

פרשת
שלח לך
Parashat Shelach Lecha

*Bamidbar / Numbers 13:1-15:41, Joshua 2:1-24
Mark 10:1-45*

What is גדלה (Gadlecha) the greatness of God?

In Parashat Shelach Lecha, Moshe sends out a delegation to spy out the land of Canaan to see the kind of people and the kind of land the Promised Land contains. Following their return after spying out the land for 40 days, the men gave a bad report to the nation of Israel demonstrating their lack of faith in God to overpower the people and take the land. We read the spies saying the following, *Bamidbar / Numbers 13:32*, ויציאו דבת הארץ אשר תרו אתה אל-בני ישראל, לאמר הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה ארץ אכלת יושביה הוא וכל-העם: *13:32 So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (ESV)* It wasn't just the people of Canaan that were the problem, these men stated this is a land that devours its inhabitants (ארץ אכלת יושביה). Because of their lack of faith, the *Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3* states the spies have no portion in the world to come, as it says, "And those men that spread such calumnies about the land, died by the plague before the lord" (*Bamidbar / Numbers 14:37*): "[they] died" in this world, "by the plague" in the world to come." In addition to

this, the rabbis also say the generation of the wilderness have no share in the world to come and will not stand at the [last] judgment, as it says, *“In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die”* The Mishnah compares these men to the generation of the flood (*Bereshit / Genesis 6*) and to the men of Sodom (*Bereshit / Genesis 18-19*). Their wickedness was so great, they are described as not having a part in the world to come to the extent that they will not stand at the final judgment saying, *“They will not stand in the congregation of the righteous, but they will stand in the congregation of the wicked.”* Because of the false report, the people of Israel, according to *Bamidbar / Numbers 14*, did the following, א וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל-הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת-קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלִילָה הַהוּא: ב וַיִּלְנוּ עַל-מִטְּשֵׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם כָּל-הָעֵדָה לֹא-מִתְּנוּ לָנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בְּמִדְבַר הַזֶּה לֹא-מִתְּנוּ: ג וְלָמָּה יְהוָה מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל בְּחֶרֶב נַשִּׁינוּ וְטַפְנוּ: *14:1 Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 14:2 All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 14:3 ‘Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ (NASB)* We read the people responding saying, וְלָמָּה יְהוָה מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל בְּחֶרֶב, *“and why does Hashem bring us to this land to fall victim to the sword?”* The idea here is Israel feared the people of the land of Canaan, and they did not believe the power of God could deliver them from anything. Because of these things, the people did not want to ascend to the land of Canaan. The men who were sent out to spy out the land, their demoralizing the people of Israel about the conquest of the land of Canaan, we read in the Torah how their conquest of the land was never about their military might. It was a gift of God (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 13:2*) as the Lord God told Moshe, *“Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.”* Because this is a gift of God, there is a spiritual aspect to ascending that is coupled to God’s mercy to receive the land לעלות, ולא אביתם לעלות, *“and you did not want to ascend.”* The Lord God Himself was going to dispossess the

Canaanites. He will wage the war against the peoples on their behalf. The reason there is a spiritual aspect to the ascending to take the land was due to their clear lack of trust in the Lord who had up until this moment overcome every obstacle that was in their path. The land of Canaan is an elevated (lifted up) land based upon a geographical spacial relationship relative to Egypt. Therefore, the Promised Land provides this imagery of drawing nearer to the Lord God in heaven. The people's refusal to go up (to ascend) was a refusal to take upon themselves the holiness of God, they were rejecting God's gift. The people did not want to ascend and so this was considered rebellion against God's command. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:25-26*)

