בס"ד

13 JUNE 2026 | 28 SIVAN 5786

VOLUME 39 | #41

DAF HASHAVUA

שְׁלַח לְךָ | SHELACH LECHA

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 10.24pm
Birmingham: 10.39pm
Bournemouth: 10.33pm
Cardiff: 10.45pm
Dublin: 11.04pm
Edinburgh: 11.26pm
Glasgow: 11.35pm
Hull: 10.59pm
Leeds: 10.50pm
Liverpool: 11.03pm
Manchester: 10.56pm
Nottingham: 10.52pm
Sheffield: 10.58pm
Southend: 10.20pm
Southport: 11.08pm
Jerusalem: 8.28pm

Shabbat Mevarechim

Rosh Chodesh Tamuz is on Monday and Tuesday

"They arrived at the Valley of Eshcol and cut from there a vine with one cluster of grapes... They also took some pomegranates and figs" ***(Bemidbar 13:23)***

The United Synagogue

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

שְׁלַח לְךָ
SHELACH LECHA

4th Sidra in:
בְּמִדְבַּר
BEMIDBAR

By Numbers:
119 VERSES
1,540 WORDS
5,820 LETTERS

Headlines:
SENDING MEN TO EXPLORE THE LAND OF CANAAN

SHELACH LECHA:
Artscroll p.798
Hertz p.623
Koren Sacks p.953
Soncino p.860

HAFTARAH:
Artscroll p.1184
Hertz p.635
Koren Sacks p.1565
Soncino p.875

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 13:1-20

God tells Moshe (Moses) to send spies into Cana'an (later the Land of Israel), one from each tribe. The names of the spies are listed. One of them is Hoshea, whose name is changed by Moshe to Yehoshua (Joshua). Moshe instructs the spies to enter the Land from the south, look at its landscape and assess the strength of its inhabitants.
Point to Consider: *Why did Moshe specifically instruct them to enter from the south? (see Rashi to 13:17)*

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 13:21-14:7

The spies enter the Land. They travel to the valley of Eshkol, where they cut a vine with a cluster of grapes which they carry on poles, as well as figs and pomegranates. After 40 days in the Land, the spies return to share their report and show the people the fruit. Their report begins positively, but then warns of the powerful nations living in the Land and the strength of their fortified cities. Calev, one of the spies, tries to reassure the people that they will nevertheless conquer the Land. The other spies, except Yehoshua, contradict him, claiming that it is a land "that devours its inhabitants and that all the people are giants". The people cry all night in response to this report and announce that they would seek a new leader who would take them back to Egypt. Moshe and Aharon despair at the people's reaction to the spies' report. Yehoshua and Calev tear their clothes in a sign of mourning, and declare the Land to be "very, very good".

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 14:8-25

Yehoshua and Calev declare that God will ensure the Israelites' conquest of the Land as long as they do not rebel against Him, but the people threaten to stone them to death. God laments the nation's lack of faith and threatens to destroy them in a plague. Moshe pleads for forgiveness on their behalf, stressing that other nations may claim that it was beyond God's power to bring Israel into the Land. God relents, but with a qualification – all those who angered Him will not enter the Land (see next *aliya*).

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 14:26-15:7

God decrees that men currently over the age of 20 will die in the desert over the next 40 years. The spies die in a plague, except Yehoshua and Calev. Moshe tells the nation about the 40-year decree and they mourn. A group of people then try to enter the Land, despite Moshe's attempts to dissuade them. They are brutally massacred by the Amalekites and Cana'anites. God tells Moshe to instruct the nation that when they bring animal offerings, these should be accompanied by a meal offering *(mincha)* and a wine libation *(nesech)*.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 15:8-16

The mitzvah to bring a meal offering and a wine libation extends to all offerings and to all members of the nation.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 15:17-26

When making bread from grain grown in the Land of Israel, one has to take a tithe from the dough *(challah)*. The Torah specifies the offerings that need to be brought if the whole nation accidentally worships idols (Rashi).

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 15:27-31

The offering brought if an individual accidentally worships idols is detailed, followed by the punishments for intentional idolatry and blasphemy. A man is found desecrating Shabbat in the desert. God instructs Moshe to put him to death. God tells Moshe to teach the nation about the mitzvah of *tzitzit* (this passage is the third paragraph of the Shema – see Authorised Daily Prayer Book, p.70).

