

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45*

25th June - 26 Sivan 5782

Numbers/Bamidbar 13:1 - 15:41

Shelach (On your Behalf)

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week’s Parsha Pearl.

Key Events

Moses sends out men to scout the promised land

The scouts bring back the report

YHVH threatens to destroy the people because of their lack of faith

Moses intercedes on their behalf

A man is caught collecting wood on the Sabbath

YHVH commands fringes to be made of blue cord to remind the people of His laws and to remain holy.

The Parsha begins:

3 *Adonai* said to Moshe, **2** “Send men on your behalf to reconnoiter the land of Kena’an, which I am giving to the people of Isra’el. From each ancestral tribe send someone who is a leader in his tribe.” **3** Moshe dispatched them from the Pa’ran Desert as *Adonai* had ordered; all of them were leading men among the people of Isra’el.

4 Here are their names: from the tribe of Re’uven, Shamua the son of Zakur;

5 from the tribe of Shim’on, Shafat the son of Hori;

6 from the tribe of Y’hudah, Kaleb the son of Y’funeh;

7 from the tribe of Yissakhar, Yig’al the son of Yosef;

8 from the tribe of Efrayim, Hoshea the son of Nun;

9 from the tribe of Binyamin, Palti the son of Rafu;

10 from the tribe of Z’vulun, Gadi’el the son of Sodi;

11 from the tribe of Yosef, that is, from the tribe of M’nasheh, Gadi the son of Susi;

12 from the tribe of Dan, ‘Ammi’el the son of G’malli;

13 from the tribe of Asher, S’tur the son of Mikha’el;

14 from the tribe of Naftali, Nachbi the son of Vofsi; and

15 from the tribe of Gad, Ge'u'el the son of Makhi.

16 These are the names of the men Moshe sent out to reconnoiter the land. Moshe gave to Hoshea the son of Nun the name Y'hoshua.

In this opening passage, we read that YHVH instructs Moses to send out the men, but these men will ultimately be chosen by Moses himself and not named by YHVH.

This immediately puts a great deal of pressure upon Moses. His option is to choose men of good standing, however, there is one stipulation; they must be tribal leaders.

One of my first thoughts at this moment is, why did YHVH not just allow Moses to pick a team from among the men but specifically instructs him that the squad be made up of leaders?

I suggest that the results from the voice of the leaders holds far more gravitas among the people; in addition this will have more impact upon the faith of the people.

We learn that Moses only asks them to bring back a report that will answer a number of questions but leaders, being who they are, can't help but add their own opinions and advice to their findings; this is not what Moses asks of them.

v18 And see the land, what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; **19** And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; **20** And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

Just read the beginning of last line of the text: ' And be ye of good courage'. KJV.

Before the scouts set off, Moses does one final and very important thing; He changes Hoshea's name to Y'hoshua. The English translation is 'Joshua'. The importance in this task, does one thing — the Hebrew letter 'yud' prefixes the original name and thus adds the name of the Lord to it. Hoshea which means 'salvation', becomes Y'hoshea, YHVH is salvation'.

This is not just an insignificant end line to this passage. Though we have only one sentence which states this amazing occurrence, it stamps the final end to the hidden message found within the list of the tribal names of the leaders. Let's have a look.

Tribal name & meaning. Scouts name & meaning

Reuben/See.....Shamua/ Hear, (Name)

Simeon/Hear.....Shafat/Decide, Judge.

Judah/Praise.....Kalev/Heart.

Issachar/Reward.....Yig'al/Redeem.

Efrayim/Fruitful.....Hoshea - Y'hoshua/Salvation - Yehovah is Salvation.

Benjmain/Son of My people.....Palti/My deliverer, delivered.

Zebulun/Prince.....Gadiel/God of My troops, God is my fortune.

Yosef/Adding.....Gadi /My Good Fortune

Dan/Judge.....Ammi'el/God of My people/ My Kinsman is God

Asher/Happy.....Setur/Hidden

Naftali/My Struggle.....Nachbi/Refuge or secret hidden place.

Gad/Fortune.....Ge'u'el/God is Exalted, the Mighty One will rise up

In a brief summary we can see that though Moses may have made an arbitrary decision to gather the group of men, the Lord's hand was in the midst of his decision.

If only the people could see the message. In essence, the translation tells us that, 'YHVH, the Name, I AM, has decided and chosen Israel to be His people and He their God. He will be their redeemer and their salvation. He will be their deliverer and protector and they will prosper and have a future. He will be their hiding place and refuge and through all of this YHVH shall be exalted.'

What more could the people want, and how could they be afraid with such a guarantee of their victory and future hope?

The scouts had some serious mileage to cover.

