

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



Produced by THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027*

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Illustrations of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Joe Sikora.*

*Composition by VARDA Graphics, Skokie, Illinois
Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden
Manufactured in the United States of America*

09 10 10 9 8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. Hebrew. 2001.

*Etz Hayim: Torah and commentary / senior editor, David L. Lieber; literary editor,
Jules Harlow; sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of
Conservative Judaism.*

p. cm.

Text of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English; commentary in English.

*Includes the haftiarot and commentary on them, p'shat and d'rash commentaries,
comments on Conservative halakhic practice, topical essays, and other material.*

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10: 0-8276-0712-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-8276-0712-5

*1. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Commentaries. 2. Haftiarot—Commentaries. 3. Bible. O.T.
Pentateuch—Theology. 4. Conservative Judaism—Customs and practices. I. Lieber,
David L. II. Harlow, Jules. III. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. IV.
Rabbinical Assembly. V. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. English. Jewish Publication Society.
2001. VI. Title.*

BS1222 .L54 2001

222'.1077—dc21

2001029757

13

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Send men to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one man from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them.” ³So Moses, by the LORD’s command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all the men being leaders of the Israelites. ⁴And these were their names:

וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
 שְׁלַח־לְךָ אַנְשִׁים וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
 אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד
 אִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִטֵּה אֲבֹתָיו תִּשְׁלָחוּ כֹל
 נָשִׂיא בָהֶם: ³וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה מִמִּדְבַּר
 פָּארָן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה כָּל־אֶנְשִׁים רָאשֵׁי
 בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הָמָּה: ⁴וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹתָם

The Generation of the Exodus: The March to Transjordan (continued)

THE RECONNAISSANCE OF CANAAN (13:1–14:45)

According to the Torah, the wilderness period was marked by two flagrant sins: the apostasy of worshipping the Golden Calf and the faithlessness of the scouts. The scouts’ negative report precipitates a wave of fear and murmuring among the people and a threat to return to Egypt under new leadership.

SCOUTS ARE CHOSEN (13:1–20)

1. According to the tradition recorded in Deuteronomy (1:22–23), the initiative to scout the Land originated with the people, not God. That constituted a breach of faith, because God already had scouted the land, so to speak. Hence, because Moses approved of the expedition, he was condemned with the people to die in the wilderness.

2. send In contrast to the chieftains who were chosen by God to conduct the census and to parcel the Land, the chieftains sent to scout were to

be chosen by Moses, an indication that God disapproved of the project from the start.

men Hebrew: *anashim*, which can refer to “important, brave” men. Here, they were distinguished leaders of each tribe.

to scout Moses would not have sent 12 clan heads on a dangerous spying mission. In a case of true espionage—at Jericho—Joshua sent two spies (*m’ragg’lim*) who probably were trained. Moses’ intent could only have been to send a cross-section of the tribal leaders so that their positive report would verify the outstanding qualities of God’s land and dispel doubts about the people’s ability to conquer it. The venture was more a test of faith than a military expedition.

land of Canaan The purpose of the expedition was to claim possession symbolically, not just to reconnoiter the land.

3. Paran Where the Israelites have camped.

CHAPTER 13

The events of this *parashah* are crucial in the Torah narrative, explaining why it took 40 years for the people to reach the Promised Land. We already have seen certain undesirable character traits emerge among the Israelites: grumbling about food and living conditions, a nostalgia for the less complicated life of being a slave in Egypt. These will culminate in a massive failure of nerve when God summons Israel to attack and conquer the Promised Land. The people do not believe in their own ability to do that, and by implication do not believe in God’s ability to ensure their victory. As a result, God decrees 40 years of wandering, to end only

when the generation that left Egypt has died off.

“One cannot be expected to leave the state of slavery, toiling in bricks and straw, and go to fight with giants. It was therefore part of the divine wisdom to make them wander through the wilderness until they had become schooled in courage, until a new generation grew up who had never known humiliation and bondage” (Maimonides).

2. Send Hebrew: *sh’lah l’kha*; literally, “send for yourself.” That is, for your own purposes (not Mine). God seems to be saying, “I have told you already that the land is good and that I will give it to you. If you need human confirmation of that, go ahead and send scouts” (Num. R. 16:8).

From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur.

⁵From the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori.

⁶From the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh.

⁷From the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph.

⁸From the tribe of Ephraim, Hosea son of Nun.

⁹From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Rafu.

¹⁰From the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi.

¹¹From the tribe of Joseph, namely, the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi.

¹²From the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli.

¹³From the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael.

¹⁴From the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi.

¹⁵From the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi.

¹⁶Those were the names of the men whom Moses sent to scout the land; but Moses changed the name of Hosea son of Nun to Joshua.

¹⁷When Moses sent them to scout the land of Canaan, he said to them, "Go up there into the Negeb and on into the hill country, ¹⁸and see what kind of country it is. Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many?

¹⁹Is the country in which they dwell good or

לַמַּטֵּה רְאוּבֵן שְׁמוּעַ בֶּן־זַכּוּר:

⁵לַמַּטֵּה שִׁמְעוֹן שַׁפְט בֶּן־חֹרִי:

⁶לַמַּטֵּה יְהוּדָה כָּלֵב בֶּן־יִפְנֶה:

⁷לַמַּטֵּה יִשְׁשָׁכָר יִגָּל בֶּן־יוֹסֵף:

⁸לַמַּטֵּה אֶפְרַיִם הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן:

⁹לַמַּטֵּה בִנְיָמִן פַּלְטִי בֶן־רָפּוּא:

¹⁰לַמַּטֵּה זְבוּלֹן גַּדְיָאֵל בֶּן־סוּדִי:

¹¹לַמַּטֵּה יוֹסֵף לַמַּטֵּה מְנַשֶּׁה גַּדִּי בֶן־

סוּסִי:

¹²לַמַּטֵּה דָן עַמִּיאֵל בֶּן־גַּמְלִי:

¹³לַמַּטֵּה אֲשֶׁר סֶתוּר בֶּן־מִיכָאֵל:

¹⁴לַמַּטֵּה נַפְתָּלִי נַחְבִּי בֶן־וּפְסִי:

¹⁵לַמַּטֵּה גָד גֵּאוּאֵל בֶּן־מָכִי:

¹⁶אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה

לְתוֹר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ

בֶּן־נּוּן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ:

¹⁷וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה לְתוֹר אֶת־אָרֶץ

בְּנָעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם עָלֶיךָ זֶה בְּנֶגֶב וְעַלִּיתֶם

אֶת־הָהָר: ¹⁸וַרְאִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ מֵה־

הָהָר וְאֶת־הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב עָלֶיהָ הַחֹזֶק הוּא

הַרְפָּה הַמְעַט הוּא אִם־רַב: ¹⁹וַיֵּדָע הָאָרֶץ

אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יֹשֵׁב בָּהּ הַטּוֹבָה הוּא אִם־רָעָה

6. Caleb The name, from "*kelev*" (dog), is probably part of a longer name with a meaning like "the obedient servant of the god so-and-so." The term "dog" as a metaphor for an obsequious servant is found often in the literature of the ancient Near East.

17. Go up there into Literally, "ascend by means of." The goal is the hill country; the Negeb

is merely the means of getting there.

Negeb Literally, "arid land." This refers to the southern part of Judah between Beer-sheba and the Sinai Peninsula.

and on into Literally, "and ascend." The ascent begins in the Negeb, and the altitude reaches 3000 feet (900 m) at Hebron.

hill country Of Judah.

16. Moses changed the name of Hosea . . . to Joshua Moses changes Joshua's name from *Hoshe-a* to *Y'hoshu-a* (God will save) by adding the letter *yod*, which stands for the name of God.

Rashi interprets this to mean, "May God save you from the malign influence of the other scouts."

bad? Are the towns they live in open or fortified?
²⁰Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not?
 And take pains to bring back some of the fruit
 of the land.”—Now it happened to be the season
 of the first ripe grapes.

²¹They went up and scouted the land, from
 the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, at Lebo-
 hamath. ²²They 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.—
²³They reached the wadi Eshcol, 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. ²⁴That place was named the wadi Eshcol
 because of the cluster that the Israelites cut
 down there.