HAFTARAH (YEHOSHUA 2:1-24)

The haftarah relates that just before the Israelites enter the Land, Yehoshua (Joshua) sends two spies. They go to Jericho and are hidden by a woman called Rachav, but their hiding place is revealed and she helps them escape. Rachav asks them to promise that when the Land is conquered, she and her family will be spared; the spies agree. The spies bring a favourable report back to Yehoshua.

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ON WINNERS AND LOSERS

BY: **RABBI YOSSI HAMBLING**
Rabbinical Coordinator, KLBD

The story is told of two wealthy individuals living in Eastern Europe in the 19th century who were involved in a bitter financial argument. Eventually they decided to turn to Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (also known as Reb Chaim Brisker, 1853-1918) to settle the case once and for all.

The Rabbi considered the facts and proceeded to issue a ruling in favour of one of the parties. The other party was unhappy and pushed back against Reb Chaim's decision: "Are you sure that is correct?" But the Rabbi refused to change his mind.

Shortly afterwards, the Rabbi's students approached him for an explanation. How could it be, they questioned, that when Rabbi Soloveitchik issued a ruling involving monetary loss in other matters – such as proclaiming the *Shechita* of an animal to be invalid – it was always accepted straight away, but in cases such as this he was met with such complaint?

Profoundly, Reb Chaim explained: people are not so worried when it comes to losing money per se. But the thought of them losing money whilst their friend gains money is quite intolerable!

Perhaps the most challenging element of the Sin of the Spies – the central narrative of this week's *parasha* – is understanding the instigators. How could it be that the ten "bad" spies, who brought back the negative report about the Land of Israel, were individuals hand-picked by Moshe for their greatness? Is the suggestion of the *Zohar* – that they knew they would lose the leadership positions they enjoyed in the desert upon entry into the Land of Israel, and so they plotted to keep the Jewish People in the desert – really plausible?

The Ktav Sofer (Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, 1815-71) suggests as follows:

As long as these leaders thought that it would be Moshe leading the Jewish People into the Promised Land, they were happy to move forward; they could accept losing the positions of power they held in the desert as long as they all lost their positions at the same time. However, as a result of Eldad and Meidad's prophecy in last week's *parasha* (see *Bemidbar* 11:26-29 and Rashi *ibid.*), these leaders knew that Moshe was destined to die in the desert, and Yehoshua (Joshua) – their fellow tribal leader – would assume the mantle of overall leadership of the people. This idea – that they should lose their positions of power, but that Yehoshua should have his position enhanced – evoked such a sense of jealousy that the spies brought back a negative report in an attempt to prevent the Jewish People ever reaching the Promised Land, which would thus prevent Joshua from becoming the overall leader of the people.

> **"People are not so worried when it comes to losing money per se. But the thought of them losing money whilst their friend gains money is quite intolerable!**

It is normal to worry about one's own losses and challenges in life. Yet when we become obsessed with preventing the success of others – rather than promoting our own achievements – we begin to walk a dangerous path indeed.

THE COMMENTATORS: ABRAVANEL

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**
US Director of Education, Interim rabbi at Belmont US

ABRAVANEL

Name: Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abravanel

Known as: Abravanel (aka Abarbanel)

Lived: 1437-1508

Locations: Born and worked in Lisbon; fled to Castille, including time in Toledo; fled to Naples after the expulsion of 1492; Corfu, Monopli and Venice. Buried in Padua.

Main works: Commentaries on the Torah and other areas of *Tanach* (the Hebrew bible).

Occupations: Rabbi, diplomat, financier, civil servant

Suggested further reading: *Peirush Abravanel al HaTorah* (Hebrew), *Abravanel's World of Torah* (Zev Bar Eitan, English), *Don Isaac Abravanel: Stateman and Philosopher* (Professor B. Netanyahu, English)

It is 1492. Jews trudge out of Spain or risk the high seas for unchartered destinations, expelled by an Edict of Expulsion and the ongoing Inquisition as the sun sets on the Golden Era of Spanish Jewry. Not for the first time in Jewish history, Jews could have been forgiven for wondering what Jewish future there could be.

In their ranks was Abravanel, who had rejected the dispensation granted by his masters King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to remain after the expulsion. He would not abandon his people, despite the loss of his material possessions, status and wealth.

