

## 5779 - Numbers 13-15 – Sh'lach L'cha (Send On Your Behalf)

<sup>13:1</sup>**The LORD said to Moses,** <sup>2</sup>"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. **From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.**" <sup>3</sup>**So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out** from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

1. <sup>2</sup>*Send some men to ...*

a. Heb. *sh'lach-l'cha* ... *"send for yourself"*— the rabbis stress the word *lecha*, "for yourself," and understand it to mean; **"If you wish to send spies, do so."**

b. **On whose initiative were the Spies sent?**<sup>1</sup>

1) The way the story is told (here) it was by Divine command:

*And G-d spoke to Moses, saying: "Send you men that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. One man, one man, per tribe shall you send, each a prince among them..."* (Num 13:1-2).

2) But when Moses recounts these events 40 years later, he tells the people of Israel,

*And you all approached me, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land and bring us back word regarding the road by which we shall go up and the cities to we shall enter." And the thing was favorable in my eyes; and I took twelve men from amongst you, one man per tribe ...* (Deu 1:22-23).

3) The commentaries reconcile these two accounts ... by explaining that **the initiative indeed came from the people of Israel**. "Moses then consulted with G-d, who said to him, 'Send you men...' to imply: Send them as dictated by your understanding. I am not telling you what to do. Do as you see fit" (Rashi). **Thus, the Spies' mission, while receiving the divine consent, was a human endeavor**, born of the desire of the people and dispatched because "the thing was favorable" in Moses' eyes.

4) The result was a tragic setback in the course of Jewish history. The spies brought back a most demoralizing report and caused the people to lose faith in G-d's promise of the land of Israel as their eternal heritage. The entire generation was then deemed unfit to inherit the land ... Only 40 years later did Moses' successor, Joshua, lead a new generation across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land.

5) Up until that time, G-d had imparted specific directives to Moses and the people of Israel virtually every step of the way. **The case of the spies was the first instance in which G-d said, "I'm not telling you what to do—do as you see fit."** **Should this not have set off a warning light in the mind of Moses?**

6) Indeed, it did. Our sages tell us that Moses sent off Joshua with the blessing, "May G-d deliver you from the conspiracy of the spies" (Rashi, Numbers 13:16). So why did he send them? ...

1) Moses changes Joshua's name from Hoshea (salvation) to Joshua (the Lord is salvation *or* the Lord will save) by adding the letter *yod* which represents the name of God (Num 13:16).

7) **Obviously, Moses was well aware of the risks involved when embarking on a course of "Do as you see fit."** For man to strike out on his own, without precise instructions from On High and with only his finite and subjective judgment as his compass, is to enter a mine-field strewn with possibilities for error and failure. **Yet Moses also knew that G-d was opening a new arena of human potential.**

8) **Free Choice**

a) **A most crucial element of our mission in life is the element of choice.** Were G-d to have created man as a creature who cannot do wrong, then He might as well have created a perfect world in the first place, or no world at all. **The entire point of G-d's desire in creation is that there exists a non-perfected world, and that we choose to perfect it. It is precisely the possibility for error on our part that lends significance to our achievements.**

c. Numbers Rabbah XVI:3

3. SEND THOU MEN. R. Aha the Great opened his discourse: *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever (Isa. XL, 8).* To what is this like? To the case of a king who had a friend with whom he made a stipulation, saying: 'Come with me, and I will give you a present.' He went with him and died. Said the king to his friend's son: 'Although your father is dead, I will not withdraw the promise of a present which I made to him. You come and take it.' So it is the case here. The king is the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, and the friend is Abraham; as it says, *The seed of Abraham, My friend* (ib. XLI, 8). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: 'Come with Me, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house*' (Gen. XII, 1). He stipulated with him that He would give him a present; as it says, *Arise, walk through the land* (ib. XIII, 17) and

