

**Wembley Synagogue**

שְׁלַח לֵךְ

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Shelach Lecha

שְׁלַח לֵךְ אַנְשִׁים וַיְתִירוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - Send forth men and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I am giving to the Children of Israel." (13:2)

Why is it necessary to mention the name of the land and the fact that Hashem is giving it to the Jewish people? The *Gemara in Sanhedrin* 91a relates that the people of Canaan once took the Jewish people to court before Alexander the Great. They demanded that *Eretz Yisrael* be returned to them because it was originally owned by their ancestor Canaan. Geviah ben Pesisa argued that Canaan was the son of Cham and was cursed by Noach to be a servant to his brothers, Shem and Yafet. According to *halachah* (*Pesachim* 88b), whatever a slave acquires belongs to his master. Thus, the Canaanites had absolutely no claim to the land, and through their ancestor Shem, the Jews were the rightful owners. The Canaanites were dumbfounded and ran away leaving their fields and vineyards to the Jewish people. In the beginning of *Bereshit*, Rashi explains that Torah starts with the narrative of creation because if the world accuses the Jews of illegally taking away *Eretz Yisrael*, they can respond, "Hashem created the entire world and it belongs to Him. With His will He took it away from them and gave it to us."

In preparation for the Jewish people's first encounter with *Eretz Yisrael*, Hashem emphasised: "This is the land of Canaan, which according to *halachah* belongs to the Jewish people since its original owner Cham became a slave to your ancestor Shem. Moreover, it is the land that 'I am giving to the Children of Israel' and as Master of the world I have the right to take it from whomever I want and give it to whomever I wish." (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטַּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלַחוּ כָּל נְשִׂיא בְּהֵם... רָאשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה - One man each from his father's tribe shall you send, every one a leader among them... They were the heads of the Children of Israel. (13:2-3)

In each of the three preceding *parshiot* there is a listing of the leaders of tribes, with the same people mentioned each time. Why, in this *parshah*, is an entirely new slate of leaders, mentioned? These people were not the actual *nesi'im* — leaders of the tribes. Spying out the land was a difficult and dangerous undertaking requiring much skill and courage. Therefore Hashem instructed Moshe to seek volunteers for the mission and from among these he was to select the ones he deemed most suitable. The spies, then, were the select of the volunteers. The word "*nasi*" derives from the root word "*nasa*," which means "raised" or "elevated." Thus, the phrase כָּל נְשִׂיא בְּהֵם means that the heart of each one elevated him to volunteer to participate in the expedition. Alternatively, the words "*kol nasi bahem*" do not mean that these people were the *nesi'im*; it means only that each *nasi* was to select a representative from his tribe as its emissary to explore the land.

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן-נּוּן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ - And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun 'Yehoshua' (13:6) Yehoshua was initially named Hoshea. His new name means 'G-d will save.' Moshe prayed for him. Only Yehoshua and one other spy were saved from sin. Why did Moshe single out Yehoshua and pray only for him? Didn't the other spies also need Divine assistance to keep them from sin? Moshe realised that the temptation to dissuade the Children of Israel from entering the Land would be especially great for Yehoshua. In last week's Sidra, Eldad and Meidad prophesied that Moshe would die in the desert and Yehoshua would lead the people into the Land. Moshe noticed that this made Yehoshua upset. It prompted him to ask Moshe to put an end to Eldad's and Meidad's careers as prophets. This indicated Yehoshua's great humility that he shied away from prestigious positions. Moshe therefore feared that Yehoshua would feel a need to dissuade the Jews from entering the Land so that he should not be forced to assume the mantle of leadership. Moshe therefore prayed that Yehoshua should receive Divine assistance and resist the pressure to join the other spies, who led the Jews astray. The prayer worked to counteract Yehoshua's tendency. Thus, he was afforded a test according to his own tendencies. As the Torah relates, Yehoshua passed his test, while the other spies failed. (Source: Avodat Yisrael - Ma'ayana shel Torah)