His was firsthand experience of the highs and lows of personal and community life. Rather than succumb to the antisemitism which drove Jews out of Spain, he responded with positivity, engaging people with Jewish texts, beliefs and practice.

Stylistically, his commentary is a lengthy essay style, opening with a set of questions which often take a thematic approach or consider a topic, rather than focusing on localised explanations per se. He includes secular and non-Jewish sources when necessary to explain his point. He also incorporated mystical interpretations from *kabbalah*.

Perhaps, in the framing of his commentary, he was speaking to Jews who wished to grapple with ideas, the bigger questions of their time and age, beyond understanding *peshat* (the straightforward meanings of Biblical texts). Let us consider the following example of his commentary from the start of *Parashat Shelach Lecha*.

"And God said to Moses as follows: Send for yourself men to reconnoitre the Land of Canaan which I am giving to the Children of Israel..." (Bemidbar 13:1)

Thus opens our *parasha*. From here until 14:11, Abravanel sets out 15 questions. The first, on the verse above, queries why it was necessary to send out scouts, given that the people were travelling at the explicit direction of God, represented by the pillar of cloud by day. Why would this not continue when the Israelites were to enter the Land of Israel at God's command and would be blessed with ongoing Divine Providence to help them succeed?

Abravanel's answer focuses on the section until the end of 13:17, which introduces the scouts and their mission. Noting their position at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Paran on the borders of the Land of Israel, Abravanel explains that they were close to the area occupied by the Emori tribe who would provide their first challenge.

The Emorites were deserving of Divine punishment, to be dispensed through the Israelites[1] if they were worthy. Was this generation of Israelites, who had sinned with the Golden Calf and denied God's providence on several other occasions, worthy of successfully entering the Land, or of continued Divine assistance? Moses was doubtful at best, so he sent these scouts as a test to help settle these questions.

"Perhaps, in the framing of his commentary, he was speaking to Jews who wished to grapple with ideas, the bigger questions of their time and age, beyond understanding *peshat*.

This is but the start of a long exploration, which must have been especially poignant to those 'stateless' Jews in 1492 and beyond.

[1] *Bereishit* 15:16

THE JEWS OF LONDON:
AN EAST END PILGRIMAGE? - PART 2

BY: **BEN VOS**
Head of Community Development

This week's *parasha* gives licence to walking tours. God instructs Moses, "Send agents to scout the land of Canaan". Unlike the Israelites reconnoitring *Eretz Yisrael* though, Jewish history tourists in London look back to remember, rather than forward to possession.

With greater justification than the 'bad spies', we might report negatively on old Jewish London: there seems little to actually *see*. What remains is often decommissioned, unrecognisable or unremarkable.

Bad spies: "Everything's gone!"
Erased are the tailoring workshops which hosted lunchtime *minyanim*, and the vast majority of synagogues and *shtiblach* - from Old Jewry (EC2) to the Chevra Shass in Old Montague Street (EC1) - have been cleared. On just one night in May 1941, the King's enemies obliterated the Great Synagogue at Aldgate, JFS in Spitalfields and the Central Synagogue in Great Portland Street. And Friendly Societies for Jewish immigrants such as the Hebrew Order of Druids (est.1896) didn't own property at all.

Good spies need imagination
But institutions are only part of the story. Plaques marking former buildings, such as the Board of Guardians in Middlesex Street or the Jews' Temporary Shelter in Mansell Street, tell us little about everyday Jewish life—especially the lives of women, changing work and domestic patterns, religiosity, or social life.

Many things must be imagined.

We might look around our *alma mater synagoga* in Bevis Marks (EC3A) and recall the extraordinary 18th century *chesed* project that was 'La Fabrica': a noble attempt by Spanish & Portuguese Jews to house dozens of poor families in buildings of variable quality.

With a little effort, Dalston Synagogue can be conjured up from the solitary remaining Victorian brick pillar in Poet's Road (N5). Not that there is really any comparison, but 1930s tailors waiting for work outside the public lavatories in Leyden Street (E1) can more easily be imagined, smoking and shuffling in the cold.