<sup>1</sup> Based on *Sefer HaSichot* ("Book of Talks") 5749, vol. II, pp. 536-540.

this is supported by the text, *For all the land which thou seest, to thee I will give it* (ib. 15). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: *'Although it is to the Patriarchs that I made a promise to give them the land, and they are dead, I will not retract,'* but ***'The word of our God shall stand forever.'***

1) Isaiah 40:1-11

<sup>5</sup>And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. **FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HAS SPOKEN.**

<sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. **<sup>7</sup>The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.**"

2) Mark 13:28-31 (cf. Mat 24:32-35)

<sup>31</sup>**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

3) 1Peter 1:25

<sup>24</sup>For, **"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,**

**<sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever"** (Isa 40:6-8). And this is the word that was preached to you.

d. Numbers Rabbah XVI:5

5. Consider the text, *'He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off his own feet, and drinketh damage'* (Prov. XXVI, 6). But **were the spies fools?** Is it not already stated, **SEND THOU MEN**. and in every instance where the expression 'men' is used it implies righteous people; as is borne out by the quotation, *And Moses said to Joshua: Choose us out men* (Ex. XVII, 9),<sup>(1)</sup> and it also says, *And the man was an old man*<sup>(2)</sup> *in the days of Saul, coming*<sup>(3)</sup> *among men* (I Sam. XVII, 12),<sup>(4)</sup> and also, *But wilt give unto Thy handmaid seed who are men* (I Sam. I, 11).<sup>(5)</sup> Can you then call these spies fools? They were only called fools on account of their

(1) Thus these 'men' were selected; **only righteous men would be vouchsafed victory in war.**

(2) I.e., wise ... and wisdom leads to piety.

(3) E.V. 'stricken in years.'

(4) He would naturally come among men who were like himself.

(5) E.V. 'a man-child.' According to the Midrash, *Seed who are men*, means wise and pious children.

having spread an evil report about the land; in accordance with what it says: *He that uttereth a slander is a fool* (Prov. X, 18). **Nevertheless they were great men, although they made fools of**

**themselves.** Concerning them it is that Moses said: *For they are a very froward (difficult to deal with) generation, children in whom is no faithfulness* (Deut. XXXII, 20).

1) Luke 12:13-21

<sup>15</sup>Then he said to them, "Watch out! **Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;** life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" ... <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, **'YOU FOOL!** This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

2) Romans 11:17-24

<sup>18</sup>**do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches ... <sup>20</sup>Do not be arrogant, but tremble. <sup>21</sup>For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either ...**

<sup>13:17</sup>When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. <sup>18</sup>**See what the land is like** and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. <sup>19</sup>**What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad?** What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwallled or fortified? <sup>20</sup>**How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor?** Are there trees on it or not? **Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land."** (It was the season for the first ripe grapes—*around the end of July or the beginning of August*).

1. Exodus 3:8 (to Moses at the burning bush)—cf. Exo 3:17

a. Exodus 13:5; b. Exodus 33:3 (after the sin of the Golden Calf)

c. Leviticus 20:22-24

<sup>13:21</sup>**So they went up** and explored the land ... <sup>22</sup>They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) <sup>23</sup>When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. <sup>24</sup>That place was called the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. <sup>25</sup>**At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.**

1. They did what Moses commanded them to do—they explored the land and brought back some of it's fruit (v.20).

<sup>13:26</sup>They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh ... There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup>They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, **and it does flow**

with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. <sup>28</sup>**BUT** (1) the people who live there are powerful, and (2) the cities are fortified and very large. We (3) even saw descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>The (4) Amalekites live in the Negev; the (5) Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the (6) Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan." <sup>30</sup>**Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."** <sup>31</sup>**But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are."** <sup>32</sup>**AND THEY SPREAD AMONG THE ISRAELITES A BAD REPORT ABOUT THE LAND THEY HAD EXPLORED.** They said, (1) "The land we explored devours those living in it. (2) All the people we saw there are of great size. <sup>33</sup>We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). (3) **We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.**"

