

## PARSHAT SHLACH

17-23 Sivan 5784  
23-29 June 2024

*Torah:* Numbers 13:1-15:41  
*Haftorah:* Joshua 2:1-24

## Entering the Land

We live in an age of action. Even so, obviously there are times when we have to stop and think. Action has more meaning and power when it is preceded by preparation - although sometimes in this process itself mistakes can be made. The story of the Spies presents an example of this concept: the need for preparation, and also the personal, individual and creative aspects of this. Beyond the specific historical event, which took place over three thousand years ago, this account offers useful guidance for our lives in any age. It is telling us about the past and also guiding us in the present.

The Jewish people were about to enter the Land of Israel. In other words, they were about to undertake a major project, something central and crucial, which they were clearly commanded by G-d: it was the fulfilment of the entire course of the Exodus from Egypt. Before taking this major step, they sent a group of twelve men into the Land, in order to investigate the situation. The Sages stress that the sending of the Spies was not a command from G-d; It was something the Jewish people decided to do themselves. This story has two parallel dimensions: it is telling us about the past, and also guiding us in the present. As explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Torah is telling us that there is a real need to pause, to think and to prepare before undertaking significant actions in our lives. These actions include the performance of everyday Commandments. "Entering the Land of Israel" represents everything important in Judaism and in life. Before the action one needs to investigate and to reflect. As in the case of sending the Spies, this reflection has a personal and individual quality. It is not "commanded" to reflect. There are no simple instructions. One needs the power to use one's own mind

and to think creatively in order to make the right kind of preparation. The person who can only follow rules will not be able to think clearly about all the issues. Now, here there is a subtle balance. The rules do have to be followed. In fact, this was the mistake of the Spies. In the course of their investigation, they decided that there was no point in trying to fulfil G-d's command to go into the Land. It would be impossible. Hence, they said: Give up.

This meant that in their case, the preparation took precisely the wrong turn. Instead of creatively investigating how to fulfil G-d's command, it became a discussion about whether to fulfil G-d's command. The disastrous effect in their case was a forty-year delay in entering the Land; in effect, this was the loss of an entire generation. Despite this, the Rebbe comments, the positive teaching remains for us. Good actions require preparation, and that preparation needs a personal and creative dimension, combined with the faith that if G-d has commanded us to do it, we can do it and it is the right thing to do. The question is how to do it in the most effective and meaningful way. Through this pause for reflection, keeping the balance between structure and creativity, each individual can enter his or her Promised Land, and ultimately help the rest of humanity to do so as well.

*By Tali Loewenthal*

people of the village." And the appalling images of vile terrorists beheading helpless innocent victims clearly have added much emphasis to the cruel connotations inherent in the word 'slaughter'. Interestingly, the (Biblical) Hebrew word for slaughter, "Shechita", has no negative connotation whatsoever. Slaughtering an animal isn't a cruel act; rather it is ultimately an act of kindness, a preliminary step in the process of elevating the animal to a spiritual level it could never achieve with its own animal powers. When the animal is eaten by a human who uses the energy provided by the meat to serve G-d, then the animal, too, is serving G-d, and reaches the apex of its Divine mission on this world. Definitely beats a "meaningful" existence of munching hay.

After the debacle of the spies, G-d decided to "slaughter" the Jews. "How long will this people provoke Me? How much longer will they not believe in Me after all the signs I have performed in their midst?" G-d perceived an essential character flaw in the Jews - perhaps inherited from their former Egyptian "hosts" - a lack of faith, and consequently a propensity to complain and whimper at the slightest hint of inconvenience (real or imagined...). This wasn't a nation which could endure extended battles against the Canaanite nations. A people who complained incessantly while in a paradise-like desert, where they didn't have to work and were surrounded by miracles - their whine would surely reach an unbearable pitch when they would be forced to earn an honest living in the Promised Land, with all the pressures and worries which accompany "normal" daily life. G-d always has our best interests at heart, and isn't given to petty feelings of vengefulness. His "punishments" are also kindness. G-d understood that that generation of Jews would be happier in Heaven than in the land of Israel. He would mercifully "slaughter" them, elevating them

## Kind Punishments

*Moses said to the L-rd: "...If You kill this nation like one man, the nations who have heard of Your reputation will say as follows: 'Since the L-rd lacked the ability to bring this nation to the Land which He promised to them, He slaughtered them in the desert'"*  
- Numbers 14:13-16.

Slaughter. A word which connotes cold-blooded killing. A word used to dramatize and magnify the cruelty and barbarism of wanton murder. "He 'slaughtered' the village's inhabitants" has a much more powerful ring than "he killed/murdered/put to death the

Psalms Daily

### Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

*Psalms 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.  
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Pirkei Avot (3:17)

*Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah would say: One whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, what is he comparable to? To a tree with many branches and few roots, whom a storm uproots and turns on its face. But one whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, to what is he compared? To a tree with many roots and few branches, whom all the storms in the world cannot budge from its place.*

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to a higher level—and in the process would rid them of their incurable character flaw. The lesson from this episode is twofold: A) When we are experiencing difficulties, we must bear in mind that even if the reason for these difficulties is punishment and/or atonement for past indiscretions, this too is

an expression of G-d's kindness. Take it in stride! B) Perhaps even more important, this is a vital lesson for parents and educators. Even when circumstances call for disciplinary measures, the objective must never be to exact revenge or retribution for its own sake. Therefore, ideally the "punishment" itself

should be constructive. This takes much more effort; it is so much easier to fall back on the "old and tried" methods many of us are used to from our own childhoods... But who said that being a real educator is an easy task?