וַיִּמָּה הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יוֹשֵׁב בָּהֶנָּה
 הַבְּמַחֲנִים אִם בְּמִבְצָרִים: ²⁰ וַיִּמָּה הָאָרֶץ
 הַשְּׂמֵנָה הֲוָא אִם-רָזָה הִי־שִׁבְיָה עַל אִם-
 אֵין וְהִתְחַזְקוּתָם וּלְקַחְתָּם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ
 וְהַיָּמִים יָמִי בְכוּרֵי עֲנָבִים:

שני ²¹ וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ מִמִּדְבַּר-צֵן
 עַד-רֶחֶב לְבָא חֲמַת: ²² וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵגֶב וַיָּבֹאוּ*
 עַד-חֶבְרוֹן וְשָׁם אַחִימָן שָׁשִׁי וְתַלְמִי יְלִידֵי
 הָעֵנָק וְחֶבְרוֹן שְׁבַע שָׁנִים נִבְנְתָה לְפָנָי
 צֵעַן מִצְרַיִם: ²³ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-נַחַל אֶשְׁכּוֹל
 וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זְמוּרָה וְאַשְׁכּוֹל עֲנָבִים אֶחָד
 וַיִּשָּׂאֵהוּ בַמּוֹט בְּשָׁנִים וּמִן-הָרְמָנִים וּמִן-
 הַתְּאֵנִים: ²⁴ לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא קָרָא נַחַל
 אֶשְׁכּוֹל עַל אֲדוּת הָאֶשְׁכּוֹל אֲשֶׁר-כָּרְתוּ
 מִשָּׁם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

v. 22. סבירין ומטעין לשון רבים

20. rich Literally, “fat,” meaning fertile.

THE EXPEDITION (vv. 21–24)

Two traditions have been brought together here:
 that the scouts traversed the entire Land (v. 21)
 and that they journeyed only as far as Hebron (vv.
 22–24).

21. Zin North of the wilderness of Paran, the
 scouts’ point of origin. The exact bounds of these
 wildernesses are not known.

Lebo-hamath An important city at the
 northern boundary of the Promised Land.

22. Hebron The most sacred site in the

southern part of the Land. All the patriarchs
 and their wives, except Rachel, are buried here.

Anakites One of the original peoples of Canaan
 before Israel’s conquest, known and feared
 for their size.

23. This verse emphasizes that a single cluster
 of grapes was so heavy that it took two men
 to carry it.

carrying frame It is unlikely that the scouts
 brought the grape cluster to the north. Hence
 scholars assume that the account of the northern
 expedition is from a second, separate source—
 and that we have here a fusion of two narratives.

22. They went up . . . and came Hebrew:
va-ya-alu . . . va-yavo; the first verb is plural
 but the second is singular. This prompted
 the Talmud to suggest that while the other
 scouts were gathering economic and military
 data, Caleb was motivated to visit the tomb
 of the patriarchs in Hebron (BT Sot. 34b).
 He alone was able to see the Land not only
 as it was at the moment but as what it had
 meant and would mean in terms of God’s
 promise to the patriarchs. They went up—
 they ascended, not only geographically
 but to a higher spiritual level. No matter
 where one comes from, going to Israel is
 referred to as *aliyah*, “going up.” Similarly, one

is called to the Torah for an *aliyah*, an ascent
 to a higher level, whether or not there are
 steps to the *bimah*.

28. What the scouts reported was factually
 correct but it was not the truth. Truth is more
 than a summary of empirical facts. It must
 include the response of the soul to those facts,
 and this is where the scouts failed in their duty
 (Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk). Although each
 of the scouts was supposed to be a leader in
 his own tribe, they did not anticipate the
 consequences of their words. They did not
 realize that by speaking their minds and
 giving voice to their own doubts, they would
 provoke panic among the people.

²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land. ²⁶They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷This 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. ²⁸However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there. ²⁹Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan."

³⁰Caleb hushed the people before Moses and

²⁵וַיָּשׁוּבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִקֵּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם:
²⁶וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-
 כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֶרָן
 קִדְשָׁה וַיָּשִׁיבוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה
 וַיֹּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ: ²⁷וַיִּסְפְּרוּ-לוֹ
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ בָּאנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ
 וְגַם זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וְדִבַּשׁ הוּא וְזֶה-פְרִיָּהּ:
²⁸אִפְס כִּי-עָזוּ הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ וְהָעֲרִים
 בְּצֻרוֹת גְּדֹלֹת מְאֹד וְגַם-יְלָדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ
 שָׁם: ²⁹עַמְּלֶק יוֹשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ הַנִּגֵּב וְהַחִתִּי
 וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר וּבְפִנְעֵנִי
 יוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַיָּם וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן:
³⁰וַיִּהְיֶה כָּלֵב אֶת-הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר

THE REPORT (vv. 25–33)

26. Kadesh The site is identified with a group of oases 50 miles (80 km) south of Beer-sheba, one of which still bears the name 'Ain Qadesh.

27–28. him That is, Moses. The prior verse tells us that a report was made to Moses and to the entire community. This indicates the possibility of different traditions.

flow with milk and honey Literally, "ooze with . . ." This is the traditional phrase for the fruitfulness of the Promised Land.

fortified The walls of ancient Canaanite cities were 30 to 50 feet (9 to 15 m) high, and sometimes 15 feet (4.5 m) thick.

29. Amalekites A nomadic tribe whose domain extended from the Negeb of Judah into the Sinai Peninsula, virtually the same sweep as Israel's wilderness trek.

Hittites The non-Semitic Hittite Empire of Anatolia (located in Asia Minor, in present-day Turkey) was destroyed around 1200 B.C.E. The Hittite language and culture, carried by Hittite enclaves, persisted in northern Syria for another 500 years. Although there is no evidence of such enclaves in Canaan, Hittite refugees may have entered Canaan from the north.

Jebusites This term appears in biblical narrative from the time of the conquest of Canaan. The Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem when King David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6).

Amorites In ancient Akkadian, "amurru" means "west"; the term was used in Mesopota-

mian cuneiform sources as early as the second half of the 3rd millennium to designate Semitic herdsmen and their territory in the Syrian steppe west of the Euphrates. In the Bible, "Amorite" occurs only as an ethnic label and does not refer to the Amurru kingdom, which disappeared around 1200 B.C.E. Sometimes the term is used as an alternative for "Canaanite," referring to all inhabitants west of the Jordan.

Canaanites Canaan was Egypt's Asian province, ruled by Egyptian governors and local princes. Its boundaries matched closely those of the Promised Land (34:1–12). In a number of biblical passages, the name "Canaanite" refers to a merchant class (Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 17:4; Prov. 31:24). Its equivalent in ancient Akkadian, *kinahhu*, also means "red-purple." The dye that served as the source of that much-desired color was extracted from sea creatures along the eastern Mediterranean and was handled exclusively by Canaanite (*kinahhu*) merchants, who came to be named after their product. (The Greek word "Phoenician" has the same link between the red-purple dye and the people.)

Negeb . . . hill country . . . Sea . . . Jordan These areas correspond to the four major geographic divisions of the Promised Land: the southern wilderness; the central mountain chain above it from Beer-sheba northward and the plains on either side; the sea coast; and the Jordan rift (the steep valley to the west and to the east of the Jordan River).

said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."

³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, "We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we." ³²Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size; ³³we saw the Nephilim there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them."

עָלָה נַעֲלָה וַיִּרְשְׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי־יָכוֹל נוֹכַל לָהּ:

³¹וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַל לַעֲלֹת אֶל־הָעָם כִּי־חָזֵק הוּא מִמָּנּוּ: ³²וַיּוֹצִיאוּ דִבַּת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אָרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הִוא וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אָנָשִׁי מְדוֹת: ³³וַיֵּשֶׁם רָאִינוּ אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עַנָּק מִן־הַנְּפִילִים וַנִּהְיֶה כְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחֹגְגִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:

יד וַתִּשָּׂא כָל־הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־קוֹלָם

30. Caleb does not contradict the content of the other scouts' reports, only their conclusions.

before Moses The negative report of verses 28–29 probably set off an audible murmuring, which Caleb and, presumably, Moses, tried to quell.

32. among the Israelites The scouts appear to have bypassed Moses and Aaron (v. 26) to spread their calumnies (vv. 32–33) directly among the people.

devours its settlers The nature of the Land is such that it will keep its inhabitants at war perpetually. It may also refer to the difficulty of finding enough food, especially in the Negeb, during years of drought.

33. Nephilim Literally, "fallen ones." The ancient Greek translation reads "giants." See Gen. 6:4, where they are the products of marriages between divine beings and mortal women, possibly superhuman creatures. In the scouts' first report they are called Anakites (v. 28). Their identification with Anakites could have only one purpose—to instill even greater fear in the hearts of the people, because to the stature and strength of the Anakites is now added the dimension of the earliest giants.

grasshoppers The smallest edible creature (Lev. 11:22), a hint that this land that "devours its settlers" would easily devour the Israelites.

