

Shelach Aliyah Summary

General Overview: Moses sends scouts to Canaan and all of them — except Joshua and Caleb — bring back frightening reports. The people react fearfully and rebelliously. G-d decrees a forty year delay until the Israelites will enter Canaan, during which time all males between the ages of twenty and sixty will perish. Many Israelites then attempt to unilaterally proceed to Canaan, but are cut down by the Canaanites. Various laws are discussed: libations, giving part of the dough ("*challah*") to a *Kohain* (Priest), certain sin sacrifices, and the mitzvah of *tzitzit*. A Jew is found desecrating the Shabbat and is executed.

First Aliyah: G-d allows Moses to send scouts to reconnoiter the land of Canaan in preparation for their anticipated invasion of the land. One member of every tribe — with the exception of the tribe of Levi — was chosen for this task. Moses instructed the scouts to bring back a report regarding the nature of the land; its strengths and weaknesses. He also instructed them to bring back samples of the land's produce.

Second Aliyah: The scouts spent forty days reconnoitering the land. They returned to the Israelite encampment with specimens of Canaan's produce, and with an ominous report. They conceded that the land flowed with milk and honey, but they warned that its population was mighty and the cities well fortified and impossible to conquer. Only Caleb and Joshua, the scouts representing the tribes of Judah and Ephraim, dissented. They argued that the land was magnificent, and there was no reason for concern because G-d could surely bring the Israelites victory in battle. The Jewish people spent that entire night wailing, expressing their preference to return to Egypt rather than be defeated in battle by the Canaanites.

Third Aliyah: The Jewish people rejected the pleas of Joshua and Caleb, and decided to stone them. G-d intervened, His glory appearing over the Tabernacle. G-d informs Moses of His decision to instantaneously wipe out the Israelites in a massive plague due to their persistent lack of faith. Moses successfully invoked G-d's mercy and pointed out that this mass execution will cause a mammoth desecration of G-d's name. "People will assume that G-d lacked the power to defeat the Canaanites in battle, so He instead slaughtered His people," Moses argued. Although G-d agreed

not to immediately wipe out the Israelites, that generation would not enter the Land. G-d instructs the Jews to reverse course, and to head back to the desert.

Fourth Aliyah: The details of the punishment are now revealed. The Israelites will wander in the desert for forty years. During that time, all males over the age of twenty — with the exception of Joshua and Caleb — would perish. The next generation would enter the Promised Land. The ten scouts who brought back the frightful report died immediately. When the Jews were informed of G-d's decision, they lamented and grieved. A group of people awoke the next day and decide to "go it alone," and enter the Land of Israel — this despite Moses' warning that their plan would not succeed for it was not sanctioned by G-d. This group is cut down and massacred by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

The Jews are told that upon entering Israel an individual who pledges to bring a sacrifice must also bring an accompaniment consisting of a wine libation and a flour offering mixed with olive oil.

Fifth Aliyah: This section continues with the rules of the aforementioned sacrifice accompaniments — detailing the quantities of wine, flour and oil to be brought with various species of livestock.

Sixth Aliyah: The mitzvah of *challah* is contained in this section: when one kneads dough, a portion must be taken and given to the priest. If the *Sanhedrin* (rabbinic supreme court) erroneously permits an act of idolatry, and the community acts upon this permission, the *Sanhedrin* must bring a special sin-offering, detailed in this section.

Seventh Aliyah: We now learn the rules regarding an individual who is guilty of an idolatrous practice — whether inadvertently or intentionally. A man is found desecrating the Shabbat, and is executed. The last part of this week's reading discusses the commandment of putting *tzitzit* (fringes) on four-cornered garments. When looking at the fringes we remember all the commandments and refrain from following the temptations of the heart.