

SHELACH

FUSION  
WITH RABBI JASON



with  
*Rabbi Jason Sobel*

5786 - THE YEAR OF OPEN WINDOWS

TORAH PORTIONS  
**Parashat Shelach**



## THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTIONS NUMBERS 13:1-15:41

*Parashat Shelach* / פרשת שלח-לך

In this weeks guide...

### COMMENTARY..... 1

Parashat Shelach contrasts the fear-driven response of the ten spies with the faith-filled perspective of Joshua and Caleb. Although all twelve men saw the same land, Joshua and Caleb focused on the God who had already delivered Israel from Egypt, while the others allowed fear to shape their interpretation of reality. The mitzvah of tzitzit later serves as a reminder to keep our attention fixed on God's commands rather than being ruled by fear, appearances, or emotions.

### NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN..... 2

The New Testament tie-in reflects on Israel's refusal to enter the Promised Land and compares it to moments in the apostles' lives when faithfulness to God brought opposition and danger. Sometimes God delivers His people dramatically, as He did for Joshua and Caleb; at other times, He gives strength to endure suffering faithfully, as seen in Paul's ministry. The passage reminds believers that courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to trust God regardless of the outcome.

### HEBREW WORD STUDY..... 3

The Hebrew word *hoshea* expresses a heartfelt cry for salvation, deliverance, and rescue. Rooted in deep dependence upon God, it reflects the biblical understanding that salvation is not merely an escape from danger but rather being brought into freedom, restoration, and the fullness of life. The word also points to the names Hoshea, Yehoshua (Joshua), and ultimately Yeshua, reminding us that true salvation comes from the Lord alone.



Shelach is an imperative verb meaning "send out." This portion's name comes from the opening words of its second verse: "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan" (Numbers 13:2). What unfolds, of course, is the tragic saga of ten spies who spread fear and discouragement by delivering a negative report about the Promised Land. The Children of Israel rebelled against the Lord, refusing to enter Canaan. As a result of their disobedience, God condemned that generation to wander in the wilderness for forty years. We are called to be a people who trust God, despite the circumstances and regardless of our feelings. After all, "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)

# Fusion Global

Parashat Shelach / פרשת שלח-לך | with **Rabbi Jason Sobel**

Staff Contributor

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## COMMENTARY

This parashah recounts the unfortunate tale of the 10 spies' report, which doomed the children of Israel to 40 years of wandering in the desert and led to the destruction of the entire generation that left Egypt.

12 spies were sent by Moses to inspect the land on a reconnaissance mission, not to decide whether it was wise, but to know exactly what they were getting into. Moses chose, per the command of the Lord, the 12 tribal heads. These were men of renown, leaders, men people look up to. They spent 40 days in the land of Canaan. One-sixth returned with faith. They all saw the same things; however, Caleb and Joshua paid closer attention to the God who freed them from the mighty Egyptian empire. This calmed their nerves and gave them the courage to do what God was calling them to do.

These men were sent, as we read, "וישלח אתם משה לתור את ארץ כנען" (*Vayishlach otam Moshe latur et eretz Canaan/And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan*) (Num 13:17). They were on a mission to see, to sense, and to report so the children of Israel could obey the command of the Lord. This went terribly wrong.

One could argue that God subsequently gave the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* in light of this tragedy. God says that the children of Israel are to tie *tzitziyot* (fringes) on the corners of their garments (Num 15:37-41). Why? We read, "And it will be to you for a fringe and you will see it and remember all the commandment of the Lord and you will do them and not go after (lit. spy out after) your heart and your eyes after which you prostitute yourselves) (Num 15:39). What's the connection?

The *tzitzit* is a physical sign to look upon and to remember what God said to do. It is a prompt to keep our attention on the Lord rather than on our hearts and eyes. The Hebrew here is the same root word in both accounts. The spies saw the land, its fortifications, and its inhabitants, and it induced fear in their hearts. It caused them to play the prostitute, following their interpretation of what they saw and how it made them feel. The *tzitzit*, however, is a sign that God is with us wherever we go, that we should remember the Lord and what He commands us to do, regardless of what we see and how we might feel.

Things can be intimidating, formidable, seemingly insurmountable, yet even as we look at what is physically in front of us, we need to turn our attention to the Lord. If He says we can do it, we can do it.

Our feelings are real, but God is a jealous God and wants them for Himself. If we give them to Him, we can overcome!

# New Testament Tie-In

When we think of low points during Israel's wilderness wanderings, the incident involving the twelve spies comes to mind. There's no shortage of profound (and sobering!) wisdom in this story...

*Should Moses have sent the spies or insisted that God's promises were enough?  
What do we do when giant grapes are accompanied by actual giants?  
How did the spies know the Nephilim saw them like grasshoppers?*

Here's what we do know: Israel chose ... *poorly*. The cloud and pillar of fire had led this nation to a decisive moment, the culmination of a dramatic and supernatural saga. God's promises to Abraham were on the verge of fulfillment! His offspring were numerous as the stars (Genesis 15) and about to possess the land he dwelled in as an outsider (Genesis 17).

Abraham's offspring said, "No!"