13:21 So the men explored the land from the Desert of Zin to the border of Hamath. 22 They went through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai lived. They are descendants of Anak. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23 When they came to the Eshcol Valley, they cut off a branch with only one bunch of grapes on it. They carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs. 24 So they called that valley Eshcol [Bunch of Grapes] because of the bunch of grapes the Israelites cut off there. 25 Forty days later, they came back from exploring the land.

During this time, you can imagine the conversations going on amongst the men. We must realise that these men made it across some rough terrain, and would have had to have some significant resolve and stamina to complete the journey; however, despite their physical prowess and mental strategising, their faith just didn't stand up to the task.

On their return, they brought back produce and were accurate in all that they surveyed. They had fulfilled the task and ticked all the boxes, but they just could not help themselves; they had to throw in their opinion; according to them, the task of taking the land and fighting the giants was just too much to ask.

"We can't attack those people, because they are stronger than we are"; 32 and they spread a negative report about the land they had reconnoitred for the people of Isra'el by saying, "The land we passed through in order to spy it out is a land that devours its inhabitants. All the people we saw there were giant! 33 We saw the N'filim, the descendants of 'Anak, who was from the N'filim; to ourselves we looked like grasshoppers by comparison, and we looked that way to them too!"

Returning to the journey for a moment, we see that the men travelled to the place of the Anakim, the land of the giants. This was the land of Hebron, where Abraham and Sarah dwelt, at the terebinths of Mamre, and where Abraham purchased the cave of Macpelah as a tomb (known as the Cave of the Patriarchs) for His wife.

Chapter 14 begins with yet another complaint from the people. They are utterly dismayed and believe that they have come all this far to be killed by God. They know that Moses will not relent on the task given him and so they remark, 'let us find a leader to help us get back to Egypt'.

Having done all to hold the people together, Moses, joined by Aaron, seem to fall on their own faces in shock and dismay. The complaint and the lack of faith halted the move forward into the land.

Following Joshua's plea and encouragement, the people decided to do a little bit of stoning and had Joshua and Caleb in their sights. At this point YHWH's glory appeared in the tent of meeting in front of the whole of the Israelite community. This is an unusual event. Despite the anger of the Lord being aroused, the Lord remains in the covering of the tent but allows only a part of Himself to be seen. YHWH could not appear outside the tent completely because those who saw Him would simply perish. This is God's grace at work. We see this again as He listens to Moses' argument.

YHWH's anger grew and He decided to destroy the nation of Israel and suggested that Moses should be the one out of whom He will make a great nation.

What we see in Moses' intercession is a man who is very familiar with God and not afraid to speak to Him from his heart. Moses argues with God to relent and not turn away from His promise to make Israel a great nation. In addition, Moses rejects the personal offer from the Lord which would propel him into the patriarchal elite.

God hears Moses' plea for mercy and thus His hand of judgment is held, but the compromise is that those who brought the bad report shall die and that Israel will wander the desert for 40 years — one year for every day the leaders were out scouting the land.

14:20 And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to your word.

21 But truly as I live and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord,

22 Because all those men who have seen My glory and My [miraculous] signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tested *and* proved Me these ten times and have not heeded My voice, 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swore to give to their fathers; nor shall any who provoked (spurned, despised) Me see it.

Later in the same chapter, we see how remorse came upon many of the people. Their decision was to somehow make amends and go back to fight. Moses argues with them saying that YHWH will not be with them and they will die. Their decision to fight was made in presumption, but it also ignored YHWH's judgement that people should continue their route by the way of the Red Sea.

Before we leave, our attention must be drawn to Joshua and Caleb. Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim and Caleb from Judah, will represent the two sticks of Joseph and Judah. In time Ephraim will take on the identity of the ten tribes in the northern kingdom and the greater diaspora. Caleb will come to own Hebron (Joshua 14) according to the Lord's promise and thus Caleb and his kinsmen stayed in the land. Hebron also became the place where David was anointed king and ruled His kingdom.

2 After this David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And he said, "To Hebron." **2** So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. **3** And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. **4** And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. 2 Samuel 2:1-4.

As we consider the story of the exodus as a pattern in the continuing saga of the redemption of Israel, I want to say that I feel that the Lord will redeem this episode in the greater exodus to come as this time will be a time when the regathering will be endowed with faith and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit amongst His people. This chapter in the history of the Hebrews is one that we must learn from and not replicate.

I have chosen in this parsha to focus upon the story of the spies. I hope that we have gleaned some of the unseen aspects of the narrative.

It would really help us if we were to consider our own responses if we found ourselves in similar circumstances. We too, with hindsight and knowledge, must hold back our own thoughts of judgement upon our ancient forebears, as our responses to future events may also be uncertain.

