

5785 - Numbers 13-15 - Sh'lach L'cha (Send On Your Behalf)

LAND AND SEE¹

You shall see the land, what it is (Numbers 13:18).

One of the great debacles of Jewish history was the incident of the Spies. Fifteen months after the Exodus from Egypt, as the people of Israel were poised to enter the Holy Land, Moses dispatched twelve men—**each a leader and representative of one of the twelve tribes of Israel**—to spy the land that G-d had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Forty days later the Spies returned, praising the fertility of the land but bewailing the military might of its inhabitants and pronouncing the land unconquerable. The Spies' report incited panic among the people, who wept that entire night in terror and despair.⁽¹⁾

That night of faithless tears became "a weeping for generations." Our entry into the Promised Land was delayed for four decades, until that entire generation, including their leader, Moses, had died in the wilderness. **Our sages tell us that if Moses had brought us into our land, we would never have been driven from it; if Moses had built the Holy Temple, it would never have been destroyed.** Thus, all travails and defeats of Jewish history are descendant of the night that Israel wept for lack of trust in the divine promise.⁽²⁾

THE MANDATE

We have already explored, in a previous essay, the root of the Spies' error and of the people's failure of faith.⁽³⁾ Yet these men were sent by Moses himself, who obviously believed that they were capable of the leap of faith that their mission demanded. Had they truly heeded Moses' words, had they truly carried out the mandate he entrusted to them, their mission would have succeeded.

Moses sent them to scout the land of Canaan. And he said to them: "Go up this way in the south, and climb up the mountain.

"You shall see the land, what it is. And the people who dwell in it: are they strong or weak, few or many? What is the land in which they dwell: is it good or bad? What are the cities in which they reside: are they in camps or in fortresses? What is the soil: is it fat or lean? Are there any trees in it or not? You shall be courageous, and take from the fruit of the land.

Moses instructed the Spies to observe the nature of the land, the quality of the soil, and the strength of its inhabitants. Of these they gave an honest

account, reporting on these realities as they saw them. But Moses had prefaced his instructions with the injunction: "**You shall see the land.**"

Sight is more than a faculty, more than just another sensory tool. **To hear, smell, taste, touch, or analyze something is to "perceive" it**—to collect data that informs us about its nature and characteristics; **but to see something is to experience it.** When we say, "I saw it myself," we are really saying: "This is a truth I have experienced absolutely. So, there is no way that you can convince me otherwise. This is not something that has been 'proven' to me, and which might therefore be 'disproved' with stronger, more compelling arguments and proofs. This is something I have *seen*. This, to me, is reality."

"You shall see the land" said Moses to the Spies. I am not sending you as mere gatherers of data. I am sending you as spies in the most literal sense of the word: **as those whose mission is to see.** I am sending you, Moses was saying, to serve as the eyes of Israel: the eyes through which the nation would achieve an absolute and unequivocal identification with their divine heritage; the eyes through whom they would experience its reality in a way that cannot be swayed by mundane data, however adverse or threatening.

This was where the Spies failed their mission. They traversed the land, examined it and probed it, sniffed about and sounded it out, and analyzed the facts they had garnered. But **they failed to see the land, and failed to bring back sight of the land to the people of Israel.**

SEEING TODAY

Before his passing, Moses pleaded with G-d: "Please, let me cross over, and see the good land across the Jordan; the goodly mountain and The Lebanon."⁽⁴⁾ G-d did not allow Moses to cross over. But He did grant him his request to see:

Ascend to the top of the summit, and lift your eyes westward, northward, southward, and eastward, and see with your eyes ... I have shown it to you so that you see it with your eyes, though you shall not cross over there.⁽⁵⁾

Our sages tell us that every soul possesses a spark of the soul of Moses.⁽⁶⁾ Moses' sighting of the land empowers each and every one of us to truly "see" the holiness and perfection of G-d's native home and make it an unequivocal reality in our lives.⁽⁷⁾

(1) Numbers 13-14

(2) See the essay, "Generation Gap," p. 65 above and sources cited in footnote 4 there. Indeed, the night following the return of the Spies was **the night of Av 9—the day that saw the destruction of both the first and second Holy Temples and numerous other tragic events in our history.**

¹ Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story, Numbers*, (Meaningful Life Center), pp. 76-79.

