

This Week In Torah *Shalach L'cha*

Those of a certain age would remember a 1972 film starring Robert Redford, called the “Candidate.” In it, Redford portrays an idealistic but political neophyte, recruited to run for senate against a 3-term political giant. With no chance of winning, Redford is told that he can run his own style of campaign in order to get his ideas out there and raise awareness. Spoiler alert—in the end, Redford wins... In the last scene, Redford looks at his campaign advisor, played by Peter Boyle, and says: “This wasn’t suppose to happen! Now what?”...

I think about that as we read this week’s *parasha*. After journey for years, spies are sent into the land of Canaan to scout it out. Sure, it is filled with what God promised them—flowing with milk and honey. It was filled with produce so large that when Joshua and Caleb wanted to show the people a sample, he needed to construct a carrying frame to carry the cluster of grapes. Yet 10 spies create havoc with the community by speaking of the human influence—walled city and giants that live within them. Rabbi Menachem Schneerson who was the Lubavitcher Rebbe created a *drash* that the spies spread the lies because they were afraid of the success of the Israelites. In the desert, they had their needs provided for them by God—manna fell nightly from heaven. As they wandered, they had the protection of the *Shechinah*—the cloud surrounded them as they camped and appeared before them as a pillar of fire as they moved. They had time to study Torah. The spies were afraid of their SUCCESS! If the Israelites moved into the land and conquered it, then they would become like everyone else—farmers who worried about rain and crops, a society that were worried about invasion from outside forces, and a people consumed with the common task and daily round. The spies KNEW they were going to be successful if they moved forward—after all, God was with them and they saw what Divine might can do thru the miracles that liberated the Hebrew slaves from Egyptian bondage. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote: “They feared their success as much as they feared their failure.”

Rabbi Sacks continued: “Faith is the courage to take on both!” He added elsewhere that “one of the greatest differences between Judaism and other religions is that while other

religions seek to lift people to heaven, Judaism seeks to bring heaven to earth.” And that was the sin of the spies—confusing those 2 elements!

For us, we should be like Joshua and Caleb who sought to share the holiness with others by sharing it with them; to bring a touch of heaven to earth. That model can inspire people to transcend the mundane and transform the ordinary with the sacred.

The charge to us is how do we build the frame to do that--- it requires faith, my friends. And to quote Redford, “now what?”

And that is up to you!!