In our own lives, many times we ask the Lord "*why have you brought me to this point in my life?*" Or "*why is this happening to me?*" The answer may be for the sake of faithfulness, for growth, for trusting in the Lord, etc. The people received the good news regarding the promises of God along with the sampling of the fruit of the land. Their receiving the land was a gift and they were commanded to go up and take the land. The people however were living in the period of time between hearing the good news and the fulfillment of that good news. This required faithfulness on their part. There was a sort of tension here that is similar to what we find going on in our lives today, we have the good news of the Lord God sending His Son Yeshua having laid down his life on our behalf, creating the opportunity to partake in the kingdom of God, we are invited into the God's kingdom through faith. We live in a time where the hearing of the news, and the fulfillment of the news about God's Messiah had already taken place, and now we are called to act in faith and faithfulness to enter into that peace, the gift that God provides. In a similar manner, we too live in the tension of the stresses, hardship, troubles of daily life and then maintaining our faith and being faithfulness before God. The beauty and power of creation is that we are always being told how the Lord God of Israel is going to do a new thing. This is what the nation of Israel struggled with in the report the spies gave going against the command of God, demonstrating a lack of faith to trust in God and going up (ascending) to take the land. Today, do we to have a similar imperative to the command of God, to have faith, to be faithful, and to trust in God to do what He has promised!

This week's reading is taken from *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:1-24*.

Bamidbar / Numbers 14:1-34

14:1 Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 14:2 All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 14:3 'Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' 14:4 So they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.' 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. 14:6 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 14:7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, 'The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 14:8 'If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us a land which flows with milk and honey. 14:9 'Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.' 14:10 But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. 14:11 The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? 14:12 'I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.' 14:13 But Moses said to the Lord, 'Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from

their midst, 14:14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O Lord, are in the midst of this people, for You, O Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 14:15 'Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, 14:16 'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 14:17 'But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 14:18 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations. 14:19 'Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.' 14:20 So the Lord said, 'I have pardoned them according to your word; 14:21 but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. 14:22 'Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, 14:23 shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it. 14:24 'But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it. (NASB)

א וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל-הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת-קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלִילָה הַהוּא: ב
 וַיִּלְנוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם כָּל-הָעֵדָה
 לוֹ-מִתְּנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בְּמִדְבַר הַזֶּה לוֹ-מִתְּנוּ: ג וְלָמָּה יְהוָה
 מִבְּיַא אֶתְנוּ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפְל בְּחָרֵב נִשְׁיָנוּ וְטַפְּנוּ יְהִיוּ לְבָז

הָלוֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוֹב מִצְרֵימָה: ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו נִתְּנָה רֹאשׁ
וְנִשׁוּבָה מִצְרֵימָה: ה וַיִּפֹּל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֹן עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי כָל-קְהֵל
עֵדֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ו וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נּוּן וְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֶה מִן-הַתָּרִים אֶת-
הָאָרֶץ קָרְעוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם: ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶתָּה טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד: [שלישי]
ח אִם-חֲפִץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה וְהֵבִיא אֶתָּנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וּנְתַנָּה לָנוּ
אָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-הוּא זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ: ט אַךְ בִּיהוָה אֵל-תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם
אֶל-תִּירְאוּ אֶת-עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לְחַמְנוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מַעֲלִיָּהֶם וַיְהוָה
אֶתָּנוּ אֶל-תִּירָאֵם: י וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל-הָעֵדָה לְרָגוּם אֶתָּם בְּאֲבָנִים וּכְבוֹד
יְהוָה נִרְאָה בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ יֵא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עַד-אַנָּה יִנְאַצְנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַד-אַנָּה לֹא-יֵאֱמִינוּ בִּי בְּכֹל
הָאֲתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ: יב אֲכַנּוּ בְּדַבָּר וְאוֹרְשָׁנוּ וְאַעֲשֶׂה אֶתָּה
לְגוֹי-גָדוֹל וְעַצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ: יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם
כִּי-הֵעֲלִיתָ בְּכַחֲדָה אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקִּרְבּוֹ: יד וְאַמְרוּ אֶל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי-אֶתָּה יְהוָה בְּקִרְבֵּי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עֵינֵינוּ בְּעֵינֵי נִרְאָה
| אֶתָּה יְהוָה וְעַנְנְךָ עִמָּד עֲלֵהֶם וּבַעֲמֵד עֲנֵן אֶתָּה הִלֵּךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם
וּבַעֲמוּד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה: טו וְהִמַּתָּה אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד וְאַמְרוּ
הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-שְׁמֵעֶךָ לֵאמֹר: טז מִבְּלַתִּי יִכְלַת יְהוָה לְהֵבִיא
אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם בַּמִּדְבָּר: יז
וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל-נָא כַח אֲדֹנָי כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר: יח יְהוָה אֲרַךְ אַפַּיִם
וְרַב-חַסֵּד נִשְׂא עוֹן וּפִשַׁע וְנִקְהָה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עוֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵי
עַל-שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעֵים: יט סֶלַח-נָא לְעוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כַּגְּדֹל חַסְדְּךָ
וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָתָה לְעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהָה: כ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סֶלַחְתִּי
כְּדַבַּרְךָ: כא וְאוּלָּם חַי-אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֵא כְבוֹד-יְהוָה אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: כב
כִּי כָל-הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי וְאֶת-אֲתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם
וּבַמִּדְבָּר וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עָשָׂה פְעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: כג אִם-יִרְאוּ
אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָם וְכָל-מִנְאַצֵּי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ: כד וְעַבְדִּי
כָּלֵב יַעֲקֹב הֵיטָה רֹיחַ אַחֲרֵת עָמוּ וַיִּמְלֵא אַחֲרָי וְהֵבִיאֲתִיו אֶל-הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר-בָּא שָׁמָּה וְזָרְעוּ יוֹרְשָׁנָה:

After the people's rebellion we read Moshe praying to the Lord asking for forgiveness and mercy, *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17* וְעַתָּה 14:17 Therefore, I pray, let my Lord's forbearance be great, as You have declared, saying, (NASB) A Midrashic approach based on *Midrash Rabbah on Bamidbar Parashat 16 Part 22* states "The words 'let Your strength be magnified' means that Moses pleads that the attribute of Mercy should prevail over the

attribute of Justice at all times in the future.” This idea is emphasized in the Masoretic text, where the letters נ-ג-ו in the word נ-ג-ו as well as the letter ו in the word וְגָדַל are enlarged with a circulus over the top indicating a note in the marginal Masorah which states these words have enlarged letters. The Masoretic text uses the enlarged letter ו in the word וְגָדַל as an allusion to emphasize that attribute of Mercy as represented by the larger ו indicating that Mercy should always be preeminent (in ascendancy). The phrase וְעַתָּה יְגַדְלֵנָּה כְּחֹדֶר אֲדֹנָי “*now let the power of HaShem be great*” Moshe asks that God’s mercy be greater than His justice. This is an important Torah based perspective. This is consistent with what Solomon said in *Mishley / Proverbs 16:31*, טוֹב אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם מִגְבוּר, “*he that is slow to anger is better than he who is mighty.*” The display of being able to suppress one’s anger is one of the greatest proofs of greatness. In the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:1*, the term גְבוּר, “*hero or strong man,*” is someone who can conquer his emotions when his emotions threaten to overrule his intellect. (*Daat Zkenim on Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17 Part 1*) The idea is that Moshe called upon the honor of the Lord imagining the nations as speaking about the disappearance of Israel due to being destroyed because of her sins, and then Moshe challenged the Lord to prove all those who do not believe in God’s ability to help Israel conquer the land of Canaan and to dispossess them. (*Chizkuni, Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17 Part 1*) In addition to this, the rabbis discuss in the *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 60* and in *Midrash Rabbah on Bamidbar Parashat 21 Part 6* how the word וְעַתָּה “*and now*” invariably means that the Lord God provided an opening for man to do תְּשׁוּבָה (repentance). This is another Torah based perspective is how God is always providing us a way that leads to repentance and turning from our sinful ways. In *Midrash Tanchuma Buber on Parashat Shelach 14:1* the rabbis comment upon Moshe’s plea to God concerning the golden calf. “*When Israel made the calf, Moses stood up to him. At that time he made a plea on their behalf. He said to him: Please, make known to me by what principle you run your world. Thus it says this (in Exod. 33:13): PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAYS KNOWN TO ME THAT I MAY KNOW YOU.... The Holy One said to him: It is by the principle of mercy (grace, chesed) that I run my world, as stated (in Exod. 34:6): AND*