- (3) See the essay, "Generation Gap," pp. 64-75 above.
 (4) Deuteronomy 3:23-25; "The Lebanon" refers to the Holy Temple.
 (5) *Ibid.*, v. 27; 34:4
 (6) *Tanya*, chapter 42.
 (7) Based on *Torat Menachem* 5711, vol. 2, pp. 169-173; *Torat Menachem* 5725, vol. 2, p. 96; *Likkutei Sichot* (Collected Talks), vol. 33, pp. 81-82.

1. *Moses dispatched twelve men—each a leader and representative of one of the twelve tribes of Israel ...*

a. Numbers 13:4-16

- ⁴from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua ...
⁵from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat ...
⁶from the tribe of Judah, Caleb ...
⁷from the tribe of Issachar, Igal ...
⁸from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea ...
⁹from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti ...
¹⁰from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel ...
¹¹from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi ...
¹²from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel ...
¹³from the tribe of Asher, Sethur ...
¹⁴from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi ...
¹⁵from the tribe of Gad, Geuel ...
¹⁶These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

1) The "twelve tribes" *are* identified here—but **one is missing!**

2. *Our sages tell us that if Moses had brought us into our land, we would never have been driven from it; if Moses had built the Holy Temple, it would never have been destroyed. Thus, all travails and defeats of Jewish history are descendant of the night that Israel wept for lack of trust in the divine promise.*

a. Note 4, the essay "Generation Gap," p. 65

Moses was the embodiment of truth, and truth is indestructible; hence, all of Moses' accomplishments are everlasting. In the course of our history, we have suffered the loss of the Holy Temple, of the sovereignty over our homeland, and other national possessions;

but the Torah, given to us through Moses, has never left us (see Talmud, *Sotah* 9a, *Megaleh Amukot* (Revealer of Depths), *Ofan* (Chapter) 185, *Ohr HaChayim* on Deuteronomy 1:37 and 3:25; *Ohr HaTorah, Va'et'chanan*, p. 65, 93, and 2201; et al.

1) Psalms 119:89

⁸⁹"Forever, O Lord, **Your word stands firm** in the heavens."

2) Isaiah 40:8

⁸"The grass withers, the flower fades; but **the word of our God shall stand forever.**"

3) Matthew 5:18

¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, **not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.**

4) Avot 1:2

"The world stands on three things: **on Torah**, on worship, and on acts of loving-kindness."

5) Midrash Tanchuma, Noach 3

"Just as the world cannot exist without air, so Israel cannot exist without Torah."

6) Sanhedrin 90b

Torah will not be replaced in the world to come; God will not give another Torah.

7) 1Enoch² 99:2 (OPE)

²Woe to you, you who alter the words of truth and pervert **the eternal covenant**, and reckon yourselves without sin; they will be swallowed up in the earth.

8) 2Baruch³ 59:2 (OTP)

³For at that time the lamp of **the eternal law** shone on all those who sat in darkness, which announced to them that believe the promise of their reward, and to them that deny, the torment of fire which is reserved for them.

9) Jubilees⁴ 15:25 (OTP)

²⁵**This law is for all the generations for ever ...**

2 The Book of Enoch (also 1Enoch) is an ancient Jewish apocalyptic religious text, ascribed by tradition to the patriarch Enoch who was the father of Methuselah and the great-grandfather of Noah. The Book of Enoch contains unique material on the origins of demons and Nephilim, why some angels fell from heaven, an explanation of why the Genesis flood was morally necessary, and a prophetic exposition of the thousand-year reign of the Messiah.

3 2Baruch is a Jewish apocryphal text thought to have been written in the late 1st century CE or early 2nd century CE, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. It is attributed to the biblical figure Baruch ben Neriah (c. 6th century BCE). It is

not regarded as scripture by Jews or by most Christian groups. It is included in some editions of the Peshitta, and is part of the Bible in the Syriac Orthodox tradition. It has 87 sections (chapters).

4 The Book of Jubilees, sometimes called Lesser Genesis, is an ancient Jewish religious work of 50 chapters, considered canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as Ethiopian Jews, where it is known as the Book of Division. Jubilees is considered one of the pseudepigrapha by Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

3. *Sight is more than a faculty, more than just another sensory tool. To hear, smell, taste, touch, or analyze something is to "perceive" it—to collect data that informs us about its nature and characteristics; but to see something is to experience it.*

a. "I'll believe it when I see it" is a common idiom that expresses doubt or skepticism about something. It means that the speaker does not trust or accept what someone else says or promises, and they need to see proof or evidence before they believe it.⁵

—It is an idiom that shows doubt or disbelief.