Georgian tenements were significant victims of German bombing and municipal idealism. Examples survive in Turner Street (built 1809-1814) and elegant Sidney Square (1820s); we know a good number of the many Jews who lived here and what they did (from the census). Anything but institutional, these were homes where candles were lit, fish was fried and *sedarim* enjoyed. Oddly, with the Museum of the Home nearby and the Tenement Museum in New York excelling in telling Jewish domestic stories, these houses seldom make the itinerary of walking tours (including ours!). More challengingly, the Dutch-Jewish settlement in the Dutch Tenterground (E1) opposite the old JFS site, has almost been obliterated (White's Row survives); the unique proletarian *'choot'** culture to which this micro-district was home, has gone, root and branch, but it can be remembered.

Not only *chedarim* like Redman's Road Talmud Torah (E1); (where spoken Hebrew was learned '*eavris b'eavris*'!) also 'Jewish buildings': the Moorish Market in Fashion Street (E1) and the Carreras Cigarette Factory in Camden (NW1) inspired by North African and ancient Egyptian styles, were built by Jewish entrepreneurs. The boldness with which the market and factory embody the *shuk* experience and Egyptomania respectively, represent well the exuberant striving of their creators. With imagination and knowledge of where to look, there is lots to enjoy.

DIY tour
It is easy and worthwhile to create one's own walking tour, using AI, maps and a few photos like those of David Hoffman. But for a version of our shared story, why not start with our tour, which I hope is more 'good' than 'bad' spying? www.thejewsoflondon.com

* *'choot'* is derived from the guttural Dutch pronunciation of 'Good Shabbos'.

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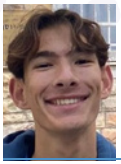
THE LESSON OF THE SPIES



BY: **JOSH MARCOVITCH**

Regional Tribe Coordinator – Essex

In *Parashat Shelach*, twelve spies are sent to explore the Land of Israel. Ten come back terrified. They describe giant people, powerful cities and impossible battles. Only Yehoshua (Joshua) and Calev (Caleb) believe the nation can succeed. The people panic and say something shocking: "Let us return to Egypt."

Let us return to the land of our slavery! How could they say such a thing?

Rabbi Sacks zt"l explains that the spies were not really afraid of giants. They were afraid of freedom.

In the desert, life was easy in a strange way. God gave the people food, water and protection every day. They did not need to farm, build an army or run a country. In Israel, however, they would need to take responsibility. They would have to create a society and bring holiness into everyday life.

That is much scarier.

Sometimes we think freedom means doing whatever we want. But Judaism teaches that freedom means responsibility. A free person chooses what is right, especially when it is difficult.

All of us face moments where we have to choose who we want to be. Every day in small ways, we decide whether to act with kindness, truth and courage. We can choose to include someone who feels left out, to speak honestly even when it's hard, or to put in effort when no one is watching. These choices might seem small, but they build the world around us.

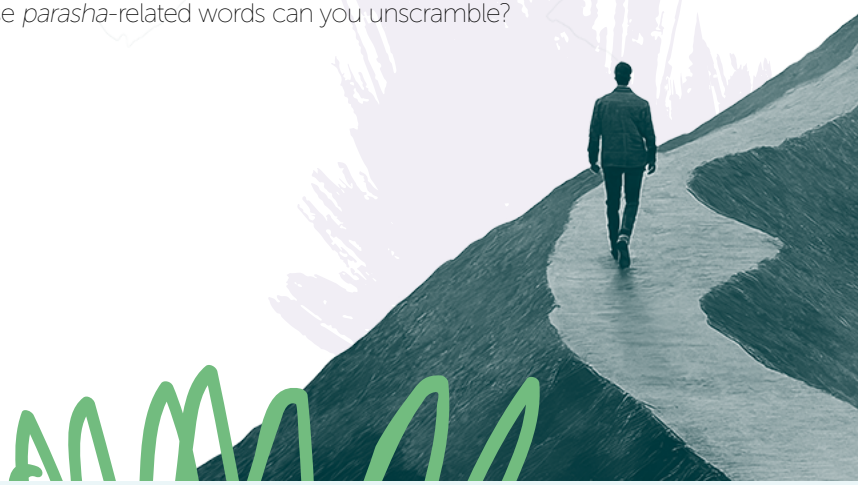
Yehoshua and Calev understood that God did not take the Jews out of Egypt just to wander forever. He wanted them to build something meaningful.

The same is true for us. Judaism is not about hiding. It is about entering the world and making it better. Real courage is not the absence of fear. It is choosing to move forward despite it.

