

Parsha Plug: Parshat Shlach

Bamidbar 13:17-14:10	במדבר יג:יז-יד:י
<p>17 Moshe 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. 18 You shall see what [kind of] land it is, and the people who inhabit it; are they strong or weak? Are there few or many? 19 And what of the land they inhabit? Is it good or bad? And what of the cities in which they reside are they in camps or in fortresses? 20 What is the soil like 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.” It was the season when the first grapes begin to ripen...25 They returned from scouting the Land at the end of forty days. 26 They went, and they came to Moshe and Aharon and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the desert of Paran, to Kadesh. They brought them back a report, as well as to the entire congregation, and they showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They told him and said, “We came to the land to which you sent us, and it is flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 However, the people who inhabit the land are mighty, and the cities are extremely huge and fortified, and there we saw even the offspring of the giant Anak. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the south land, while the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountainous region. The Canaanites dwell on the coast and alongside the Jordan.” 30 Calev silenced the people to Moshe, and he said, “We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it.” 31 But the men who went up with him said, “We are unable to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we”. 32 They spread an [evil] report about the land which they had scouted, telling the children of Israel, “The land we passed through to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of stature. 33 There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, descended from the Nephilim. In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes”...6 Yehoshua ben Nun and Calev ben Yephunneh, who were among those who had scouted the land, tore their clothes. 7 They spoke to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, saying, “The land we passed through to scout is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the Lord desires us, He will bring us to this land and give it</p>	<p>יז וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה, לְתוֹר אֶת-הָאָרֶץ כְּנַעַן; וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם, עֲלוּ זֶה בְּנֹגֵב, וְעַלִּיתֶם, אֶת-הַהָר. יח וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ, מִה-הוּא; וְאֶת-הָעָם, הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ--הַחֹזֵק הוּא הַרְפָּה, הַמְעֻט הוּא אִם-רַב. יט וּמֵה הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ--הַטּוֹכָה הוּא, אִם-רְעָה; וּמֵה הָעֵרִים, אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּהֶנְה--הַבְּמַחֲנִים, אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים. כ וּמֵה הָאָרֶץ הַשְּׂמֵנָה הוּא אִם-רְזָה, הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּהּ עֵץ אִם-אֵין, וְהַתְּחֻקֹּתָם, וְלִקְחֹתָם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ; וְהַמַּיִם--יַמִּי, בְּפוּרֵי עֵנְבִים...כה וַיָּשׁוּבוּ, מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ, מִקָּז, אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם. כו וַיָּלְכוּ וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן--קְדֵשָׁה; וַיִּשְׁבִּיבוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה, וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ. כז וַיִּסְפְּרוּ לוֹ, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, בְּאָזְנוֹ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְתֶּנּוּ; וְגַם זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ, הוּא--וְזֹה-פְרִיָּהּ. כח אָפֶס כִּי-עַז הָעָם, הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ; וְהָעֵרִים, בְּצִרּוֹת גְּדֹלַת מְאֹד, וְגַם-בְּלִדֵי הָעֵנֶק, רָאִינוּ שָׁם. כט עָמְלַק יוֹשֵׁב, בָּאָרֶץ הַנֹּגֵב; וְהַחֲתִי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי, יֹשֵׁב בְּהָר, וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יֹשֵׁב עַל-הַיָּם, וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן. ל וַיְהִי כִּלְב אֶת-הָעָם, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיֹּאמֶר, עֲלֵה נַעֲלֵה וַיִּרְשָׁנוּ אֹתָה--כִּי-יָכוֹל נוֹכַל, לָהּ. לא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-עָלוּ עִמּוֹ, אָמְרוּ, לֹא נוֹכַל, לַעֲלוֹת אֶל-הָעָם: כִּי-חֹזֵק הוּא, מִמֶּנּוּ. לב וַיֵּצִיאוּ דְבַר הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ, אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר: הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ, אָרֶץ אֲכָלֹת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הוּא, וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ, אַנְשֵׁי מְדוֹת. לג וְשָׁם רָאִינוּ, אֶת-הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק--מִן-הַנְּפִילִים; וַנִּהְיֶינּוּ בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים, וְכֵן הִיָּינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם...ו וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נוּן, וְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֵה, מִן-הַתְּרַיִם, אֶת-הָאָרֶץ--קִרְעוּ, בְּגָדֵיהֶם. ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר: הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ--טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ, מְאֹד מְאֹד. ח אִם-חָפֵץ בָּנוּ, ה'--וְהֵבִיֵא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ</p>

