

# Torah Weekly

June 14-20, 2020  
22-28 Sivan, 5780

Torah: Shelach: Numbers  
13:1-15:41  
Haftarah: Joshua 2:1-24

PARSHAT SHELACH

## Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

## Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

## Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

## Draw Your Own Conclusion?

Some conclusions are more obvious than others. Sometimes the most obvious conclusion isn't necessarily correct. Drawing our own conclusions can often be a risky business. Take the case in this week's Parshah. The spies sent by Moses return from their reconnaissance mission of the Promised Land with a frightening report about the fierce warrior nations of Canaan. The Jewish people are dejected and frightened, and even weep at the thought of their impending invasion, convinced it can only be a suicidal mission impossible. The Almighty is angered, the people are punished for their lack of faith in His promise, and the spies go down in history as the villains in the story. But why? What, in fact, was their sin? Moses asked for a report of the land. They came back and reported exactly what they had seen. They told no lies. The land *was* formidable. The inhabitants *were* huge and powerful. The fruits *were* extraordinarily large. They even brought back samples to prove it. So, if it was all true, why were they punished? The answer lies not in the report, but in their conclusion. The facts as the spies presented them were entirely accurate. The sin was their conclusion, "We will not be able to go up to that people, for it is too strong for us." Moses had sent them on a fact-finding mission. Their job was to bring back information.

Nobody asked them for their personal opinions. The whole point of their mission was to gather the data necessary for the Israelites to find the best way of conquering the land. That they would do so was a given. G-d had promised them the land, told them of its natural beauty and assured them of success. The same G-d who just miraculously delivered you from Egypt, the mightiest superpower on earth; split the sea for you; and revealed Himself in all His glory to you at Sinai—has now said that the Promised Land is there waiting for you. And, after all He has done for you, you turn around and publicly doubt His power to help you succeed? This is not only a mistake in judgment. This is shameful, sinful and faithless. The spies' report was correct, but their conclusion was disastrous. A high-school teacher decided to demonstrate to his class the dangers of alcohol abuse. So he conducted an experiment. He took one glass of water and one glass of whiskey. He then took a little worm and dropped it into the glass of water. The worm had a nice swim, and then the teacher removed the worm unharmed. He then dropped the worm into the glass of whiskey. In no time at all, the worm was dead. He then turned to the class and asked them what the experiment proved. Whereupon one wise guy at the back piped up and said, "Sir, it proves conclusively that if you drink enough

whiskey, you will never suffer from worms!" The facts are there for all of us to see. The question is how to interpret them. If we have a preconceived position and then manipulate the data to draw conclusions that suit us, we may come off clever at first, but in the end we may well go the way of the spies. Without faith, even the most accurate information can lead to the wrong conclusion.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

## Humans Vs. Fallen Angels

In the portion of Shelach, we read about the spies, who toured the Promised Land and gave a twisted report aimed at getting the Israelites to doubt that Moses—or for that matter, G-d—would be able to conquer the land. One of the arguments they used was, "And there we saw the *nefilim* . . . children of the giant . . . and we were as grasshoppers . . ." Who were these *nefilim*? Why would they spies even consider that they would be too powerful for G-d to conquer, especially after all the miracles they witnessed? Rashi explains that the *nefilim* are the descendants of Shamchazai and Azael, two angels that assumed material form and descended to earth in the days of Enosh, in the generations before the flood. They came down with pure intentions, but their involvement in the physical world corrupted them so much so that they were involved in the beginnings of

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idol worship. Hence, they are called *nefilim*, “fallen.” When the flood came and killed all the people, the children of the *nefilim* survived. The spies felt that involvement in the physical would take the Jewish people away from their spiritual focus. They would be better off staying in the desert, where they were free of all material pursuits and the difficulties of making a living. In the desert, all their needs were taken care of, and they were free to bask in spirituality. Entering the land meant having to work the land for food; it meant the need to make a living and achieve other physical requirements that would take them away from their spiritual pursuits. This is what the spies meant with their argument, “we saw the *nefilim*!” If these great angels, with pure intentions, fell so low, then we, who are like grasshoppers compared to them, don’t stand a chance. (They were also afraid that if G-d didn’t destroy them with the flood, then perhaps He won’t be able to destroy them now. Even though this argument is foolish, it was enough to cast doubt.) The answer to this came from Joshua and Caleb: “If G-d desires us, He will take us to this land . . . G-d is with us; don’t fear them.” First of all, we are different than these angels because G-d wants us. He wants us in the land, submerged in the physical. It is there where we are meant to accomplish our purpose. Secondly, we are greater than angels because G-d is with us. Unlike angels, we have a human *neshamah*, a G-dly soul that is actually a part of Him. While angels are spiritual beings, we are G-dly beings, with the ability to fuse the physical world with spirituality and G-dliness. We don’t have to fear entering the mundane physical world. We need to embrace it and uplift it to holiness. This is why G-d created us. We can do what no angel can because we are greater than them. We need to recognize our abilities, and the fact that we are special. This in itself gives us the strength to overcome so much and fills us with a sense of obligation to the world—to keep to higher standard, and to be G-d’s ambassadors to the world. To bring out the G-dly essence of the world and uplift it. May we witness our accomplishments soon, with the coming of Moshiach.

By Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz

**Sunday, June 14, 2020 --- 22 Sivan, 5780**

**Miriam Quarantined (1312 BCE)**

Miriam, the elder sister of Moses and Aaron, was afflicted with tzaara (leprosy) after speaking negatively of Moses, and was quarantined outside of the camp for seven days--as related in Numbers 12

**Monday, June 15, 2020 --- 23 Sivan, 5780**

**Jeroboam Barricades Jerusalem (797 BCE)**

After King Solomon's passing in 977 BCE, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, led by Jeroboam ben Nebat of the tribe of Ephraim, rebelled against Solomon's son and heir, Rehoboam. The Holy Land split into two kingdoms: the "Kingdom of Israel" in the north, with Jeroboam as its king and the city of Samaria as its capital; and the southern "Kingdom of Judah" with its capital Jerusalem, where Rehoboam ruled over the two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that remained loyal to the royal house of David. The spiritual center of the land, however, remained Jerusalem, where the Holy Temple built by Solomon stood, and where every Jew was obligated to make a thrice-yearly pilgrimage for the festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. Seeing this as a threat to his sovereignty, Jeroboam set up, on Sivan 23 of that year, roadblocks to prevent the people's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, introducing instead the worship of two idols, in the form of gold calves, which he enshrined on the northern and southern boundaries of his realm.

The barricades remained in place for 223 years, until Hoshea ben Elah, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, had them removed on the 15th of Av of 574 BCE. By then, the ten tribes residing there were already being expelled from the land in a series of invasions by various Assyrian and Babylonian kings. The last of these occurred in 556 BCE, when Shalmaneser of Assyria completely conquered the Kingdom of Israel, destroyed its capital, exiled the last of the Israelites residing there, and resettled the land with foreign peoples from Kutha and Babylon. These peoples -- later known as the "Samaritans" -- assumed a form of Judaism as their religion, but were never accepted as such by the Jewish people; they subsequently built their own temple on Mount Gerizim and became bitter enemies of the Jews. The "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" were never heard from again, and await the coming of the Moshiach to be reunited with the Jewish people.

**Monday, June 15, 2020 --- 23 Sivan, 5780**

**Haman's Decree Counteracted (357 BCE)**

Even after Haman was hanged on the 17th of Nissan of 357 BCE, his evil decree "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, infants and women, in one day, the 13th day of the 12th month (Adar)" remained in force. Queen Esther pleaded with King Achashverosh to annul the decree, but Achashverosh insisted that "a writ that has been written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, cannot be returned." Instead, he suggested to Esther and Mordechai to "inscribe, regarding the Jews, as you please, and seal it with the king's seal." On the 23rd of Sivan, Mordechai drafted a royal decree giving the Jews the license to defend themselves and kill all who rise up against them to kill them, and dispatched it to all 127 provinces of Achashverosh's empire. (Book of Esther, chapter 8)

**Wednesday, June 17, 2020 --- 25 Sivan, 5780**

**Three of the "Ten Martyrs" Killed (2nd century CE)**

Among the millions of Jews cruelly killed by the Romans were the "Ten Martyrs"--all great sages and leaders of Israel--memorialized in a special prayer recited on Yom Kippur. Three of them--Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha and Rabbi Chanina S'gan Hakohanim--were killed on Sivan 25.

**Shabbat, June 20, 2020 --- 28 Sivan, 5780**

**Rebbe Arrives in US (1941)**

After escaping Nazi-occupied Paris, and many perilous months in Vichy France, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), and his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushkah (1901-1988), boarded the *SS Serpa Pinto* in Lisbon, Portugal. On Monday, June 23--Sivan 28 on the Jewish calendar--at 10:30 A.M., they arrived in New York.

Shortly after his arrival, the Rebbe's father-in-law, the then Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak Schneerson (who had been rescued from Nazi-occupied Warsaw in 1940), appointed him to head the social and educational outreach programs of Chabad-Lubavitch. Thus the Rebbe began his decades-long revolutionary work to revitalize Jewish life in the Western Hemisphere, which spread, by means of the emissaries ("shluchim") he dispatched from his New York headquarters, to every part of the world.