

**MORASHAH**  
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Rabbi Yaakov Siegel

*Parashat HaShavuah Series*

**Parashat Sh'lach**

One of the great beauties of the Torah is that it may be interpreted in different ways, in different times and situations. The Rabbis compare this to a rock being struck by a hammer, throwing fragments in every direction.

In this week's *parashah*, we have the incident of the *meraglim*, the spies sent to investigate the nature of the great gift God is about to give His people: Eretz Yisrael. Amazingly, ten of the twelve tribal heads bring back an evil report. But why? Various explanations are offered.

One is that they were afraid of losing their positions of influence, which they had in the desert. There will be a new order. What would be their place in it? "A land that devours its inhabitants"? Perhaps, they thought, our positions will be devoured!

Another explanation is that they misinterpreted God's Providence as signs of evil. Wherever they went, they saw funerals. "It's a land that devours its inhabitants". Actually, the deaths of prominent Canaanites were to distract the locals from defending themselves against the Israelites.

Yet another interpretation, which I find particularly meaningful, is offered by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. "A land that devours its inhabitants" – what happens when we devour food? It becomes part of us! What we eat today walks and talks tomorrow. If one walks but four cubits in Eretz Yisrael, one is forever part of the Holy Land. Our deeds, our accomplishments, our failures, even our careers, do not define us; they are merely **parts** of our lives. We retain our individual identities, for better or for worse, regardless of these things. But to become **part and parcel** of something greater can indeed be frightening. On the other hand, it can be an incredible opportunity. We all experience a bit of this on our wedding day! The spies were happy being who they were, with all their prestige and power. Now, were they to become "merely" part of something? They found this unbearable. Joshua and Caleb brought back the message "the land that the Lord is giving us is very, very good." We are about to leave the "prestige" of the wanderer. We are about to become part of something much, much bigger. We are about to become part of the Holy Land, to be a Holy People, to begin a sacred history towards a glorious future. Perhaps it would be easier and safer to remain where we were. We are told that that is a fatal mistake.

This choice is offered to each of us. Yes, life was far easier in the cradle. But is that really life? We are to go forward and become part of our families, our People, our Land, our

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destinies! We stand at the borders of the loss of our pettiness, the beginning of greatness. The choice isn't easy. But it is magnificent!

Especially when Israel is demonized everywhere, we can not hide in our tents. Israel devours us – we are part of it. The outside world knows this. Let us not flee or hide, but celebrate our destiny!

*Shabbat Shalom!*

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