31. We cannot attack The verb used here for "attack" (*la-alot*) also means "to go up." Thus the scouts are pictured as saying, "We cannot rise to the occasion." The problem is not with the Canaanite fortifications but with ourselves (Arama).

it is stronger than we The word translated as "than we" (*mi-mennu*) can also be read as "than Him," namely, God. Their lack of faith in themselves came to include a lack of faith in God's power to bring them to victory (BT Sot. 35a).

33. we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves Conveys the essence of the scouts' failure. The problem was that the Israelites did

not believe in themselves. They had no way of knowing what the inhabitants of the Land thought of them. Indeed, we learn from chapter 22 that the Moabites were terrified of the Israelites, and from Joshua 2 (see the *haftarah*) that the inhabitants of Jericho were equally afraid to confront them. Because the Israelites saw themselves as "grasshoppers," weak and ineffectual, they assumed that others saw them the same way.

so we must have looked to them God's response: Why are you so concerned about how you look in the eyes of the Canaanites, to the point that it distracts you from your sacred task? (Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk).

cries, and the people wept that night. ²All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness! ³Why is the LORD taking us to that land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be carried off! It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!" ⁴And they said to one another, "Let us head back for Egypt."

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of the Israelites. ⁶And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes ⁷and exhorted the whole Israelite community: "The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; ⁹only you must not rebel against the LORD. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey:

וַיִּבְכּוּ הָעָם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא: ²וַיִּלְלֻּנָּה עַל־מֹשֶׁה וְעַל־אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם כָּל־הָעֵדָה לֹא־מָתָנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לֹא־מָתָנוּ: ³וְלָמָּה יְהוָה מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל בַּחֶרֶב נַשִּׁינוּ וְטַפְנוּ וְהָיוּ לְבָז הָלֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוֹב מִצְרַיִם: ⁴וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו נָתַנָּה רֹאשׁ וְנָשׁוּבָה מִצְרַיִם:

⁵וַיִּפֹּל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי כָל־קְהֵל עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁶וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן וְכָלֵב בֶּן־יִפְנֶה מִן־הַתָּרִים אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ קָרְעוּ בְּגִדֵיהֶם: ⁷וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־כָּל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֲתָה טוֹבָה הָאֶרֶץ מְאֹד: ⁸אִם־חָפֵץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה וְהִבִּיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל־הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְנָתַנָּה לָנוּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא זָבֶת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ: ⁹אָךְ בִּיהוָה אֵל־תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֵל־תִּירְאוּ אֶת־עַם הָאֶרֶץ

שלישי

THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE (14:1–5)

3. back to Egypt They now wish to return to bondage willingly in the country where they had been forced into slavery.

4. Let us head Hebrew: *nitnah rosh*; literally, "let's set the head." The phrase can mean "set the mind, decide" or "appoint." Here it could mean "appoint a leader," implying a complete break with Moses and God. New leadership would be required if the defecting militia were to succeed.

5. fell on their faces To propitiate the people or as an act of helplessness and despair.

THE RESPONSE OF JOSHUA AND CALEB (vv. 6–10)

6. of those who had scouted the land This ex-

planation is needed either because Joshua has not yet been introduced into the dialogue, or simply to indicate that the other spies did not rend their clothes.

rent their clothes Out of grief and distress over the humiliation heaped on Moses and particularly because of the implied rebellion against God.

7. good In answer to Moses' query concerning the Land (13:19) and in contrast to the "good" of returning to Egypt ("it would be better for us," v. 3).

9. prey Literally, "food" or "bread." To eat prey means to conquer.

protection Hebrew: *tsel* (literally, "shade"), an appropriate term for those who live under a

CHAPTER 14

2. If only we had died A sense of helplessness, a feeling of inadequacy, and inability to deal with one's problems can lead to a person's giving up on life and wishing for death. In contrast, a sense of hope in the possibility of a brighter future, a belief that God can help us to

do what we find hard to do unaided, can banish that sense of futility and restore the will to live.

6–10. Joshua and Caleb risk their lives by acting with integrity and standing up to a misguided majority. In the end, it is the majority who will die in the wilderness and the people of integrity and courage who will survive to see their dreams realized.

their protection has departed from them, but the LORD is with us. Have no fear of them!" ¹⁰As the whole community threatened to pelt them with stones, the Presence of the LORD appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.

¹¹And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst? ¹²I will strike them with pestilence and disown them, and I will make of you a nation far more numerous than they!" ¹³But Moses said to the LORD, "When the Egyptians, from whose midst You brought up this people in Your might, hear the news, ¹⁴they will tell it to the inhabitants of that land. Now they have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people; that You, O LORD, appear in plain sight when Your cloud rests over them and when You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵If then You slay this people to a man, the nations who have heard Your fame will say, ¹⁶'It must be because the LORD was powerless to bring that people into the land He had promised them on oath that He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' ¹⁷Therefore, I pray, let my Lord's forbearance be great, as You have declared, say-

כִּי לַחֲמֵנוּ הֵם סָר צִלָּם מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיְהִי
אֲתָנוּ אֶל-תִּירָאָם׃ ¹⁰ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל-הָעֵדָה
לְרָגוֹם אֹתָם בָּאֲבָנִים וַיִּכְבֹּד יְהוָה נִרְאָה
בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ פ
¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עַד-אַנּוּה יִנְאַצְנִי
הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַד-אַנּוּה לֹא-יֵאֱמִינוּ בִּי בְּכָל
הָאֲתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ׃ ¹² אֶפְנוּ
בְּדָבָר וְאוֹרְשָׁנוּ וְאָעֲשֶׂה אֹתָךְ לְגוֹי-גָדוֹל
וְעַצּוֹם מִמֶּנּוּ׃ ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה
וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי-הָעֲלִיתָ בְּכַחֲךָ אֶת-
הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקִּרְבּוֹ׃ ¹⁴ וַאֲמָרוּ אֶל-יֹשְׁבֵי
הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּם
הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עִינָן בָּעֵינִן נִרְאָה׃ אֲתָה
יְהוָה וְעַנְנְךָ עֹמֵד עֲלֵהֶם וּבַעֲמֹד עֵנָן אַתָּה
הֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם וּבַעֲמֹד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה׃
¹⁵ וְהִמָּתָה אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד
וַאֲמָרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-שִׁמְעֶךָ
לֵאמֹר׃ ¹⁶ מִבִּלְתִּי יִכָּלֵת יְהוָה לְהַבִּיא
אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע
לָהֶם וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם בַּמִּדְבָּר׃ ¹⁷ וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל-
נָא * כַּח אֲדֹנָי כְּאִשֶּׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר׃

v. 17. י' רבתי לפי מהדורת לעטעריס

Mediterranean sun. Here it is a metaphor for divine protection.

10. them That is, Moses and Aaron.

Presence Hebrew: *kavod*, the cloud-encased fire that descended over the tabernacle. God descends to speak to Moses and to deter Israel from attacking Moses and Aaron. While God appears to the Israelites in the tabernacle courtyard, Moses enters the tent to hear God's command.

GOD'S RESPONSE (vv. 11–38)

12. God's initial reaction was virtually identical at the apostasy of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:10).

disown Israel will no longer be God's inheritance (Deut. 32:9).

far more numerous Literally, "greater and mightier than," in a physical sense.

13–19. Moses intercedes. How is God to

punish Israel and yet maintain a reputation of power in the world?

the nations That is, Egypt and Canaan.

promised them on oath The oath is recorded as given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18, 22:16, 26:3) but not to the generation of the Exodus. The original oath, however, must be assumed in God's promises of fulfillment (Exod. 3:8, 17). God's promise is equivalent to a new oath.

forbearance Hebrew: *ko-ah*; literally, "strength." It denotes the strength to hold back from destroying the people Israel.

great In response to the Lord's wish to make Moses great (v. 12), Moses asks God to make divine forbearance great.

not remitting all punishment This means, "will definitely not acquit [the guilty]."

children All the ancient Aramaic versions understand this as "rebellious children."

ing, ¹⁸“The LORD! slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.” ¹⁹Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt.”

²⁰And the LORD said, “I pardon, as you have asked. ²¹Nevertheless, as I live and as the LORD’s Presence fills the whole world, ²²none of the men who have seen My Presence and the signs that I have performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and who have tried Me these many times and have disobeyed Me, ²³shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers; none of those who spurn Me shall see it. ²⁴But My servant Caleb, because he was imbued with a different spirit and remained loyal to Me—him will I bring into the land that he entered, and his offspring shall hold it as a possession. ²⁵Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites occupy the valleys. Start out, then, tomorrow and march into the wilderness by way of the Sea of Reeds.”