THE LORD PASSED BY BEFORE HIM, AND PROCLAIMED: THE LORD, THE LORD IS A MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS GOD, SLOW TO ANGER AND ABOUNDING IN KINDNESS AND TRUTH.” When Moses saw that the Holy One had said to him; SLOW TO ANGER, he began saying to the Holy One” According to Bamidbar / Numbers 14:18, we read the following, יח יהוה ארך אפים ורב-חסד נשא עון ופשע ונקה לא ינקה פקד עון אבות על-בנים על-שלישים ועל-רבעים: 14:18 ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations. (NASB) The idea here is the mercy of God being brought to the people through the intermediary Moshe. The Lord God Almighty used the example of Moshe through the Torah as an intermediary between God and the people to bring peace and forgiveness. A similar thread of thought is brought out in the book of John on the mercy of God being brought through the Messianic intermediary Yeshua the Messiah.

John 1:12-20

1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 1:15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 1:16 And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed,

I am not the Christ. (KJV)

What John is describing here is of the promised one, whom God would bring as the annointed one of God who would help the people obtain mercy from God. This parallels what we find going on throughout the Torah between Moshe and Israel. *John 1:13* states “*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” This is a reference to the Lord God providing a way into the kingdom of heaven outside of birthright (being Jewish) opening the door for men from all peoples to become the sons of God. John the leads into the discussion in *John 1:17* which states that it was by Moshe that the Torah was given, and by Yeshua that grace/mercy and truth had come. This statement parallels what we find here in this week’s Torah portion on Moshe, as the intermediary of God, brought peace, mercy, and forgiveness for the people. This statement does not place the Torah in a negative light by stating the Law was given by Moshe. This is a Torah based conclusion that is messianic in nature showing us how Yeshua taught the correct interpretation and application for God’s Word to life in His role as the annointed one of God leading His people in God’s ways of righteousness and truth. It is through faith in Yeshua the Messiah that we receive the mercy and grace of God, His forgiveness, peace, and truth! John chapter 1 is a pro-Torah text!

Sifrei on Bamidbar / Numbers 134:5 states the following:

Sifrei on Bamidbar / Numbers 134:5

... You wrote in Your Torah (Shemot 22:19) “He who sacrifices to a god shall be condemned.” Yet your children served idolatry and I sought mercy from You, and You forgave them. (Devarim, Ibid.) “to show Your servant”: miracles and mighty acts, viz. (Shemot 3:3) “I shall turn aside and I shall see, etc.” (Devarim, Ibid.) “Your greatness”: This is the attribute of Your goodness, as it is written (Bamidbar 14:17) “And now, let the power of the L-rd be made great.” (Devarim, Ibid.) “And Your (mighty) hand”: This is Your right hand,

which is stretched out to all who enter the world, viz. (Shemot 15:6) “Your right hand, O L-rd, is exalted in power,” and (Psalms 44:4) “Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your countenance.” (Devarim, Ibid.) “mighty”: For You subdue with mercy the attribute of justice, viz. (Michah 7:18) “Who is a G-d like You, forgiving transgression and passing by offense,” (19) “He will return and be merciful to us, He will subdue our transgressions,” (20) ...

The idea being emphasized is the great compassion of God through forgiveness and this is the meaning of the right hand of God being magnified. The greatness of God (gadlecha, גְּדֻלָּתוֹ) is coupled to His attribute of goodness, as in (*Bamidbar / Numbers 14:17* יז וְעַתָּה יִזְכָּר: (יגְדֹל-נָא כַח אֲדֹנָי כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר: “*And now, let the power of the Lord be magnified (yigdal, יגְדֹל)*” and *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:18* יח יְהוָה אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד נִשְׂא עֵוֹן וּפְשָׁע וְנִקְיָה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עֵוֹן אָבוֹת: (עַל-בָּנִים עַל-שְׂלֵשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים: “*The Lord withholds wrath and He is abundant in lovingkindness/grace/chesed (חֶסֶד).*” The rabbis say this is the prototype for all “*gadlecha*” (גְּדֻלָּתוֹ) in the Torah. Thus, the gadlecha (power) of God in the Torah is in the greatness of His mercy/grace (רַב-חֶסֶד). This is the context being drawn out in the opening chapter of the book of John, the power of God to bring forth His Messiah by His Word, and by faith in His Messiah all have received grace for grace (mercy for mercy) (*John 1:16*). This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message work together.