1. <sup>28</sup>*descendants of Anak* ... Anak (*long-necked*) was a very tall man, like his father *Arba*, the legendary founder of Hebron—he founded a race of giants known as *Anakim*.
2. <sup>30</sup>*Caleb silenced the people* ... In the next chapter (14:6,30), Joshua is associated with Caleb in his opposition to the ten faithless men.
  - a. Since Joshua was the attendant of Moses, he may have felt that Caleb was more likely to be listened to.
3. <sup>32</sup>*a bad report* ...
  - a. Genesis 37:2-3  
<sup>2</sup>... Joseph ... was tending the flocks with his brothers ... **and he brought their father a bad report about them.**
4. <sup>33</sup>*the Nephilim* ... the primeval giants mentioned in Gen 6:4 — perhaps the spies use that name to heighten the effect of their description—and to make the sons of Anak seem invincible.
5. The spies traversed the entire land from south to north.
  - a. It is 260 miles long and it's average width (between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River) is about 40 miles.
  - b. The country is "divided" into three strips:
    - 1) The Maritime Plain—extending inwards from the coast to a distance of 4–15 miles. It is very fertile and includes the famous Plain of Sharon.
    - 2) The Hill Country — the "backbone" of the Promised Land. On the east, it falls precipitously (abruptly, steeply, suddenly) down to the Jordan Valley.
    - 3) The Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea—the Great Rift Valley.

## 6. Numbers Rabbah xvi. 8

8. When they said to Moses, '*Let us send men before us,*' Moses began to wonder. He said: 'Can I do anything before consulting the Holy One, blessed is He?' So he went and consulted Him. He said to Him: 'Your children are asking for such and such a thing.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'This not their first offense. While they were still in Egypt they jeered at me'; as it says, *This was their derision in the land of Egypt* (Hos. vii, 16). 'This is their usual way. **I do not need to test them**'; for it is written, He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him (Dan. ii, 22). **The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Him: 'Moses, I know what they are,** but since you have asked, Send thou, i.e., on your own account.' How do we know that this was so? Because it is in fact written, *These are the names of the men that Moses sent to spy out* (Num. xii, 16).

a. Genesis 22:1-2; b. James 1:12-15; c. Exodus 3:19; d. John 3:17

<sup>14:1</sup>**That night all the people of the community** raised their voices and **wept aloud**. <sup>2</sup>All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "**If only we had died in Egypt!** Or in this desert! <sup>3</sup>**Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?** Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup>And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

## 1. *wept that night* ...

### a. Ta'anit (Fast-Days) 26b

[In Jewish history] five punishments befell our forebears ... **On the ninth of Av, it was decreed upon our forebears [in the wilderness] that they were 1) not to enter the Land, the Temple was destroyed 2) the first time and 3) the second time, 4) Bethar was captured, and 5) the city [of Jerusalem] was plowed over.**

### b. Ta'anit (Fast-Days) 29a

'When the sound of their weeping reached heaven, God said: "You weep now without cause; the time will come when you will have good cause to weep on this day." It was then decreed that the Temple be destroyed on this same day, the ninth of Av; so that it forever became a day of tears.'

#### 1) Tishah b'Av—

**a) It was decreed that all of the adults who left Egypt (save two) would not enter the Promised Land.**

**b) The destruction of the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple.**

**c) The destruction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple.**

- d) The final battle of the Bar Kochba revolt ended with the death of Bar Kochba and the slaughter of his followers at Betar in 135 C.E.
- e) One year later, Jerusalem is “plow(ed)” under by Emperor Hadrian.