They refused to trust and obey God by entering the Promised Land. They rejected Moses by suggesting new, self-appointed leadership (cf. Numbers 14.4). Most diabolical of all, the Israelite nation called for the assassination of the only two godly voices amongst the spies,

But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle.  
-Numbers 14.10 (NLT)

One commentator describes the scene: "At the moment that Caleb and Joshua are threatened with death by stoning, God interposes His earthly manifestation, the luminous cloud, and drives back the assailants rather like the two divine messengers to Sodom (Genesis 19) drive off the would-be rapists by striking them with blinding light."<sup>1</sup>

Stories like this are a source of boldness and courage. When we are faithful to God, He can supernaturally intervene to protect us from people's violent responses to that very faithfulness. But there's another story. It's not nearly as encouraging, but it's worth considering because it might expand our ways of thinking about how God manifests His power in the lives of His servants. In other words, anyone can be impressed with God rescuing His people from danger via a supernatural display of glory, but sometimes God's glorious goodness takes different forms.

In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas entered a synagogue in Iconium (modern Konya, Turkey). Their preaching stirred up trouble (as it often did), and it wasn't long until "an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jewish people, along with their rulers, **to abuse and stone them**. But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding countryside" (Acts 14.6-7 *emphasis added*).

Paul and Barnabas resumed preaching in the next city, serving *Yeshua* faithfully and with holy boldness. "But Jewish people came from Antioch and Iconium; and after they won the crowd over and **stoned Paul**, they were dragging him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went back into the city" (vv 19-20).

## WHAT IF...?

Sometimes, the cloud of God's glory may appear and prevent a stoning. Other times, we're empowered to endure stoning and march back into the fray because God's glory in His people surrounds us! Sometimes a breakthrough looks like deliverance from fearful and threatening situations.

Maybe this is why Paul could write,

"But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord." -Romans 8.37-39

# Hebrew Word Study

## *Hosea/Hoshea* [הושע] / “salvation, deliverance”

The Hebrew word הושע (*hoshea*) comes from the root *yasha* and is important in the Hebrew Bible, where it means salvation, deliverance, and rescue. In its Hiphil imperative form, it is a direct and urgent call: “Save!” or “Deliver!” This is more than just a theological idea; it is a personal plea to God.

Psalm 118:25 shows this urgency: “O LORD, save now! We beseech You, O LORD, prosper now!” (TLV). This same plea appears as “Hosanna” in the New Testament (Matthew 21:9), showing how a cry for help can become an act of praise, moving from urgent need to worship.

The root *yasha* means more than rescue from danger; it also includes feelings of relief, freedom, and having room to live. In Hebrew thought, salvation is not just about escaping trouble, but about being brought into a place where life can be lived fully. When the Psalmist cries out, it is not only for survival but for God to restore a full and clear life. Using the imperative form makes the plea more intense, showing strong trust in God. Calling out in this way is an act of faith, believing that God listens and responds.

The word *hoshea* challenges our modern habit of trying to stay in control during hard times. Instead of giving up, it encourages people to actively ask God for help. When Psalm 118:25 adds “now, please”, it shows that urgency is not just allowed but expected in faith. Still, calling out to God means trusting Him with the result.

Several people in the Bible exemplify the meaning of *hoshea*. Joshua’s first name was Hoshea (Numbers 13:8, 16, TLV: “From the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun”), but Moses changed it to Yehoshua, which means “Yahweh is salvation.” This change shows that true salvation comes from God. The prophet Hosea’s name also points to God’s saving purpose during a time of crisis (Hosea 1:1–2, TLV: “The word of *ADONAI* that came to Hosea...”). On the other hand, the last king of Israel, Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1, TLV: “In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria”), is an example of salvation that was not accepted.

Ultimately, *hoshea* represents more than a term; it embodies a posture. It shows an attitude of being honest about our needs, speaking directly, and trusting God. It is the kind of prayer people make when they have nothing left but their relationship with God. In Hebrew thought, true salvation begins when a person is completely dependent on God.

# FUSION

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**HEBREW WORD STUDY**

הושע

**הושע / Hoshea / proper name, meaning salvation, deliverance, rescue**

הוֹשֵׁעַ (Hoshea) means “salvation.” In every appearance, the name draws attention to the saving purpose of God, whether through a faithful leader, a prophet’s message, or even the fall of a kingdom that refused to repent. The name’s promise is realized only when joined to faithfulness (Joshua, post-exilic Hoshea) and forfeited when the covenant is spurned (King Hoshea).

Each reference, whether to leader, king, official, covenant signer, or prophet, adds a facet to the portrait of divine “salvation.” Sometimes it is embraced; sometimes it is tragically abandoned.

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Taken from Lexical Summary at biblehub.org

[fusionglobal.org](http://fusionglobal.org)

## THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- The ten spies and the two faithful spies all saw the same obstacles, yet they responded very differently. When you face intimidating situations or uncertainty, what tends to shape your perspective most strongly: fear, circumstances, and appearances, or confidence in God’s faithfulness and promises? What would it look like to “fix your eyes” more intentionally on the Lord this week?
- The tzitzit were given as a physical reminder to remember God’s commands instead of following fear, impulse, or emotion. What practical reminders help keep your heart and mind centered on God in daily life? Are there areas where your emotions or anxieties may be competing with trust and obedience?

# GLOBAL

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:** *Parashat Korach* / פרשת קורח

## **TORAH**

*Sunday:* Numbers 16:1-13

*Monday:* Numbers 16:14-19

*Tuesday:* Numbers 16:20-17:8

*Wednesday:* Numbers 17:9-15

*Thursday:* Numbers 17:16-24

*Friday:* Numbers 17:25-18:20

*Saturday:* Numbers 18:21-32

## **Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*):**

1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

## **New Covenant Reading:**

John 19:1-17

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.

<sup>1</sup>Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 525.