²⁶The LORD spoke further to Moses and Aaron, ²⁷“How much longer shall that wicked

¹⁸יְהוָה אֶרְךָ אֲפִים וְרַב־חֶסֶד נָשָׂא עֵוֹן וּפָשַׁע וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנָּקֶה פֶּקֶד עֵוֹן אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־שָׁלָשִׁים וְעַל־רִבְעִים: ¹⁹סְלַח־נָא לְעֹוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כַּגְּדֹל חֶסֶדְךָ וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הַנֶּה: ²⁰וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סְלַחְתִּי כְדַבְּרְךָ: ²¹וְאִלֶּם חַי־אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֹא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ²²כִּי כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־כְּבֹדִי וְאֶת־אֹתוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבְמִדְבָּר וַיִּנָּסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עָשָׂר פַּעַמִּים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: ²³אִם־יִרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבֹתָם וְכָל־מִנְאֲצֵי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ: ²⁴וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב עֶקֶב הִיִּתָּה רוּחַ אַחֲרָת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא אַחֲרֵי וַהֲבִיאוּתִיו אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא שָׁמָּה וְזִרְעוּ יוֹרְשֶׁנָּה: ²⁵וְהָעַמְלָקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּעֵמֶק מַחֲרָ פָּנּוּ וַיִּסְעוּ לָכֶם הַמִּדְבָּר דֶּרֶךְ יַם־סוּף: פ

²⁶וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן רַב־עֵי: ²⁷לֵאמֹר: עַד־מָתִי לַעֲדָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת

19. Pardon Hebrew: *salah*, used only of the deity; it means “forgiveness of offenses against God.”

21. as I live Human beings swear by God; because there is no superior entity, this vow is sworn by God’s own “life” (essence or being).

fills the whole world God has the power to fulfill this oath.

24. Caleb will be granted the right to enter the land he scouted (13:22) and to bequeath it to his children as their inheritance.

25. Amalekites . . . Canaanites The scouts frightened Israel by mentioning these nations, which posed no threat. Now that Israel has spurned God, they will indeed become a threat.

occupy the valleys The Canaanites are located along the sea, and the Amalekites in the Negeb. All the entrances are blocked.

26. Aaron and the Levites are also exempt from God’s oath of retribution because the tribe of Levi was not represented among the scouts.

27. wicked community The scouts.

22–23. Why does God, who forgave Israel for the Golden Calf and other acts of faithlessness, condemn to death an entire generation for this offense? God is prepared to forgive such slights against Heaven, but not sins against the idea of the Jewish people as the people of God (Spector).

27. community Hebrew: *edah*, used here for a group numbering exactly 10, the scouts who offered a negative report. Jewish law used this as the source for the ruling that 10 is the minimum number of adults required for a group to be counted as a community, a *minyan*.

community keep muttering against Me? Very well, I have heeded the incessant muttering of the Israelites against Me. ²⁸Say to them: 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'I will do to you just as you have urged Me. ²⁹In this very wilderness shall your carcasses drop. Of all of you who were recorded in your various lists from the age of twenty years up, you who have muttered against Me, ³⁰not one shall enter the land in which I swore to settle you—save Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. ³¹Your children who, you said, would be carried off—these will I allow to enter; they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³²But your carcasses shall drop in this wilderness, ³³while your children roam the wilderness for forty years, suffering for your faithlessness, until the last of your carcasses is down in the wilderness. ³⁴You shall bear your punishment for forty years, corresponding to the number of days—forty days—that you scouted the land: a year for each day. Thus you shall know what it means to thwart Me. ³⁵I the LORD have spoken: Thus will I do to all that wicked band that has banded together against Me: in this very wilderness they shall die to the last man.'"

³⁶As for the men whom Moses sent to scout the land, those who came back and caused the whole community to mutter against him by spreading calumnies about the land—³⁷those who spread such calumnies about the land died

אשר המה מליניני עלי את־תלונות בני ישראל אשר המה מליניני עלי שמעתי: ²⁸אמר אליהם חי־אני נאם־יהוה אם־לא באשר דברתם באזני כן אעשה לכם: ²⁹במדבר הזה יפלו פגריכם וכל־פקדיכם לכל־מספרכם מִבֶּן עשרים שנה ומעלה אשר הלינתם עלי: ³⁰אם־אתם תבאו אל־הארץ אשר נשאתי את־ידי לשכן אתכם בה כי אם־כלב בן־יפנה ויהושע בן־נון: ³¹וטפכם אשר אמרתם לבז יהיה והביאתי אתם וידעו את־הארץ אשר מאסתם בה: ³²ופגריכם אתם יפלו במדבר הזה: ³³ובניכם יהיו רעים במדבר ארבעים שנה ונשאו את־זנותיכם עד־תם פגריכם במדבר: ³⁴במספר הימים אשר־תרתם את־הארץ ארבעים יום לשנה יום לשנה תשאו את־עונותיכם ארבעים שנה וידעתם את־תנואתי: ³⁵אני יהוה דברתי אם־לא זאת אעשה לכל־העדה הרעה הזאת הנועדים עלי במדבר הזה יתמו ושם ימתו:

³⁶והאנשים אשר־שלח משה לתור את־הארץ וישבו וילינו ויילינו עליו את־כל־העדה להוציא דבה על־הארץ: ³⁷וימתו האנשים מוצאי דבת־הארץ רעה

28. Israel is about to achieve its wish: "If only we might die in this wilderness!" (v. 2).

29. this very wilderness Paran. **from twenty years up** Although they were of fighting age, they refused to fight.

30. swore The Hebrew idiom is *nasa yad*; literally, "raise the hand." That is, heavenward, calling God to witness.

31. Your children Up to the age of 20. **they shall know the land** In contrast to their parents, who instead shall know God's punishment (v. 34).

33. suffering for your faithlessness Delaying

punishment to a future generation may be an aspect of God's mercy.

carcasses . . . down in the wilderness This implies that burial will be denied.

34. bear your punishment Literally, "carry [the consequences of] sin."

forty years This will allow a fourth generation to be born in the wilderness and thereby fulfill God's attribute of punishing to the fourth generation.

35. against Me When the Israelites banded together to stone Joshua and Caleb, their real intention was to rebel against God.

of plague, by the will of the LORD. ³⁸Of those men who had gone to scout the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived.

³⁹When Moses repeated these words to all the Israelites, the people were overcome by grief. ⁴⁰Early next morning they set out toward the crest of the hill country, saying, "We are prepared to go up to the place that the LORD has spoken of, for we were wrong." ⁴¹But Moses said, "Why do you transgress the LORD's command? This will not succeed. ⁴²Do not go up, lest you be routed by your enemies, for the LORD is not in your midst. ⁴³For 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 the LORD and the LORD will not be with you."

⁴⁴Yet defiantly they marched toward the crest of the hill country, though neither the LORD's Ark of the Covenant nor Moses stirred from the camp. ⁴⁵And the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down and dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah.

בַּמִּגַּפָּה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ³⁸וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון וְכָלֵב בֶּן־יִפְנֶה חֵיו מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָהֵם הַהֹלְכִים לְתוֹר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:
³⁹וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ הָעָם מְאֹד:
⁴⁰וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶל־רֹאשׁ־הָהָר לֵאמֹר הִנֵּנוּ וְעַלֵּינוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר יְהוָה כִּי חָטֵאנוּ: ⁴¹וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לָמָּה זֶה אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה וְהוּא לֹא תַעֲלֶה: ⁴²אַל־תַּעֲלוּ כִּי אֵין יְהוָה בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְלֹא תִנָּגְפוּ לִפְנֵי אֹיְבֵיכֶם: ⁴³כִּי הָעֵמֶלְקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי שָׁם לִפְנֵיכֶם וְנִפְלֹתֶם בַּחֶרֶב כִּי־עַל־כֵּן שִׁבְתֶּם מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם:
⁴⁴וַיַּעֲבְלוּ לַעֲלוֹת אֶל־רֹאשׁ הָהָר וְאַרְוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא־מָשָׁו מִקְרֵב הַמַּחֲנֶה: ⁴⁵וַיֵּרֶד הָעֵמֶלְקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בַּהָר הַהוּא וַיַּכּוּם וַיִּכְתּוּם עַד־הַחֲרָמָה: פ

15 טו וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

THE PEOPLE'S EXPEDITION (vv. 39–45)

Stricken by guilt and grief, the people attempt to invade Canaan, but the outcome is disastrous. The Lord's oath is irrevocable: The generation of the Exodus must die in the wilderness.

39. these words Verses 20–25 and/or 28–35.