As believers, we have all gone through a process of change. Often, we will fight with the prescribed way of God. We will want the easy over the hard ways, the valleys instead of the mountains, and even prefer to contend with people much like ourselves instead of the giants. It may well be certain that we will also join the grumblers and the complaining tribe.



As we leave, let us pray that we may have the resolve of Joshua and Caleb, whose ardour and zeal for the Lord remained well into their old age. Let us also refrain from listening to bad conversation and even more be part of the culpable community.

Friends, it will be for sure that hiding along path of our own faith-life journey, the giants will find purchase. For some of us, they have become embedded in the trials of our lives and have become burdensome travellers with us. However, it is time now to address their positions and the power they wield in our lives. They may seem invisible, but they are ever present. They stand like suits of armour in the corridors of a grand house. Some are active and some empty. Their weapons of warfare hack away at the things that pertain to our advancement and inheritance. The Lord says that when we go through the valley of shadow — these dark corridors, He is with us. He is our strength, our shield and hiding place. He is our future and He will be exalted. The arrows of the enemy cannot pierce the armour and the shield and his giant taunts and shouts do not penetrate the helmet of salvation. He believes in his formidable stature, but he has forgotten that he will always be taken down by the 'Rock'.

The five stones.

Scripture tells us that David took five stones:

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. 1 Samuel 17:40.

Some writers have identified these stones as being aspects of David's heart:

Faith, Trust, Courage, Obedience, and Praise. Others say that they symbolise grace (represented by the number 5) in the Torah, and Chronicles 20:5-8 goes on to tell us of the giants David and his servants slew later on in his life.

However, I'd like to propose something else. But first, as we have yet to identify some giants that prevail in our human experience let us have a look at a few: Constant ill health, never being able

to progress, hurt through disappointment, the death of a loved one, situations at work, unworthiness, abuse — especially in the marriage relationship, relational breakdown.

We can all possibly think of a few more prevailing circumstances that stand in our way of moving positively forward. We can choose to remain under subjugation to these powers, but we have all be given the authority to remove them and to conquer and change the situation. We know that in Christ, we will never have to defeat them on our own.

Now let us look at my proposal for the five stones. I believe that each stone represents a giant. Goliath, embodied the aspect of each stone. These giants are:

1. Fear.
2. Lack trust in God.
3. Unbelief in ourselves and who we are in Christ.
4. Verbal Abuse.
5. Control or slavery.

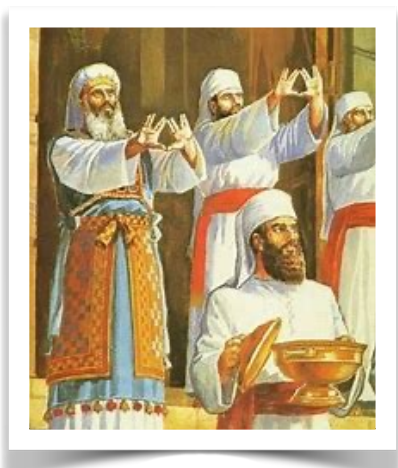
For forty days Goliath strutted before the army of Israel, taunting them.

Goliath stood and shouted a taunt across to the Israelites. “Why are you all coming out to fight?” he called. “I am the Philistine champion, but you are only the servants of Saul. Choose one man to come down here and fight me! If he kills me, then we will be your slaves. But if I kill him, you will be our slaves! I defy the armies of Israel today! Send me a man who will fight me!” 1 Samuel 17:8-25

Fear overtook the Israelite army and thus they did not put their trust in the Lord, and neither did they have confidence in themselves. Goliath abused them verbally in his forty day rant, threatening to defeat the Israelites and to place them in slavery, under the control of the Philistines.

Friends, without even a single swipe from the sword of this giant, Goliath deployed an awesome barrage of armament toward Israel simply by his presence. The aspects of the stones represent therefore this barrage that are projected to hit the heart of our confidence. We can choose to maintain our focus on the giant or decide to deploy the weapons of warfare which we have been given authority to use.

Be encouraged friends. We have not been given a spirit of fear, we have been given a different spirit. Run with it and do not be dismayed. Be grateful also, for the mistakes of our ancient brothers and sisters. They have taught us something. I can hear the voice of the Lord, ‘*Don’t do it again!*’



Numbers 6:

24 ‘Y’varekh’kha Adonai v’yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya’er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

**[May Adonai make his face shine
on you and show you his favour.]**

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v’yasem l’kha shalom

**[May Adonai lift up his face
toward you and give you peace.]**

Shabbat Shalom

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Additional Readings.

Haftarah B'chukkotai: Joshua 2:1-24 – B'rit Hadashah: Mt 10:1-14, Heb 3

Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (Halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**, otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides - 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.