וַיִּבְאוּ עַד נַחַל אֲשָׁכַל וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זְמוּרָה וַאֲשָׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים... - And they cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes, and bore it on a double pole, and of the pomegranates and of the figs (13:23) Rashi explains that of the twelve spies, eight carried the cluster of grapes on a bed of poles, one carried a huge fig, and another carried a huge pomegranate. Yehoshua and

Kalev did not bring any of the fruits because they knew that the spies intended to show that the land was abnormal and dangerous and they did not want to participate in this plan to promote fear and apprehension. Why did Yehoshua and Kalev not follow the instructions of Moshe, "vehitchazaktem u'lekachtem miperi ha'aretz" — "you shall strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land" (13:20)? If Moshe's intention was that they bring back a sample of the fruits, the word "vehitchazaktem" — "you shall strengthen yourselves" — is superfluous. It could have just said "ulekachtem" — "and you shall take [from the fruit of the land]"? Therefore the *Targum Yonatan ben Uziel* explains that the word "vehitchazaktem" does not mean "strengthen yourself" but derives from the root word "chazakah" — an act of acquiring ownership. According to *halachah*, when one buys a field, a way to legally acquire it is through *chazakah*, and according to the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 192:11) gathering the fruits of the land is a proper *chazakah*. Thus, Moshe's intention was "vehitchazaktem" — "you shall make a *chazakah*" — acquire the land and become its owner through taking for yourselves from the fruit of the land. The spies, however, exceeded their authority, and in addition to taking fruit for themselves, they also brought back a sample, hoping to use it to discourage the people from wanting to go to *Eretz Yisrael*. Yehoshua and Kalev *did* take fruit for themselves as they were instructed, but refused to participate in the evil plan of the spies.

וַיָּשׁוּבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאֶרֶץ מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם - They returned from spying out the Land at the end of forty days (19:25) Rashi notes that, logically, it should have taken the spies much longer to tour the Land in its entirety. Hashem in his mercy realised that the Jewish people would have to wander in the Wilderness an entire year for every day the spies were on their mission. He therefore granted them unnatural speed and allowed them to finish their mission within forty days. The spies should have realised that just as they were able to accomplish their undertaking in a supernatural manner, Hashem would certainly deliver the land to them in a supernatural manner. (Source: The Torah Treasury)

וְנָתַנוּ עַל צִיצִית הַכֶּנֶף פִּתּוּל תְּכֵלֶת - And they shall place upon the Tzitzit of each corner a thread of techeilet (15:38) The Talmud in Chullin 89a teaches that the thread of techeilet wool was intended to remind Bnei Yisrael of the Heavenly Throne. With thoughts of the Divine Presence on their minds all the time, the people would be able to avoid the temptation of sin. Bnei Yisrael had the Divine Presence in their midst in its full glory only for 850 years. From the time they entered the land until the first Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, the Divine Presence was continually found either in the Mishkan or in the Beit Hamikdash. The numerical value of techeilet the reminder and symbol of the Divine Presence is 850. (Source: Kol Dodi)

וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ מְקַשֵּׁשׁ עֵצִים בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת - And the Children of Israel were in the desert, and they found a man gathering sticks on the Shabbat day (15:32).

All the events that took place in this Sidra occurred whilst in the desert. Why then was it necessary for the episode of the wood-gatherer on Shabbat to begin with the phrase "and the children of Israel were in the desert?"

The Gemara in Shabbat 96b informs us that the wood gatherer transgressed the prohibition of transporting an item four cubits in a *reshut harabim* – a public domain. The Gemara asks: - What is a public domain? A large public square, through- streets and a desert." Abaye explains that normally, a desert is not considered a public domain, because large numbers of people are not found there, nor do they often travel through (Shabbat 6b see Rashi). When the list does include the desert, it refers only to when all of Israel was living there. The other two places in the list are what are considered the "public domain" in normal times. We now understand the verse here. The one who gathered sticks violated the Torah by carrying them a distance of four amot in a public domain- and if there was any doubt that the desert is not a public domain - the verse clarifies that the Children of Israel were in the desert. During that period in our history, this place was considered a public domain. (Source: Ohr Hachayim / Shabbat Delights)

The Yalkut explains that the word "found" implies that that Moshe appointed watchmen who found a man gathering the sticks on Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 10.21pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is produced by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

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