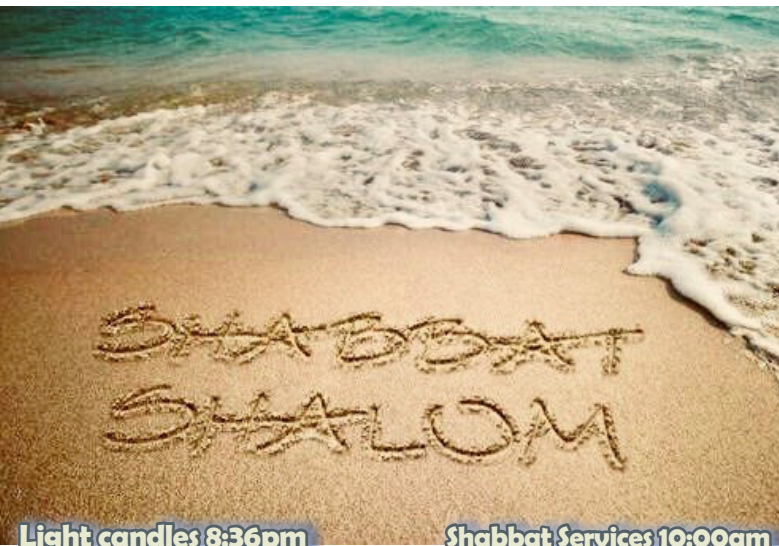




Carnegie Shul Chatter

June 23, 2022



Shelach in a Nutshell

Numbers 13:1–15:41

Moses sends twelve spies to the land of Canaan. Forty days later they return, carrying a huge cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig, to report on a lush and bountiful land. But ten of the spies warn that the inhabitants of the land are giants and warriors “more powerful than we”; only Caleb and Joshua insist that the land can be conquered, as G-d has commanded.

The people weep that they’d rather return to Egypt. G-d

Zoom in for Services

Shabbat services are held by Zoom, at 10am and last 60-90 minutes. A link is sent to all Shul members; if you don't receive it, contact Wendy Panizzi at panizziw@gmail.com.

Deserved — Or Not?

According to the Orthodox Union, there are 39 different categories of work that are prohibited by Jewish Law on the Sabbath. I will not list them all here, but I will say that if you are not orthodox, you probably violate most of these prohibitions.

And yet you are not stoned to death.

Should you be?

Who am I to judge? And if you were to be stoned to death, I'd have to be stoned to death too.

I can't say if the guy who was stoned to death should have been or not. It was a different

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time. The laws of the Sabbath were new. God was encamped with the people, and the guy disobeyed the laws and did not respond to warnings from the people. I guess he had to be punished because he was mocking God's laws and didn't seem to care. He couldn't be allowed to get away with that, could he?

Did the people learn a lesson?

I don't think so. Sadly, people, Jews included, have continued to break God's laws throughout history. God can punish, but he is also a merciful God. We should all be thankful for that or we might all be stoned to death, too.

decrees that Israel's entry into the land shall be delayed forty years, during which time that entire generation will die out in the desert. A group of remorseful Jews storm the mountain on the border of the land, and are routed by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

The laws of the nesachim (meal, wine and oil offerings) are given, as well as the mitzvah to consecrate a portion of the dough (challah) to G-d when making bread. A man violates the Shabbat by gathering sticks, and is put to death. G-d instructs to place fringes (tzitzit) on the four corners of our garments, so that we should remember to fulfill the mitzvot (divine commandments).



This week we have another parshah, Shelach, with a lot happening, most notably the story of the spies and the overly negative report ten of the twelve bring back about the occupants of the land of Canaan and the ability of the Children of Israel to conquer it – a report that dooms the nation to forty years of wandering in the wilderness – and the story of the man who is stoned to death for gathering wood on the Sabbath.

Here is a commentary from partnersintorah.org about the spies, which I particularly liked. The sidebar includes my own very brief comment on the stoning.

Timing is Everything

By Rabbi Leiby Burnham

ונאטח יב' רמא רשא מוקמה לא ונילעו וננה רמאל רהה שאר לא ולעיו רקב ומכשיו

“They awoke early in the morning and ascended toward the mountaintop, saying, “We are ready, and we shall ascend to the place of which G-d has spoken, for we have sinned!” (Bamidbar 14:40)



In this week's portion, Shelach, we read about the *meraglim*, the spies who were sent to scout out the Land of Israel before entering it.

Ten of the spies came back with a negative report. Their description of the Land of Israel as full of giants, impenetrable cities, deadly plagues and even "mutated fruit" threw the Jewish people into a crisis of faith.

As evening fell, the Jews lost hope of entering the Land. They spent the night crying over the tragic fate they envisioned lay before them. They were so distraught that they asked to return to Egypt.

G-d, however, had promised that the land was good. It was their ancestral homeland and theirs to inherit. Yet, because they believed the spies' slanderous report, the Jewish people were sentenced to wander in the desert for forty years. Their children, the next generation, would enter the Land instead.

The morning after this decree, a group of Jews realized their error and attempted to rectify it by leaving immediately for the Land of Israel. Moses sent word that this course of action was prohibited, as G-d had already decreed that they must remain in the desert. Moreover, were they to take this action, G-d would not be with them, and they would fall prey to the Amalekites and Canaanites.

The group refused to listen. They pushed forward on their own – only to be massacred by the Amalekite and Canaanite forces.

The commentators point to an ironic twist of events in the story line: Less than twenty-four hours before, these people had been so sure that Israel was a death trap that they had begged to go back to the slavery of Egypt! How is it possible that the very next morning, their perspective had changed so radically that they were willing to risk their lives to go there?

Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm (known as the Alter of Kelm, Lithuania, 1842-1898, whose teachings focused intensely on character development, or *mussar*) answers this question with a penetrating insight into human nature.

We often find ourselves on the cusp of greatness; the dreams and aspirations we worked so hard to achieve are finally within our grasp. And just at that very moment, we are immobilized by negative thoughts, doubt and indecision.

The reverse seems to happen when we embark on the wrong path. The obstacles seem to disappear, and we sail smoothly – in the wrong direction!

On a spiritual level, this seeming inconsistency can be understood from the fact that anything worthwhile must be achieved through genuine effort and hard work. G-d wants us not only to

earn our greatness, but to value it as well.

When things do go smoothly or we are confronted with significant challenges on the path to doing the right thing, it can be tremendously beneficial to pause for introspection. Roadblocks and brick walls may be an indication to keep on pushing. Conversely, when things are going smoothly, we might need to rethink some of the choices we've made.

As the Jewish people were about to enter the Land of Israel and begin living on a more spiritual plane, they were beset by a massive onslaught of negativity. By the next morning, the struggle was over. The doubts and distortions suddenly melted away as they experienced a higher level of spiritual clarity. Unfortunately, they missed that opportunity for greatness.

This episode is particularly instructive for our generation. People tend to seek the easy path and even pray that they lead a comfortable and stress-free life. However, the very struggles, doubts and hardships that we confront are the key to our personal growth. True greatness comes from overcoming challenges.

So... if all is "quiet on the western front," it might just be time to put in for a transfer!

Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeits of:

Ida Wilk

Rae Horovitz

Frida Peresman

David Rosenfield

Abraham G. Solovitz

David J. Moskovitz

May their memories be for a blessing.

