I want to continue looking at Israel's stumble in a more positive light, to see more of the good that God brings from it. First though, in the spirit of always trying to be generous toward Israel, let me just say that we need to give this generation a little slack. Even if we are pondering the actions of a generation that is long gone, we need to be careful to guard ourselves to be people of mercy and grace. In that vein, let me point out that the Sages say that "all beginnings are difficult." We really can't imagine what kind of environment these people grew up in. Let's keep in mind that God chose these souls to walk through this momentous beginning for the nation. That's a great honor for them, actually.

We need to be able to see the positives in our stumbles. It's vital, really. We can't allow our stumbles to blow up into something bigger than what they are so that we're not disheartened to the point that we just sink and slide into the pit. The way to turn the negative into a positive is to say, "Ok, that was stupid. What can I learn from this error? What can I do to not fall into this trap the next time?" This is the faith response to falling that leads to strengthening in the end, rather than weakening. Yes, we should experience the sadness of the separation that sin causes, but we can't afford to become overwhelmed by it. Treat it as a learning moment.

Here are a few longer-term benefits of the punishment of the wilderness journey. First, the nation becomes a pretty tough group of people, capable of living in a truly harsh environment. I would imagine that they gain a lot of practical life skills while learning to live in the desert. And this experience would surely make them appreciate all the more the solid homes they would inherit eventually in the Land. In the wilderness, they become a deeply unified people. Can you imagine the camaraderie you would feel with your fellow Jews after living through the wilderness experience together? In the wilderness, God trains an army, organized and, eventually, faithfully submitted to the authority God has placed over them. I think once the people are in the Land, it somehow becomes more of a challenge for a single leader to command authority over the nation. In the wilderness, on the other hand, they're walking together as one, and they come to be submitted to Moses as one. The wilderness is a special time of being near to God, literally walking with Him and daily experiencing His miraculous provision. It's unlike any other time in Israel's history. I think one lesson Israel learns in the wilderness is that even in the midst of God's punishment, there is life.

### **A Message in the 12 Names**

Connected to this idea of there being life even in the midst of the fall and punishment if we are walking with God, I want to suggest that there is a story that is being told in the 12 names of the 12 spies. There is no detail in the Word that is random. The sequence of these 12 names has meaning. In fact, it's the story of salvation. We don't have the time to go through them in detail right now, so I encourage you to look through it and meditate on it yourselves. But the story goes something like this: it starts with infamy and judgment and the lowliness of a dog, the names Shammua, Shaphat, and Caleb. So these first names indicate a beginning in a very low place. It then moves through redemption, salvation, and deliverance with the three consecutive names Igal, Hoshea, and Palti. This leads to first a spiritual blessing in God with two

names connected to the idea of “fortune,” “Gaddiel” and “Gadi.” The spiritual gift is followed by a knitting together with God, the name “Ammiel,” which means “people of God.” The spiritual blessing and knitting together is followed by a material blessing that we see in two names related to concealment, the hiddenness of physicality and physical blessing, Sethur and Nahbi. And the last name refers to a looking back on the journey to see a grand vision of the majesty of God, Geuel. This list of twelve names is then followed by the statement that Moses called Hoshea “Yehoshua,” which puts an overall name on the whole list, the whole progression. This progression is named “Yehoshua,” the “salvation of God.” So, if you missed that, the names take us from a very low place of infamy and judgment, through re-connection to God, then a spiritual outpouring of God and finally a physical manifestation of salvation.

It’s hard to be too disheartened when you look and see emerging from one of the darkest moments of Israel’s history the very image of God, the story of Yeshua, God’s salvation. We see these things and just have to smile, and I think God smiles too and says, “What you meant for evil, I meant for good.” Yes, they suffered in the wilderness for a long time because of this incident with these 12 men, but from beginning to end, it was salvation for Israel. As Grant would often say, “You can’t lose with a God like this.” Trust in Him. You won’t be sorry.

### **Yeshua**

Let’s finish now with a couple of points directly connected to Yeshua. First of all, Yeshua is the greatest example of a “stumble” that leads to life, or at least the appearance of a stumble. To the world, His death looks like a stumble. But through it, the whole world is brought back to life.

The second point I would make here comes from the Brit Chadashah reading, which is the story of Yeshua sending out the 12 apostles as shaliachs, emissaries, in Matthew 10. The contrast is stark in that Yeshua sends out His apostles in power, power to heal. There is a vast growth that has taken place between this first sending of the 12 in Numbers and Yeshua’s sending out of 12. Yeshua emphasizes that the 12 are to NOT be concerned about their physical welfare. Rather, their trade is a spiritual one. In return for food and shelter, they render spiritual services, including the giving of their peace, the literal application of their peace to a home where they are staying, if that home is worthy. They are to put the spiritual first and trust that the physical will fall into line. In contrast, 10 of the 12 spies feared for their physical well-being, seeing the giants in the Land and thinking it impossible that they could prevail against them; whereas the 12 Yeshua sent out were told to despise their physical security, the 10 sought to preserve their physical lives to the point of defiance against the God of the Universe. Praise the Lord that He brings Israel from this first sending out of the 12 to this second sending out under Yeshua. And praise the Lord that He shepherds us, too, on Israel’s path.

Well, that’s all for today. Thank you for listening. There is a link to an outline below the video. May God deeply impress upon us the great evil of lashon hara, particularly speaking against Israel. May we be a people who choose the path of faith and obedience, but may we also be a people who learn from our failings when we do stumble. May He bless us to see beneath the

surface, especially as we look inward in this season. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.