40. Instead of retreating, as they were com-

manded, they defied the Lord and invaded Canaan.

crest of the hill country That is, toward Hebron, one of the highest points in the Judean mountains.

wrong Because it follows God's decree, the remorse here is too late.

42. the LORD is not in your midst The Ark did not accompany them in battle.

A MISCELLANY OF LAWS (15:1–41)

This chapter, a collection of diverse laws, interrupts the narrative sequence of the spy story

(chapters 13–14) and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (chapters 16–17).

40. the place that the LORD has spoken of, for we were wrong Or "the place concerning which the LORD said we were wrong." That is,

the people still refuse to admit that they had done wrong. They go off to battle sullenly, reluctantly, without enthusiasm.

²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

When you enter the land that I am giving you to settle in,³ and would present a gift to the LORD from the herd or from the flock, be it burnt offering or sacrifice, in fulfillment of a vow explicitly uttered, or as a freewill offering, or at your fixed occasions, producing an odor pleasing to the LORD:

⁴The person who presents a gift to the LORD shall bring as a grain offering: a tenth of a measure of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of oil mixed in.⁵ You shall also offer, with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, a quarter of a *hin* of wine as a libation for each sheep.

⁶In the case of a ram, you shall present as a grain offering: two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with a third of a *hin* of oil mixed

² וַיֹּדַבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
כִּי תָבוֹאוּ אֶל-אֶרֶץ מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי
נֹתֵן לָכֶם: ³ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה עֹלָה
אוֹזֶבֶחַ לַפֶּלֶא-נֶדֶר אוֹ בְנִדְבָה אוֹ
בְּמַעַדֵיכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה
מִן-הַבֶּקָּר אוֹ מִן-הָעֹזֹן:
⁴ וְהִקְרִיב הַמִּקְרִיב קֶרֶבֶן לַיהוָה מִנְחָה
סֹלֶת עֶשְׂרוֹן בָּלֹל בְּרִבְעִית הַהֵין שֶׁמֶן:
⁵ וְיֵין לְנֶסֶף רְבִיעִית הַהֵין תַּעֲשֶׂה עַל-
הָעֹלָה אוֹ לִזְבַּח לַכֹּפֶשׁ הָאֶחָד:
⁶ אוֹ לְאֵיל תַּעֲשֶׂה מִנְחָה סֹלֶת שְׁנֵי
עֶשְׂרִינָם בָּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלִשִׁית הַהֵין:

ACCOMPANIMENTS TO THE SACRIFICE (vv. 1–16)

Because meat was eaten together with bread and wine, these last two items accompanied an animal sacrifice. The grain offering and the wine libation were not required in the wilderness because they are products of an agricultural society.

2. When you enter the land This introductory phrase is often found in connection with laws that presume a settled agricultural life.

to settle in In permanent settlements, not in tents.

3. flock Birds, however, do not require any accompaniment of grain and libation offerings.

at your fixed occasions The burnt offerings required for the fixed, public sacrifices.

4. The person Either a man or a woman.

grain offering The private grain offering was given as a revenue to the priest after a token portion was offered on the altar. When such an offering accompanied a meat offering, however, it was burned completely on the altar (as prescribed in Lev. 14:20, 23:13).

measure An *ephah*, equal to about 1 bushel.

choice flour Semolina, the finest grade of flour.

hin See Comment to Exod. 29:40.

5. You shall . . . offer Hebrew: *ta-aseh*, which is singular. The change of person from plural to singular in the direct address to Israel is a feature of these texts.

libation Most likely, the wine originally was poured on the base of the altar and not burned on its hearth, because its flames might be extinguished in violation of Lev. 6:6.

sheep This rule applies to goats as well.

CHAPTER 15

In this chapter, the theme of a generation sentenced to die in the wilderness for their lack of faith seems to be dropped, as the Torah proceeds to spell out laws for various offerings. It concludes with the commandment to wear fringes (*tzitzit*) on the corners of one's garments. The Sages find a connection between the story of the scouts and the commandments to bring offerings and to wear *tzitzit*. Ibn Ezra imagines the Israelites

cast into despair. God has written them off, and the dream of settlement in the Promised Land now seems impossible. To revive their spirits, God commands Moses to tell them "When you enter the land that I am giving you" (v. 2). These words affirm that God still communicates with the people, that God has not written them off permanently. They affirm further that the promise of the Land is still in force, although it will be their children who will enter it and put these laws into practice.

in; ⁷and a third of a *hin* of wine as a libation—as an offering of pleasing odor to the LORD.

⁸And if it is an animal from the herd that you offer to the LORD as a burnt offering or as a sacrifice, in fulfillment of a vow explicitly uttered or as an offering of well-being, ⁹there shall be offered a grain offering along with the animal: three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with half a *hin* of oil mixed in; ¹⁰and as libation you shall offer half a *hin* of wine—these being gifts of pleasing odor to the LORD.

¹¹Thus shall be done with each ox, with each ram, and with any sheep or goat, ¹²as many as you offer; you shall do thus with each one, as many as there are. ¹³Every citizen, when presenting a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD, shall do so with them.

¹⁴And when, throughout the ages, a stranger who has taken up residence with you, or one who lives among you, would present a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD—as you do, so shall it be done by ¹⁵the rest of the congregation. There shall be one law for you and for the resident stranger; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger shall be alike before the LORD; ¹⁶the same ritual and the same rule shall apply to you and to the stranger who resides among you.

¹⁷The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁸Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

7. of pleasing odor to the LORD This phrase applies to the case of the sheep as well, mentioned in verses 4–5.

10. of pleasing odor to the LORD Although the wine was poured at the base of the altar and not on its hearth, it still exuded a pleasing aroma.

11. Thus shall be done A summary, enumerating the animals in inverse order: ox, ram, lamb.

ox Hebrew: *shor*, in masculine gender, is equivalent to “animal from the herd” (*ben bakar*) in verse 8 and can be female (Lev. 22:28). A female bovine is acceptable for the well-being offering (Lev. 3:1).

any sheep or goat Of either sex.

⁷ וַיִּזֶן לִנְסֹף שְׁלִשִׁית הַהֵיזֶן תְּקָרִיב רִיח־
נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה:

⁸ וְכִי־תַעֲשֶׂה בֶן־בָּקָר עֲלֶה אוֹזֹבָח חמישי
לְפָלֶאֱנֶדֶר אוֹ־שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה: ⁹ וְהִקְרִיב
עַל־בֶּן־הַבָּקָר מִנְחָה סֵלֶת שְׁלִשָּׁה
עֶשְׂרִינָם בְּלוֹל בְּשֶׁמֶן חֲצִי הַהֵיזֶן: ¹⁰ וַיִּזֶן
תְּקָרִיב לִנְסֹף חֲצִי הַהֵיזֶן אֲשֶׁה רִיח־נִיחֹחַ
לַיהוָה:

¹¹ כֹּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְשׂוֹר הָאֶחָד אוֹ לְאֵיל
הָאֶחָד אוֹ־לְשֶׁה בִּכְבָּשִׁים אוֹ בְּעִזִּים:
¹² בְּמִסְפָּר אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּ כֹכָה תַּעֲשׂוּ לְאֶחָד
בְּמִסְפָּרָם: ¹³ כָּל־הָאִזְרָח יַעֲשֶׂה־כֹּכָה
אֶת־אֵלָה לְהִקְרִיב אֲשֶׁה רִיח־נִיחֹחַ
לַיהוָה:

¹⁴ וְכִי־יִגֹּר אֶתְכֶם גֵּר אוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בְּתוֹכְכֶם
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם וַעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁה רִיח־נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה
כְּאֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּ בֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה: ¹⁵ הַקְהֵל חֻקָּה
אֶחָת לָכֶם וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר חֻקַּת עוֹלָם
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כֹּכֶם כְּגֵר יִהְיֶה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:
¹⁶ תּוֹרָה אֶחָת וּמִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָכֶם
וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר אֶתְכֶם: פ

¹⁷ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹⁸ דַּבֵּר
אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

14. one who lives among you Literally, “one who is among you,” perhaps the foreigner (*nokhri*) who visits or sojourns but does not actually reside among the Israelites, as does the stranger (*ger*). Both may offer sacrifices, provided these regulations are followed (Lev. 22:25).

16. the same ritual In this case. (The stranger is placed on an equal footing with the Israelite citizen in matters of civil law, but there are differences between them in religious law.)

THE FIRST OF THE DOUGH: A PRIESTLY
EMOLUMENT (vv. 17–21)

18. When you enter the land This law is not

When you enter the land to which I am taking you ¹⁹and you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set some aside as a gift to the LORD: ²⁰as the first yield of your baking, you shall set aside a loaf as a gift; you shall set it aside as a gift like the gift from the threshing floor. ²¹You shall make a gift to the LORD from the first yield of your baking, throughout the ages.