Shelach Scramble!

How many of these *parasha*-related words can you unscramble?

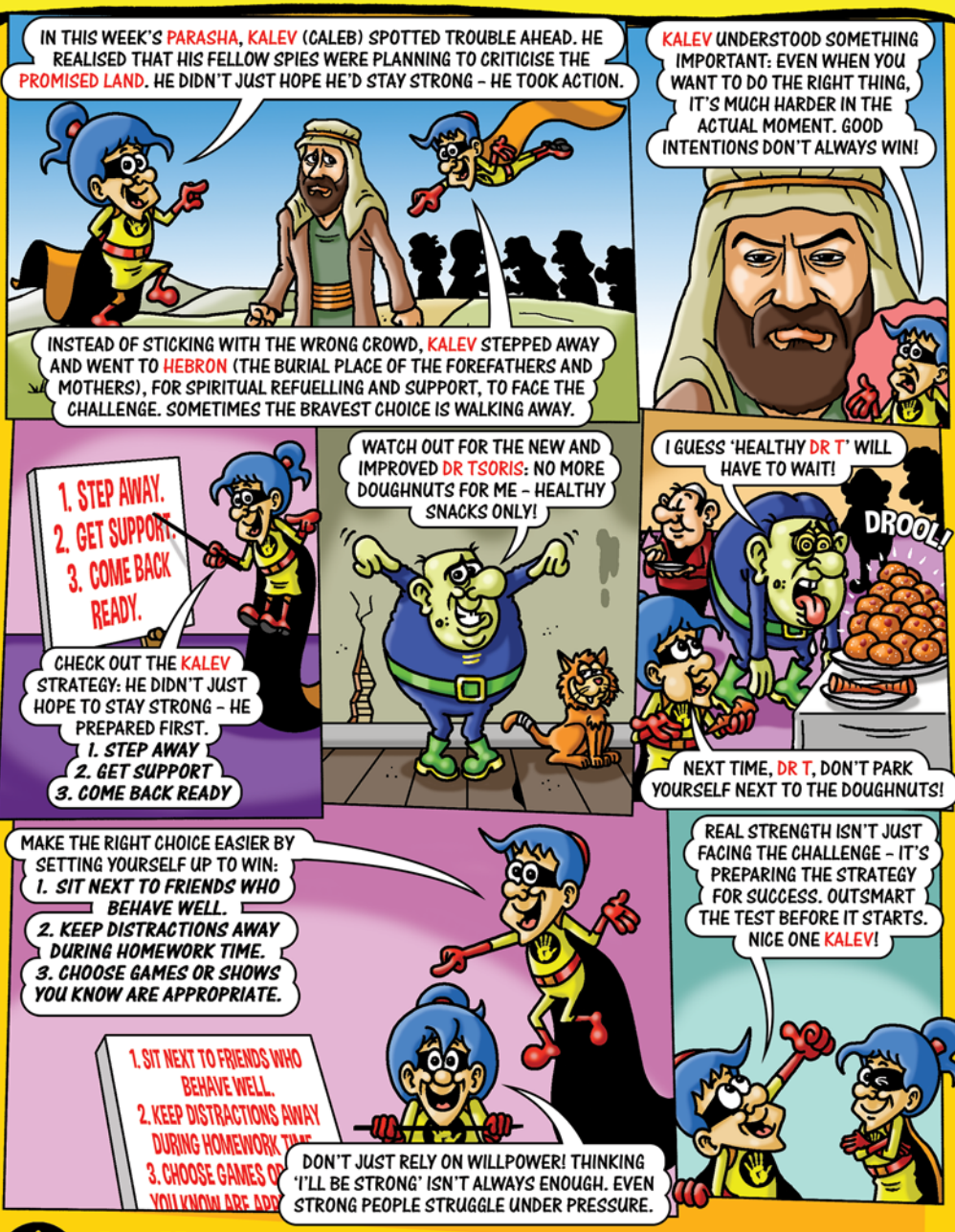
1. PSESI
2. IASLER
3. LCSEHHA
4. SEMOH
5. DIMAEBRB
6. EGRUACO



Answers: 1. Spies 2. Israel 3. Shelach 4. Moshe 5. Bemidbar 6. Courage

THE TRIBE SCRIBE

SHELACH: BE PREPARED!



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