

Parsha Paths: Shelach: A Good Land

The Route of the Spies

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבַּר פָּאֵרָן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה כְּלֵם אַנְשִׁים רֹאשֵׁי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:
וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ מִמִּדְבַּר־צֹן עַד־רְחֹב לְבָא חֲמַת:

So Moses, by GOD's command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran—all of them being men of consequence, leaders of the Israelites. They went up and scouted the land, from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, at Lebo-hamath. (Bamidbar 13:3, 21)

Zoan

וַיַּעֲלוּ בְּנֹגֵב וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־חֶבְרוֹן וְשֵׁם אַחִימָן וְשֶׁשַׁי וְתַלְמַי יְלִידֵי הָעֵנָק וְחֶבְרוֹן שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים נִבְנְתָה לְפָנַי צֶעַן
מִצְרַיִם:

They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron, where lived Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the Anakites.—Now Hebron was founded seven years before Zoan of Egypt (Bamidbar 13:22)

Rather, Hebron was seven times more fruitful [*mevunna*] than Zoan. And there is no stonier land in Eretz Yisrael than Hebron. because they would bury the dead there. And of all the lands, there is none of a higher quality than the land of Egypt, as it is stated: "Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt" (Genesis 13:10). And there was no higher-quality land in all of the land of Egypt than Zoan, as it is written "For his princes are in Zoan" (Isaiah 30:4). And even so, Hebron was seven times more fruitful than Zoan. (Sotah 34b)

Symbol of Wine?

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־נַחַל אֶשְׁכּוֹל וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זְמוּרָה וְאַשְׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים אֶחָד וַיִּשְׂאֶהוּ בְמוֹט בַּשָּׁנִים וּמִן־הָרְמָנִים
וּמִן־הַתְּאֵנִים:

They reached the wadi Eshkol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes—it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them—and some pomegranates and figs. (Bamidbar 13:23)

Strong Cities

וַיִּסְפְּרוּ־לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ בָּאנוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ וְגַם זָבַת חֵלֶב וּדְבַשׁ הִוא וְזֶה־פְרִיָּהּ:
אֶפְסֹ כִי־עַז הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ וְהָעָרִים בְּצָרוֹת גְּדֹלֹת מְאֹד וְגַם־יְלִדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ שָׁם:

This is what they told him: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who inhabit the

country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there. (Bamidbar 13: 27-28)

Weak People

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת־הַצִּרְעָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְגִרְשָׁה אֶת־הַחִיִּי אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַחִתִּי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ:

I will send the tzirah ahead of you, and it shall drive out before you the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites. (Shmot 23:28)

Maapilim Then and Now

וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶל־רֹאשׁ־הַהָר לֵאמֹר הֲנִנוּ וְעַלִּינוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר יְהוָה כִּי חָטָאנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְמָה זֶה אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה וְהוּא לֹא תַצְלַח: אֶל־תַּעֲלוּ כִּי אֵין יְהוָה בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְלֹא תִגָּפוּ לִפְנֵי אִיְבֵיכֶם: כִּי הָעַמְלֹקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי שָׂם לִפְנֵיכֶם וַיַּחַרְבְּ בְּחָרֵב כִּי־עַל־כֵּן שָׁבַתֶם מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא־יְהִי יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם: וַיַּעֲפְלוּ לַעֲלוֹת אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַהָר וְאַרְוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא־מָשׁוּ מִקֶּרֶב הַמַּחֲנֶה: וַיֵּרֶד הָעַמְלֹקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּהַר הַהוּא וַיַּכּוּם וַיִּכְתּוּם עַד־הַחֲרָמָה:

Early next morning they set out toward the crest of the hill country, saying, “We are prepared to go up to the place that God has spoken of, for we were wrong.” But Moses said, “Why do you transgress God’s command? This will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be routed by your enemies, for God is not in your midst. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there to face you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned from following God and God will not be with you.” Yet defiantly they marched toward the crest of the hill country, though neither God’s Ark of the Covenant nor Moses stirred from the camp. And the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down and dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah. (Bamidbar 14: 40-45)

Challah

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם בְּבֹאְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מְבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה: וְהָיָה בְּאֲכֹלְכֶם מִלֶּחֶם הָאָרֶץ תְּרִימוּ תְרוּמָה לַיהוָה:

Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

When you enter the land to which I am taking you

and you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set some aside as a gift to God:

(Bamidbar 15:18-19)

MISHNAH: Foreign produce imported into the Land is obligated for *hallah*. If it was exported, Rabbi Eliezer declares it obligated but Rabbi Aqiba declares it free.

HALAKHAH: “Foreign produce,” etc. It is written (*Num. 15:17*) “To the Land into which I am bringing you.” There you are obligated, you are not obligated outside the Land. It was stated: These are the words of Rabbi Meir. But the words of Rabbi Jehudah are: Foreign produce imported into the Land, Rabbi Eliezer declares it free but Rabbi Aqiba declares it obligated. What is the reason of Rabbi Eliezer? (*Num. 15:18*) “From the Land’s bread,” not foreign bread. What is the reason of Rabbi Aqiba? (*Num. 15:17*) “To the Land into which I am bringing

you.” There you are obligated, both for produce of the Land and foreign produce.” (Yerushalmi Challah 2:1)

Who was the Wood Gatherer?

וַיְהִי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ מִקְטֹשֵׁשׁ עֵצִים בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:

Once, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, a fellow was found gathering wood on the sabbath day. (Bamidbar 15:32)

the Sages taught in a *baraita*: The wood gatherer was Zelophehad, and it says: “And the children of Israel were in the desert and they found a man gathering wood on the day of Shabbat” (Numbers 15:32), and below, it is stated: “Our father died in the desert and he was not among the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons” (Numbers 27:3). Just as below the man in the desert is Zelophehad, so too, here, in the case of the wood gatherer, the unnamed man in the desert is Zelophehad; this is the statement of Rabbi Akiva. (Shabbat 96b)

The Sages taught: There was an incident with a pious man in which a breach was made in his field, and he decided to fence it in. And then he remembered that it was Shabbat. And that pious man refrained from fixing the fence [forever because he had thought about fixing it on Shabbat.] And a miracle was done for him, and a caper bush grew there and from it he received his livelihood and the livelihood of the members of his household. (Shabbat 150b)

Elusive Techelet

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כֹּנָפֵי בְגְדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וַנִּתְּנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכֹּנֵף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת:

Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. (Bamidbar 15:38)

Rabbi Meir would say: What is different about sky-blue from all other colors? It is because sky-blue dye is similar in its color to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory, as it is stated: ‘And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness’ (Exodus 24:10). (Sotah 17b)