²²If you unwittingly fail to observe any one of the commandments that the LORD has declared to Moses—²³anything that the LORD has enjoined upon you through Moses—from the day that the LORD gave the commandment and on through the ages:

²⁴If this was done unwittingly, through the inadvertence of the community, the whole

בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מְבִיא
אֵתְכֶם שָׁמָּה: ¹⁹וְהָיָה בְּאֲכֹלְכֶם מִלֶּחֶם
הָאָרֶץ תָּרִימוּ תְרוּמָה לַיהוָה: ²⁰רֵאשִׁית
עֲרֹסְתְּכֶם חֶלֶה תָּרִימוּ תְרוּמָה בְּתֵרוּמַת
גֶּרֶן כֵּן תָּרִימוּ אֹתָהּ: ²¹מִרֵּאשִׁית
עֲרֹסְתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה תְּרוּמָה
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: ס

²²וְכִי תִשְׁגּוּ וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת
הָאֵלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: ²³אֶת
כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה
מִן-הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה וְהָלָאָה
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם:

²⁴וְהָיָה אִם מֵעֵינֵי הָעֵדָה נָעֲשְׂתָה לְשִׁגְגָה

independent of the preceding law; both take effect simultaneously.

19. set some aside as a gift Hebrew: *tarimu t'rumah*, from the verb *herim*, which here means “to set apart, dedicate.” Thus the noun *t'rumah* refers to that which is set apart or dedicated to the sanctuary.

to the LORD We would not know if the gift is to be assigned to the altar or to the priest were it not for the prophet Ezekiel's instructions: “Give the first of the yield of your baking to the priest” (Ezek. 44:30).

20. baking Hebrew: *arisah*, which may refer to a kind of baking vessel.

gift from the threshing floor The priest was entitled to the first yield of the threshing floor (wheat) and of the vat (wine, oil), as prescribed in 18:12. This text, then, presumes a knowledge

of the priestly compensations listed in 18:8–32. The amount is never specified but seems to refer to the first loaf.

21. from the first yield Not all of it.

INADVERTENT AND BRAZEN WRONGDOING (vv. 22–31)

This passage deals with sacrifices required when the community, an Israelite citizen, or a stranger accidentally violates any of the laws.

22. The prescribed sacrifice is brought for any inadvertent sin.

23. from the day that the LORD gave the commandment Probably refers to all the laws given “from whatever day,” i.e., given at any time (Luzzatto).

through the ages The laws given to Moses are valid for all time.

20. first yield of your baking The offering of dough is different from the offering of first fruits or the firstborn of the flocks. It represents the human achievement of mixing several ingredients to make something new, different from any of its components. Even the products

of human creativity are to be considered gifts from God. To this day, Jewish tradition calls for bakers to discard a pinch of dough before baking bread. Boxes of *Pesah matzah* commonly carry the note that “the *hallah* offering” has been made.

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15:20. the first yield of your baking Jews are responsible for separating *hallah* when baking bread made from at least three pounds of flour of any of the five grains: wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats (M Hal. 1:1). (This offering is not to be confused with braided egg bread used for *Shabbat*, which is also called *hallah*.) To take *hallah*, one recites the blessing *l'hafrish hallah min ha-issah*, separates a symbolic piece of dough at least the size of an olive, and burns the dough in the oven.

community shall present one bull of the herd as a burnt offering of pleasing odor to the LORD, with its proper grain offering and libation, and one he-goat as a purification offering. ²⁵The priest shall make expiation for the whole Israelite community and they shall be forgiven; for it was an error, and for their error they have brought their offering, a gift to the LORD and their purification offering before the LORD. ²⁶The whole Israelite community and the stranger residing among them shall be forgiven, for it happened to the entire people through error.

²⁷In case it is an individual who has sinned unwittingly, he shall offer a she-goat in its first year as a purification offering. ²⁸The priest shall make expiation before the LORD on behalf of the person who erred, for he sinned unwittingly, making such expiation for him that he may be forgiven. ²⁹For the citizen among the Israelites and for the stranger who resides among them—you shall have one ritual for anyone who acts in error.

³⁰But the person, be he citizen or stranger, who acts defiantly reviles the LORD; that person

וַעֲשׂוּ כָל־הַעֲדָה פֶּרֶבְיָקָר אֶחָד לְעֹלָה
לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה וּמִנְחָתוֹ וְנִסְכּוֹ
בְּמִשְׁפֹּט וּשְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת*:
²⁵וְכַפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן עַל־כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְנִסְלַח לָהֶם כִּי־שָׁגְגָה הָיָה וְהֵם הִבִּיאוּ
אֶת־קָרְבָּנָם אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה וְחַטָּאתָם לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה עַל־שְׁגִגָתָם: ²⁶וְנִסְלַח לְכָל־עֲדַת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכָם כִּי לְכָל־
הָעָם בְּשָׁגְגָה: ס

שביעי ²⁷וְאִם־נִפְשׁ אֶחָת תַּחֲטָא בְּשָׁגְגָה
וְהִקְרִיבָה עֹז בַּת־שָׁנָתָה לְחַטָּאת:
²⁸וְכַפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן עַל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַשֹּׁגְגָה בְּחַטָּאתָהּ
בְּשָׁגְגָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו וְנִסְלַח
לּוֹ: ²⁹הָאֶזְרָח בְּבִנֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר
בְּתוֹכָם תּוֹרָה אֶחָת יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת
בְּשָׁגְגָה:

³⁰וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תַּעֲשֶׂה | בְּיַד רָמָה מִן־
הָאֶזְרָח וּמִן־הַגֵּר אֶת־יְהוָה הִוא מְגִדָּף

v. 24. חסר א'

INADVERTENT WRONGS OF THE COMMUNITY (vv. 24–26)

Based on Lev. 4:13–21.

24. through the inadvertence of the community The failure to observe a commandment escaped the notice (literally, “eyes”) of the community.

the whole community Through its representatives.

present That is, sacrifice.

proper As given in verses 9–10.

25. and they shall be forgiven Better: “that they may be forgiven.” Forgiveness is not automatic, it does not inhere in the ritual. It depends entirely on the will of God.

INADVERTENT WRONGS OF THE INDIVIDUAL (vv. 27–29)

Based on Lev. 4:27–31.

29. The stranger (*ger*) who commits an inadvertent wrong is just as liable as the Israelite citizen to bring the required sacrifice.

30. acts defiantly Literally, “with upraised hand.” An appropriate image for the brazen sinner who acts in open defiance of the Lord. (However, the phrase has a good connotation in Exod. 14:8, referring to Israelite defiance of the Egyptians.)

27. Why does a person who has sinned unintentionally have to bring an offering? It is needed to cleanse the soul of the guilt felt over having done wrong. Ramban says this refers to a person who was raised without knowledge of

the Torah, who only later in life discovers that many things he or she was accustomed to doing are forbidden. This procedure enables such a person to cleanse the soul of the embarrassment of having done wrong.

shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has spurned the word of the LORD and violated His commandment, that person shall be cut off—he bears his guilt.

³²Once, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, they came upon a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. ³³Those who found him as he was gathering wood brought him before Moses, Aaron, and the whole community. ³⁴He was placed in custody, for it had not been specified what should be done to him. ³⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death: the whole community shall pelt him with stones outside the camp.” ³⁶So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death—as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁷The LORD said to Moses as follows: ³⁸Speak

וְנִכְרְתָהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִקֶּרֶב עַמָּהּ: ³¹ כִּי
דְבַר־יְהוָה בָּזָה וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתוֹ הִפְרָה כִּכְרַת |
תִּכְרַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא עֲוֹנָה בָּהּ: פ

³² וַיְהִי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּמְצְאוּ אִישׁ
מִקֵּשֶׁשׁ עֵצִים בַּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: ³³ וַיִּקְרִיבוּ
אֹתוֹ הַמִּצְטָאִים אֹתוֹ מִקֵּשֶׁשׁ עֵצִים אֶל־
מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל כָּל־הָעֵדָה:
³⁴ וַיִּנְיְחוּ אֹתוֹ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר כִּי לֹא פֹרֵשׁ
מִהֲיַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: ³⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־
מֹשֶׁה מוֹת יוֹמָת הָאִישׁ רְגוֹם אֹתוֹ
בְּאֲבָנִים כָּל־הָעֵדָה מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה:
³⁶ וַיֵּצִיאוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל־הָעֵדָה אֶל־מִחוּץ
לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ בְּאֲבָנִים וַיָּמָת כְּאֲשֶׁר
צֻוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

מַפְטִיר ³⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ³⁸ דַּבֵּר

reviles the LORD By brazenly violating any of God's commandments.