—It can be used to respond to someone who says or promises something that seems unlikely or unrealistic.

1) Luke 24:6-12

⁶(Yeshua) is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." ⁸Then they remembered his words. ⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

2) John 20:24-29

²⁴Now Thomas ... one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Yeshua came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them ... Yeshua came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side ..." ²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Then Yeshua told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (i.e., "have seen with their heart")."

b. Luke 7:18-23

¹⁸John's disciples told him (the "news" about Yeshua). Calling two

of them, ¹⁹he sent them to the Lord to ask ... "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" ²¹At that very time Yeshua cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²²So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ²³Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

1) Matthew 15:29-31

²⁹Yeshua left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. ³⁰Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them.

³¹The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

2) John 1:18

¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

3) 2Peter 1:16

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

4. *This was where the Spies failed their mission. They traversed the land, examined it and probed it, sniffed about and sounded it out, and analyzed the facts they had garnered. But they failed to see the land, and failed to bring back sight of the land to the people of Israel.*

a. Isaiah 6:10

¹⁰Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

1) Exodus Rabba XXXVI:3

"The commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light" (Prov 6:23). A parable of one who stands in a dark place. No sooner does he start walking than he stumbles over a stone or comes to a gutter and falls into it ... Why does this happen? Because he has no lamp in his hand. So, too, is the unlearned man who

⁵ <https://usdictionary.com/idioms/ill-believe-it-when-i-see-it/>

possesses no Torah. When he comes upon a transgression, he stumbles into it and dies. But **they who study Torah give light wherever they are**. A **parable** of one who stands in the dark with a lamp in his hand. **When he comes upon a stone, he does not stumble [over it] ... Why not? Because he has a lamp in his hand**, as Scripture says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105).

a) John 12:35

³⁵Then Yeshua told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. **Walk while you have the light**, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.

b. Psalm 119:18

¹⁸**Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.**

c. 2Corinthians 4:4

⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that **they cannot see the light of the gospel** that displays the glory of Messiah, **who is the image of God**.

d. Ephesians 1:18

I pray also that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened **in order that you may know** the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ...

5. *Our sages tell us that every soul possesses a spark of the soul of Moses. Moses' sighting of the land empowers each and every one of us to truly "see" the holiness and perfection of G-d's native home and make it an unequivocal reality in our lives.*

a. Tanya,⁶ 42

Each and every soul of the house of Israel contains within it something of the quality of our teacher Moses, peace unto him, for he is one of the "seven shepherds"⁷ who cause vitality and G-dliness to flow to the community of Jewish souls, for which reason they are called "shepherds." **Our teacher, Moses, peace unto him, is the sum of them all, and he is called "the faithful shepherd."**

This means that he brings down the quality of *da'at* (knowledge) to the community of Israel that they may know the Lord, each accor-

ding to the capacity of his soul and its root above, and its nurture from the root of the soul of our teacher Moses, peace unto him ...

1) Hebrews 3:1-6

¹Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Yeshua, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. ²**He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house** (Num 12:7). ³Yeshua has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. ⁴For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. ⁵**Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house**, bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. ⁶But **Messiah is faithful as the Son over God's house. AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE**, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

b. Isaiah 40:10-11

¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. ¹¹**He tends his flock like a shepherd**: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

1) Psalm 23:1-3

¹A psalm of David. **The LORD is my shepherd**, I lack nothing. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake ...

2) John 10:11-14

¹¹**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ...

6 Written by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), the founder of Chabad Chasidism, *Tanya* ("It has been taught") is the foundational work of Chabad and presents the philosophy of the movement. Written in 5 sections, the *Tanya* provides an outline for living a spiritual Jewish life.

7 According to Jewish tradition, during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, seven ancient worthies from the Bible take turns visiting the palm-topped tabernacles attached to the homes of religious Jews. A custom developed of the Seven

Guests (*Ushpizin*) who were all shepherds: **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David**. These Seven Shepherds of Judaism correspond to the Seven days of the Jewish Holiday of Succot (Festival of Tabernacles) and it is believed that they appear as spiritual guests. On each day of Succot, the character traits of each of these shepherds are discussed.