

Parashah Sh'lach

The one where Moses sends scouts to the promised land and conflicting reports come back. As punishment for doubting the plan, the Israelites must wander in the desert for 40 years. The tzitzit are introduced.

Parashah Sh'lach begins with Moses selecting 12 leaders, one from each tribe, to act as scouts and explore the land of Canaan, the land promised to the Israelites. These leaders are sent on a 40-day mission to assess the land's fertility, its inhabitants, and the strength of its cities.

Upon their return, the scouts present their findings to Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the community. They describe the land as indeed flowing with milk and honey, showcasing some of its bountiful produce, such as grapes, pomegranates, and figs. However, they also talk about the challenges they think will come. Ten of the scouts express fear and worry, describing the people of Canaan as giants and their cities as heavily fortified. They believe that the Israelites are not strong enough to conquer the land.

In contrast, Joshua and Caleb, the other two scouts, attempt to bring faith and confidence to the people, telling them that with divine assistance, they can overcome the obstacles and inherit the land. They emphasize that the land is very good and say the people should not fear.

Despite the encouragement from Joshua and Caleb, the negative report causes panic among the Israelites, and they express a desire to return to Egypt, even suggesting the selection of a new leader to take them back. This lack of faith greatly angers God, and as a result, a harsh decree is issued: the Israelites will wander in the wilderness for 40 years, one year for each day the spies spent in Canaan, and only their children, along with Joshua and Caleb, will eventually enter the Promised Land.

The parashah also contains instructions for various offerings and rituals, including the offering of challah and the tzitzit, which are fringes worn on the corners of garments as a reminder of the commandments. Tzitzit are also the fringes on a tallit, which is worn in morning prayer.

Additionally, **there is an account of a person who violates the sanctity of the Sabbath by gathering wood on that day and is liable to be put to death.** This incident serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of observing the Sabbath and the consequences of disregarding God's commandments.

Teen Takeaways from Parashah Sh'lach

1. Many people think that there were spies involved in this parashah. But Moses is told to send out "anashim" (men) to "tur" (scout) the land. How is a spy like a scout? Is it helpful to know ahead of time what to expect in a certain situation? What do you imagine your b'nai mitzvah will be like?
2. **The power of belief and trust:** Parashah Sh'lach shows us how having strong beliefs and trust in something greater than ourselves can make a big difference. When the 10 spies didn't believe in their abilities to overcome challenges, it led to problems. So, it's essential to trust in ourselves and what we can achieve. Why is self-confidence such a difficult thing to maintain? Does too much lead you away from being humble? How can you balance the two?
3. **Avoiding fear and negative thoughts:** The spies' negative report was driven by fear and negative thinking. This teaches us that fear and negative thoughts can hold us back and become self-fulfilling prophecies. It's important to stay positive and believe in our abilities, even when things seem tough. What is the difference between optimism and pessimism?
4. **Consequences of complaining and rebellion:** The Israelites' reaction to the negative report was to complain and rebel. This disobedience had serious consequences. This teaches us to respect authority and not give in to rebellion or complaining, especially when things are challenging. Judaism certainly allows complaining, but only when there is something to complain about!
5. **Importance of leadership and courage:** Caleb and Joshua showed strong leadership and courage by believing in their abilities and standing up for what they thought was right. They remind us that leaders can make a difference and it takes courage to do what's right, even when it's not popular. It is easy to express your opinion when you are in the majority, but it takes courage when you are not.
6. **Learning from mistakes:** When the Israelites tried to enter the Promised Land without guidance, it didn't work out. This reminds us that it's important to learn from our mistakes and not rush into things without a plan. Repentance and forgiveness require us to be sincere and humble.
7. **Following rules and doing good deeds:** Parashah Sh'lach also has rules about offerings, fringes, and observing a special day of rest. These rules remind us to do good deeds and follow ethical guidelines in our lives.

Summary

Parashah Sh'lach teaches us important lessons about **self-belief**, **positivity**, **respecting authority**, **leadership**, **learning from mistakes**, and **doing good deeds**.