## 2) Other calamities

- a) The First Crusade officially commenced on August 15, 1096 killing 10,000 Jews in its first month and destroying Jewish communities in France and the Rhineland.  
—1.2 million Jews were killed during this crusade which started on the 9th of Av.
- b) The Jews were expelled from England on July 25, 1290 C.E.
- c) The Jews were expelled from France on July 21, 1306.
- d) The Jews were expelled from Spain on July 31, 1492 C.E.
- e) World War II and the Holocaust, historians conclude, was actually the long drawn-out conclusion of World War I that began in 1914.  
—Germany declared war on Russia, effectively catapulting the First World War into motion, on the 9th of Av, Tisha b'Av.
- f) On August 2, 1941, (Av 9) SS commander Heinrich Himmler formally received approval from the Nazi Party for "The Final Solution."  
—Almost two-thirds of the Jews on the face of the earth were captured and killed at that time.
- g) On the 9th of Av, 5702 (July 23, 1942), the mass deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, en route to Treblinka.

## 3) On the 10th of Av two events took place:

- a) Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires took place, killing 85 and injuring 300 on Monday, July 18, 1994, 10th of Av, 5754.  
—Over the years, the case has been marked by incompetence and accusations of cover-ups. All suspects in the "local connection" (among them, many members of the [Buenos Aires Provincial Police](#)) were found to be "not guilty" in September 2004. In August 2005, federal judge Juan José Galeano, in charge of the case, was impeached and removed from his post on a charge of

"serious" irregularities due to mishandling of the investigation. In 2005, Cardinal [Jorge Mario Bergoglio](#), who would later become [Pope Francis](#), was the first public personality to sign a petition for justice in the AMIA bombing case. He was one of the signatories on a document called “85 victims, 85 signatures” as part of the bombing’s 11th anniversary.

## b) Israel's unilateral disengagement plan evicted 8,000 Israelis from Gaza.

- 4) Observant Jews fast and pray on that day:
  - a) And they repeat the Prophet Jeremiah’s plea for the hastening of Israel’s restoration and the rebuilding of Zion in the days of Messiah.
  - b) When this happy event occurs, then Tishah b’ Av will be transformed from a day of mourning into a day of rejoicing.
- 5) **The rabbis think of weeping and complaining (without cause) a form of profaning God’s name.**
  - a) [Leviticus 18:21](#) (cf. [Exo 20:7](#))  
"Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

<sup>14:5</sup>Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. <sup>6</sup>Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup>and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "**The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. <sup>8</sup>If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.**

<sup>9</sup>Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, **because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone**, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." <sup>10</sup>But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.

כִּי לַחֲמֵנוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מַעֲלֵיהֶם  
ki [lach](#)-mei-nu hem sar tzi-lam mei-a-lei-hem

- 1. Lit., *they are our bread* —i.e., *we shall easily destroy them* ...
- 2. Lit., *their shadow is removed from over them* ...



3. The word **לֶחֶמֶנִּי** (*our bread*) may refer to the manna, and **מֵעֲלֵיהֶם** **סָר צֵלָם** (*their shadow is removed from over them*) to the melting of the manna at noonday (Exo 16:21).

- a. The meaning of the passage would then be: "Fear not the people of the land, for they are like the manna when the shadows pass, *i.e.*, when the sun has come out. There is then no manna left. The Lord is with us: our enemies shall melt away—fear them not" (Ephraim Lenczic) (Hertz, p. 627).

<sup>14:11</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? **How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?** <sup>12</sup>I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, **but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.**"

<sup>13</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "**Then the Egyptians will hear about it!** By your power you brought these people up from among them. <sup>14</sup>And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

<sup>15</sup>If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, <sup>16</sup>The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.' <sup>17</sup>"Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: <sup>18</sup>The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'

<sup>19</sup>**In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.**" <sup>20</sup>The LORD replied, "**I have forgiven them, as you asked.**

<sup>21</sup>Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, <sup>22</sup>**not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—<sup>23</sup>not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.** <sup>24</sup>But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. <sup>25</sup>Since the Amalekites and Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea."