<p>to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 9 But you shall not rebel against the Lord, and you will not fear the people of that land for they are [as] our bread. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” 10 The entire congregation threatened to pelt them with stones, but the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the children of Israel.</p>	<p>הַזֹּאת, וַיִּנְתְּנָהּ לָנוּ: אֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-הוּא זֶבֶת חֵלֶב וְדִבְשׁ. ט אַךְ בְּה', אֶל-תִּמְרְדוּ, וְאַתֶּם אֶל-תִּירְאוּ אֶת-עַם הָאָרֶץ, כִּי לַחֲמֹנוּ הֵם; סָר צֶלֶם מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וְה' אִתָּנוּ, אֶל-תִּירָאֵם. י וַיֹּאמְרוּ, כָּל-הָעֵדָה, לְרַגֹּם אֹתָם, בְּאֲבָנִים; וַיִּכְבֹּד ה', נִרְאָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>
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Masechet Sotah 35a	מסכת סוטה לה.
<p>...Calev said to them, “He [Moshe] brought us out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea for us and fed us with manna. If he were to tell us, ‘Prepare ladders and ascend to heaven’, should we not obey him! Let us go up at once and possess it.” But the men that went up with him said: “We will not be able.” Rebbe Hanina bar Papa said: “A grievous statement did they make at that moment: ‘For they are stronger than we.’ Read not ‘than we’ but ‘than He’; as though even the master of the house cannot remove his furniture from there.”</p> <p>“It is a land that eats up its inhabitants”: Rava expounded, “The Holy One, blessed be He, said ‘I intended this for good but they thought it in a bad sense. I intended this for good, because wherever [the spies] came, the chief [of the inhabitants] died, so that they should be occupied [with his burial] and not inquire about them. Others say that Job died then and the whole world was occupied with mourning for him. But they thought it in a bad sense: ‘It is a land that eats up its inhabitants’”.</p> <p>“And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight”: Rav Mesharsheya said, “The spies were liars. As regards ‘We were in our own sight as grasshoppers’, very well; but how could they know that ‘so we were in their sight’?” But it is not so; for when [the inhabitants] held their funeral-meal they ate it under cedar trees, and when [the spies] saw them, they climbed the trees and sat there. Then they heard them say, “We see men like grasshoppers in the trees.”</p> <p>“And all the congregation lifted up their voice and wept”: Rabbah said in the name of Rebbe Yochanan, “That day was the ninth of Av; and the Holy One, blessed be He, said: They are now weeping for nothing, but I will fix [this day] for them as an occasion of weeping for generations.”</p> <p>“But all the congregation bade them stone them with stones”, and it continues, “And the glory of the Lord appeared in the</p>	<p>אמר להו: הוציאנו ממצרים וקרע לנו את הים והאכילנו את המן, אם יאמר עשו סולמות ועלו לרקיע לא נשמע לו? עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה וגו' והאנשים אשר עלו עמו אמרו לא נוכל וגו' - אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא: דבר גדול דברו מרגלים באותה שעה, כי חזק הוא ממנו - אל תקרי ממנו אלא ממנו, כביכול, אפילו בעל הבית אינו יכול להוציא כליו משם. ארץ אוכלת יושביה היא - דרש רבא, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אני חשבתי לטובה והם חשבו לרעה, אני חשבתי לטובה - דכל היכא דמטו, מת חשיבא דידהו, כי היכי דניטרדו ולא לשאלו אבתרייהו, ואיכא דאמרי: איוב נח נפשיה, ואטרידו כולי עלמא בהספידא, הם חשבו לרעה - ארץ אוכלת יושביה היא. ונהי בעינינו כחגבים וכן היינו וגו' - אמר רב משרשיא: מרגלים שקרי הוו, בשלמא ונהי בעינינו כחגבים - לחיי, אלא וכן היינו בעיניהם מנא הוו ידעי? ולא היא, כי הוו מברי אבילי, תותי ארזי הוו מברי, וכי חזינהו, סלקו יתבי באילני, שמעי דקאמרי: קחזינן אינשי דדמו לקמצי באילני. ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו - אמר רבה אמר רבי יוחנן: אותו היום [ערב] תשעה באב היה, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: הן בכו בכיה של חנם, ואני אקבע להם בכיה לדורות. ויאמרו כל העדה לרגום אותם באבנים, וכתיב: וכבוד ה' נראה באהל מועד - אמר רבי חייא בר אבא: מלמד, שנטלו אבנים וזרקום כלפי מעלה.</p>

tent of meeting”: Rebbe Hiyya bar Abba said: It teaches that they took stones and hurled them against He Who is above....	
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Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Shlach Lecha 5774: Confidence

Only Yehoshua and Calev among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because God was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader from president to parent is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people he or she leads, and inspire that faith in them...Confidence, by the way, is Latin for “having faith together.”

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, “We cannot do it” are probably right, as are those who say, “We can.” If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in a previous Covenant and Conversation, is what the story of Moshe’ hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one-in-two Jews who have been brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the Jewish journey.

Harvard economic historian David Landes in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion: “In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right.” I prefer the word “hope” to “optimism.” Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.