*By Naftali Silberberg*

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF KING DAVID (907 BCE – 837 BCE)

King David was born in Bethlehem, in the Judean Hills, in 2854 (907 BCE), the youngest of the seven sons of Yishai (Jesse). A shepherd as a teenager, the Prophet Shmuel (Samuel) soon anointed him, in secret, as the next King of the Jewish People, the successor to King Shaul (Saul).

At around that time, Goliath, a Pelishti (Philistine) giant, began taunting the Jews, challenging them to present a soldier for a one-on-one battle, and taunting G-d. When young David became aware of this, he stepped forward, and killed Goliath with just one shot of small stone from a slingshot. When he returned from the front, he married King Shaul's daughter Michal. He became a general in King

Shaul's army, and achieved great successes, worrying King Shaul, who knew David had been selected by G-d, through the Prophet Shmuel, as the next King of the Jews. David was forced to flee from King Shaul for several years, until the death of King Shaul in battle several years later.

Following King Shaul's death, David was recognized by the people of Israel as King, and he began his reign in Chevron (Hebron), south of Jerusalem. He raised a large army of several hundred thousand warriors, and led them to victory against Israel's enemies: the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Zobah, among others. He also conquered the city of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and established his capital

there. In Yerushalayim, King David prepared the materials for the construction of the Holy Temple for G-d on Mount Moriah; G-d has told him he wouldn't be allowed to be the one to actually build the Temple, as he had fought many wars, however justified they were. Instead, King David's son and successor, King Shlomo (Solomon), would build the Temple following King David's passing. King David is known, among other titles, as the "Great Psalmist of Israel"; much of Tehillim (Psalms) is attributed to him. He passed away in 837 BCE, and was buried in Yerushalayim. According to Jewish tradition, Moshiach (the Messiah) will trace his paternal ancestry directly to King David.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, June 23, 2024-17 Sivan, 5784**

**Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat (2105 BCE)**

Seven months after the beginning of the Great Flood, and 17 days after the waters covering the earth began to subside, the Ark came to rest on the (still submerged) summit of Mount Ararat.

**Hasmonean Victory (circa 140 BCE)**

The Hasmonean fighters recaptured Migdal Tzur from the Greek enemy and proclaimed this day a holiday.

**Monday, June 24, 2024-18 Sivan, 5784**

**Spanish Expulsion Rescinded (1967)**

The Spanish cabinet approved a bill which granted religious freedom to Spain's Jews as well as other religious minorities.

**Tuesday, June 25, 2024-19 Sivan, 5784**

**Passing of R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1733)**

R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1655–1733), who served as rabbi in Fez, is regarded as one of the greatest leaders among Moroccan Jewry. A saintly and pious man, he was known as a miracle worker and was revered by the local Jews and Muslims alike. It is related that he was once thrown into a lion's den and miraculously survived unharmed.

**Wednesday, June 26, 2024-20 Sivan, 5784**

**Martyrs of Blois (1171)**

The 20th of Sivan is the anniversary of the first blood libel in France. On this date in 1171, tens

of Jewish men and women were burned alive in the French town of Blois on the infamous accusation, blood of Christian children in the preparation of Matzot for Passover.

**Friday, June 28, 2024-22 Sivan, 5784**

**Miriam Quarantined (1312 BCE)**

Miriam, the elder sister of Moses and Aaron, was afflicted with Tzaraat after speaking negatively of Moses, and was quarantined outside of the camp for seven days.

**Shabbat, June 29, 2024-23 Sivan, 5784**

**Jeroboam Barricades Jerusalem (797 BCE)**

After King Solomon's passing in 797 BCE, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, led by Jeroboam ben Nebat of the tribe of Ephraim, rebelled against Solomon's son and heir, Rehoboam. The Holy Land split into two kingdoms: the "Kingdom of Israel" in the north, with Jeroboam as its king and the city of Samaria as its capital; and the southern "Kingdom of Judah" with its capital Jerusalem, where Rehoboam ruled over the two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that remained loyal to the royal house of David. Every Jew was obligated to make a thrice-yearly pilgrimage for the festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, to Jerusalem. Jeroboam set up, on Sivan 23 of that year, roadblocks to prevent the

people's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, introducing in its stead the worship of two idols.

**Haman's Decree Counteracted (357 BCE)**

Even after Haman was hanged on the 17th of Nissan of 357 BCE, his evil decree "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, infants and women, in one day, the 13th day of the 12th month (Adar)" remained in force. Queen Esther pleaded with King Achashverosh to annul the decree, but Achashverosh insisted that "a writ that has been written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, cannot be returned." Instead, he suggested to Esther and Mordechai to "inscribe, regarding the Jews, as you please, and seal it with the king's seal."

**Passing of R. Yaakov Pollack (1525)**

R. Yaakov Pollack served as rabbi first in Prague and then in Cracow. In Cracow he established a large yeshiva that attracted thousands of students. R. Yaakov devised a new method of Talmudic study known as pilpul, with the goal of stimulating the intellectual abilities of his students. Although many scholars of subsequent generations opposed this method, R. Yaakov succeeded in bringing about a renewal of Talmudic study in Poland, which became a major Torah center for the next four centuries.