31. he bears his guilt He will be punished.

THE CASE OF THE WOOD GATHERER
(vv. 32–36)

32. Once, when Ramban claims that this incident took place on the *Shabbat* that followed the disastrous reconnaissance mission (chapters 13–14) and was placed here for chronologic reasons.

gathering Hebrew: *m'koshesh*, formed from

the noun *kash* (stubble). It is used for gathering stubble or pieces of wood.

34. Moses hesitated because he did not know how the offender was to be punished.

35. the whole community All must participate to indicate that all share the responsibility.

outside the camp Executions took place only beyond the camp.

TZITZIT (TASSELS) (vv. 37–41)

The violet woolen cord in the *tzitzit* is a sign of nobility and priesthood. By requiring that all Is-

32. Later commentators try to mitigate the apparent severity of this narrative, lest readers come to fear that any minor breach of *Shabbat* would be considered a capital offense. Thus *Sifrei* explains that this happened years earlier, in the wilderness of Sinai, shortly after the giving of the Decalogue. The Israelites had scrupulously kept the first *Shabbat* after the giving of the law. Had they kept one more *Shabbat* with equal devotion, it might well have become a permanent way of life. The wood gatherer, therefore, was not just violating one law but was destroying the dream that Israel would be a people obedient to God's ways. For that reason, he was punished so severely. Why is the

account placed here, out of chronologic order? To introduce the concept of *tzitzit* as a reminder of our obligations. It would also seem to follow naturally upon the law of the brazen sinner.

37–41. The verb “to follow” in verse 39 is the same verb used in relation to the scouts in 13:2 (Rashi); this commandment was prompted by the misadventure of the scouts, who followed their minds (Heb. “hearts”) and eyes instead of following the will of God (Hirsch).

The purpose of the fringes seems to be to help us remember. “Seeing leads to remembering, and remembering leads to doing” (BT Men.

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.³⁹ That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the LORD and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge.⁴⁰ Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.⁴¹ I the LORD am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the LORD your God.

אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם
צִיצִית עַל־כְּנָפֵי בְגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנּוּ
עַל־צִיצִית הַכֶּנָּף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת: ³⁹ וְהָיָה
לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־
כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־
תִתְּנוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: ⁴⁰ לְמַעַן
תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהִיִּיתֶם
קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: ⁴¹ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם מִצְרָיִם
לֵהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: פ

raelite males wear *tzitzit*, God is elevating them in status.

38. fringes The *tzitzit* resemble a lock of hair (see “and took me by the *tzitzit* of my head,” Ezek. 8:3). Hence, one might also render it “tassels.” Some say that the word refers to an ornamental floral design, as attested by a related term in Akkadian.

corner Hebrew: *kanaf*; literally, “wing.” In ancient days, men wore closed robes or skirts, as did women. The term may refer to the scalloped hems resembling wings or to the embroidered threads that hung from the hem at quarter points.

39. That shall be your fringe Literally, “that shall be a *tzitzit* for you,” i.e., an “ornament.” The word is related to *tzitz*, “ornament, frontlet,”

which is mentioned in Exod. 28:36.

it Hebrew: *oto*, which is masculine in gender and so cannot refer to the tassel or fringe (*tzitzit*), a feminine noun. It must refer to the combination of tassel and thread.

lustful urge Hebrew: *זנה*; literally, “fornicate.” It is most often used figuratively to describe Israel’s relationship with pagan gods.

40. holy to your God The *tzitzit* are a reminder of the priestly robes. The Israelites, although not priests, can still attain a life of holiness.

41. to be your God The redemption of the Israelites from Egypt was the act by which the Lord claimed their allegiance. The Israelites thereby are enjoined to follow God’s commandments and achieve holiness.

43b). “Remember that you are servants of the Almighty, from whom you received commandments” (Sforno). The purpose of remembering is not to shape our belief but to guide our behavior.

your heart and eyes Should “eyes” not come first? We see something and then we are tempted by it. In fact, the reverse is often true. Our hearts are inclined to covet something and only then do our eyes fasten on it.

you shall be reminded Hebrew: *tizk’ru*. A Hasidic custom emphasizes the “z” sound when pronouncing this word, to ensure that it will not be confused with *tisk’ru* (you shall be rewarded). We should observe the commandments out of love for and obedience to God, not in anticipation of reward. The Midrash compares *tzitzit* to a lifeline thrown to a drowning person: “Take hold of this, for if you do not, you endanger your life” (Num. R. 17:6).

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15:37–41. The Sages chose these verses as the third passage of the *Sh’ma*, which, along with the *Amidah*, is one of the two major parts of the morning and evening services. These verses are the basis for the practice of wearing a prayer shawl (*tallit*) with a ritual fringe (*tzitzit*) on each of its four corners. Some also wear a small fringed garment (*tallit katan*) under the shirt. Fluid from a mollusk (*hillazon*) was used to produce the blue (*t’kheilet*) dye (BT Men. 42b); once that source became nearly extinct, the blue thread was no longer required. But the blue-among-white of the *tzitzit* inspired the design of the flag of the State of Israel.

הפטרות שלח לך

HAFTARAH FOR SH'LAḤ L'KHA

JOSHUA 2:1–24

Two people dispatched by Joshua to spy out the land first come to the house of Rahab the harlot in Jericho where they find shelter and enter into a series of commitments in gratitude for their host's protection from a royal search party. Finally they head for the hills, to lie low until their pursuers turn back.

Rahab has heard the frightening report that Israelite troops put the Amorites under the ban (*herem*) of utter annihilation (v. 10). She boldly requests that her act of loyalty to the spies be requited and her family saved (vv. 12–13), and her request is granted. No such situation is known from any war reports in Deuteronomy or elsewhere, where the repeated divine demand is annihilation (cf. Deut. 2:34–36), showing no mercy (Deut. 7:2). We must, therefore, assume that the text in Joshua rejects the harsh law of *herem* and opts for mercy to those who display kindness. A silent protest (albeit hedged with signs and oaths and conditions) thus lies at the heart of the narrative. The human face of the enemy makes a compelling claim.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

In preparation for his invasion of Canaan, the military leader Joshua sends two spies to scout the Land. "Go, reconnoiter the region of Jericho," he commands, employing a verb that literally means to "see" or "spy out" (*r'u*) the land. Moses used similar terminology when he commanded 12 spies to go and "see" (*u-r'item*) what kind of country they are about to enter (Num. 13:18). This verbal echo reminds the reader that Joshua's commission is a second attempt to scout the Land. The first one failed because the negative report

of 10 of the spies led to a failure of nerve among the people. Joshua's command to his spies thus closes an historical cycle: The sins of the rebellious generation of the wilderness have been punished and the Land may now be settled. In other words, Joshua hopes to complete what Moses had initiated.

The dominant relation between the *parashah* and the *haftarah* is the difference between failure and success. The little faith of the original spies (except for Caleb and Joshua) resulted in a popular protest against Moses' plan, and God's punishment of that entire generation. Only the innocent babes (and the two faithful spies) were spared so as to enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:30–33; Deut. 1:39). That entrance under Joshua's leadership not only concludes the period of wandering and wrath but inaugurates the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham as well (Gen. 15:16–19). The events in Josh. 2 thus start to bring closure to hopes and prophecies at the beginning of national memory. On the other side of the river Jordan is the homeland. Ancient sins have been expunged. All is ready for a new beginning.

Yet one ironic connection stands out. After the failure of the first venture to reconnoiter the Land, God bemoaned the people's disregard of the many signs (*otot*) of divine power (Num. 14:11) that they had witnessed. How fitting, then, that Joshua's spies exchange signs (*otot*) with the harlot of Jericho (their oath, her cord). It is as if the time of miracles has passed and all depends on human arrangements. But the spies learn faith from Rahab. When they return to Joshua, they invoke her own words (in v. 9), saying, "The LORD has delivered the whole land into our power . . . all the inhabitants are quaking before us" (v. 24).

2 Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim, saying, "Go, reconnoiter the region of Jericho." So they set out, and they came to the house of a harlot named Rahab and lodged there. ²The king of Jericho was told, "Some men have come here tonight, Israelites, to spy out the country." ³The king of Jericho thereupon sent orders to Rahab: "Produce the men who came to you and entered your house, for they have come to spy out the whole country." ⁴The woman, however, had taken the two men and hidden them. "It is true," she said, "the men did come to me, but I didn't know where they were from. ⁵And at dark, when the gate was about to be closed, the men left; and I don't know where the men went. Quick, go after them, for you can overtake them."—⁶Now she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under some stalks of flax which she had lying on the roof.—⁷So the men pursued them in the direction of the Jordan down to the fords; and no sooner had the pursuers gone out than the gate was shut behind them.

⁸The spies had not yet gone to sleep when she came up to them on the roof. ⁹She said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given the country to you, because dread of you has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds for you when you left Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings across the Jordan, whom you doomed. ¹¹When we heard about it, we lost heart, and no man had

ב וישלח יהושע־בן־נון מן־השט"ם שְׁנַיִם־אֲנָשִׁים מִרְגְּלִים חָרַשׁ לֵאמֹר לְכוּ רְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־יְרִיחוֹ וְיִלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית־אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וּשְׁמָהּ רַחַב וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ שָׁמָּה: ² וַיֵּאמֶר לְמֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה אֲנָשִׁים בָּאוּ הֵנָּה הַלַּיְלָה מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַחְפֹּר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: ³ וַיִּשְׁלַח מֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ אֶל־רַחַב לֵאמֹר הוֹצִיֵאִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבָּאִים אֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ לְבֵיתְךָ כִּי לַחְפֹּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ: ⁴ וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה אֶת־שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֵאֵין הֵמָּה: ⁵ וַיְהִי הַשָּׁעַר לִסְגֹּר בַּחֲשֹׁף וְהָאֲנָשִׁים יָצְאוּ לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אָנָּה הָלְכוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים רִדְפוּ מֵהָר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כִּי תִשְׁיָגוּם: ⁶ וְהָיָה הָעֵלְתָם הַגָּגָה וַתִּטְמְנֵם בְּפִשְׁתֵּי הָעֵץ הָעֲרֻכֹת לֹהַ עַל־הַגָּג: ⁷ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רִדְפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם דֶּרֶךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן עַל הַמַּעְבְּרוֹת וְהַשָּׁעַר סָגֹר אַחֲרֵי בְּאֶשֶׁר יָצְאוּ הָרִדְפִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: ⁸ וְהָמָּה טָרֵם יִשְׁכְּבוּן וְהָיָה עֲלֵתָה עֲלֵיהֶם עַל־הַגָּג: ⁹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאֲנָשִׁים יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־נִתְּנָן יְהוָה לָכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִי־נִפְלָה אִימַתְכֶם עָלֵינוּ וְכִי נִמְגֹּו כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם: ¹⁰ כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הוֹבִישׁ יְהוָה אֶת־יָם־סוּף מִפְּנֵיכֶם בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם לְשֹׁנֵי מִלְּחָמָה הָאֵלֶּם אֲשֶׁר בָּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן לְסִיחֹן וְלָעוֹג אֲשֶׁר הִחְרַמְתֶּם אוֹתָם: ¹¹ וְנִשְׁמַע וַיִּמָּס לְבָבָנוּ וְלֹא־קָמָה עוֹד רוּחַ בְּאִישׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם

Joshua 2:1. harlot Hebrew: *zonah*. Since antiquity, Jewish tradition has softened the image by interpreting the word as "innkeeper," one who "provides food" (*zun*). There is no reason, however, to doubt the ascription of harlotry. It serves as an ironic counterpoint to the narrative of salvation.

4. and hidden them Literally, "and hid him" (*va-titzp'no*), interpreted to mean that she hid each one separately to make their hiding places inconspicuous (Rashi, Radak).

any more spirit left because of you; for the LORD your God is the only God in heaven above and on earth below. ¹²Now, since I have shown loyalty to you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will show loyalty to my family. Provide me with a reliable sign ¹³that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death.” ¹⁴The men answered her, “Our persons are pledged for yours, even to death! If you do not disclose this mission of ours, we will show you true loyalty when the LORD gives us the land.”

¹⁵She let them down by a rope through the window—for her dwelling was at the outer side of the city wall and she lived in the actual wall. ¹⁶She said to them, “Make for the hills, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Stay there in hiding three days, until the pursuers return; then go your way.”

¹⁷But the men warned her, “We will be released from this oath which you have made us take ¹⁸[unless,] when we invade the country, you tie this length of crimson cord to the window through which you let us down. Bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your family together in your house; ¹⁹and if anyone ventures outside the doors of your house, his blood will be on his head, and we shall be clear. But if a hand is laid on anyone who remains in the house with you, his blood shall be on our heads. ²⁰And if you disclose this mission of ours, we shall likewise be released from the oath which you made us take.” ²¹She replied, “Let it be as you say.”

She sent them on their way, and they left; and she tied the crimson cord to the window.

בִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם
מִמַּעַל וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת: ¹²וְעַתָּה
הַשְׁבְּעוּנִי לִי בַיהוָה כִּי־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּכֶם
חֶסֶד וְעָשִׂיתֶם גַּם־אִתָּם עִם־בֵּית אָבִי
חֶסֶד וְנָתַתֶּם לִי אוֹת אֶמֶת: ¹³וְהַחַיִּיתֶם
אֶת־אָבִי וְאֶת־אִמִּי וְאֶת־אֲחֵי וְאֶת־אֲחֹתִי
אֲחִיוֹתִי וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם וְהַצַּלְתֶּם
אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵינוּ מִמָּוֶת: ¹⁴וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ
הָאֲנָשִׁים נַפְשֵׁנוּ תַּחְתִּיכֶם לְמוֹת אִם
לֹא תִגִּידוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵנוּ זֶה וְהָיָה בְּתֶת־
יְהוָה לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ חֶסֶד
וְאֶמֶת:

¹⁵וַתוֹרְדֵם בַּחֲבֵל בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן בִּי בֵּיתָהּ
בְּקִיר הַחוֹמָה וּבְחוֹמָה הִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת:
¹⁶וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הִהְרֵה לָכֹּן פֶּן־יִפְגְּעוּ בָכֶם
הָרֹדְפִים וְנִחַבְתֶּם שָׁמָּה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים עַד
שׁוּב הָרֹדְפִים וְאַחֵר תֵּלְכוּ לְדֶרֶכְכֶם:
¹⁷וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הָאֲנָשִׁים נָקִים אֲנַחְנוּ
מִשְׁבַּעְתְּךָ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר הַשְׁבַּעְתָּנוּ: ¹⁸הִנֵּה
אֲנַחְנוּ בָּאִים בָּאָרֶץ אֶת־תִּקְוַת חַיֵּי הַשָּׁנִי
הַזֶּה תִּקְשְׁרִי בַּחֲלוֹן אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְדְתָנוּ בּוֹ
וְאֶת־אֲבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ וְאֶת־אֲחִיךָ וְאֶת
כָּל־בֵּית אָבִיךָ תִּאֲסָפִי אֵלַיךָ הַבֵּיתָה:
¹⁹וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מִדֹּלְתֵי בֵיתְךָ
הַחוּצָה דָּמּוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְאֲנַחְנוּ נָקִים
וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אִתְּךָ בְּבֵית דָּמּוֹ
בְּרֹאשׁוֹ אִם־יֵד תִּהְיֶה־בּוֹ: ²⁰וְאִם־תִּגִּידִי
אֶת־דְּבָרֵנוּ זֶה וְהָיִינוּ נָקִים מִשְׁבַּעְתְּךָ
אֲשֶׁר הַשְׁבַּעְתָּנוּ: ²¹וַתֹּאמֶר כְּדַבְּרִיכֶם כֹּן־
הוּא

וְתִשְׁלַחַם וַיִּלְכוּ וַתִּקְשֹׁר אֶת־תִּקְוַת הַשָּׁנִי
בַּחֲלוֹן:

11. for the LORD your God is the only God
For this expression of piety, midrashic tradition
says that Rahab was a righteous gentile who con-

verted and married Joshua; together they pro-
duced prophets (including Jeremiah) and priests.

²²They went straight to the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers turned back. And so the pursuers, searching all along the road, did not find them.

²³Then the two men came down again from the hills and crossed over. They came to Joshua son of Nun and reported to him all that had happened to them. ²⁴They said to Joshua, "The LORD has delivered the whole land into our power; in fact, all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before us."

²² וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ הָהָרָה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים עַד־שָׁבוּ הָרֹדְפִים וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ הָרֹדְפִים בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ:

²³ וַיָּשְׁבוּ שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּרְדּוּ מִהָהָר וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון וַיְסַפְּרוּ־לּוֹ אֵת כָּל־הַמַּצְאוֹת אֹתָם: ²⁴ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְגַם־נִמְלָגוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ: ס