<sup>14:26</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: <sup>27</sup>"How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. <sup>28</sup>So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, **I will do to you the very things I heard you say:** <sup>29</sup>In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. <sup>30</sup>Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. <sup>31</sup>As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. <sup>32</sup>But you—your bodies will fall in this desert. <sup>33</sup>Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. <sup>34</sup>**For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.'**

<sup>35</sup>I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to **this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die.**" <sup>36</sup>**So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it—<sup>37</sup>these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD.** <sup>38</sup>Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived.

<sup>39</sup>When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly. <sup>40</sup>Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. "We have sinned," they said. **"We will go up to the place the LORD promised."** <sup>41</sup>But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the Lord's command? This will not succeed! <sup>42</sup>Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, <sup>43</sup>for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there. **Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword.**" <sup>44</sup>Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp. <sup>45</sup>Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.

1. *We will go up to the place the LORD promised ...*

- a. They were now acting out of their remorse—not their faith.

2. *Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you ...*

- a. This does not mean that the Lord did not love them—he loved the nation—but had determined to put the faithless generation that left Egypt to death (v.35).
- b. Their children would go into the the land and possess it!

3. *Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up ...*

- a. This was evidence that they had not taken the Lord's words regarding this grievous sin to heart (vv. 28-30)—God was wounded by their sin.
- b. When God is prepared to lead them into the land—they refuse to go, dissuaded by the evil report.
  - Because of God's words regarding their sin—they are sorry and decide to go up—only this time God is not prepared to lead them up and wants them to stay in the wilderness.
  - Their behavior demonstrates a complete disregard for God and for his word.

4. Lesson:

- a. **The power of cynicism (sarcastic skepticism), doubt, negativity and negative talk.**
- b. **The power of hope, faith, approval and positive talk.**
- c. **This does not mean pretending that things are O.K. when they're not or ignoring bad things when they happen—it means trusting God in a way that transcends our circumstances and looks to Him in hope.**
- d. Philippians 4:8-9

<sup>15:17</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>18</sup>"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land to which I am taking you <sup>19</sup>and you eat the food of the land, present a portion as an offering to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup>**Present a loaf from the first of your ground meal and present it as an offering from the threshing floor.** <sup>21</sup>Throughout the generations to come **you are to give this offering to the LORD from the first of your ground meal.**

1. <sup>20</sup>*the first yield of your baking*

- a. "*Challah*" means "dough"—it NOT only refers to the two braided loaves of bread that we use on Shabbat—it also refers to the small chunk of dough we tear off and burn before baking any bread.
- b. In Biblical times, the dough was given to a *kohen*, a priest who served in the Temple. Until this practice is re-instituted (when the Messiah comes), we burn that *challah* before we can eat the bread from which it was taken.

c. **TAKING CHALLAH TELLS US THAT **WHATEVER WE ARE GIVEN IS NOT FOR OUR USE ALONE.** IF WE HAVE WISDOM, MONEY OR GOOD HEALTH, OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS TO USE THEM FOR A G-DLY PURPOSE.**

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,  
צִוֵּנוּ לְהַפְרִישׁ חֲלָה

*... and commanded us to separate challah.*

<sup>15:27</sup>"But if **just one person sins unintentionally**, that person must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. <sup>28</sup>The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made, that person will be forgiven. <sup>29</sup>One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you. <sup>30</sup>"But **anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel.** <sup>31</sup>Because they have despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, they must surely be **cut off**; their guilt remains on them."

1. <sup>30</sup>"But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel.

a. וְהִנֵּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תַּעֲשֶׂה בִיד רָמָה — A person who acts high-handedly.

Although the Torah shows indulgence towards irreligious Jews, considering them **as accidental sinners**, it is extremely severe with the blasphemer and especially the one who acts deliberately. It states only one punishment for him, that of *karat*, *premature death* [excision]. The Torah repeats that term in verses 30 and 31 **to signify the excision of both body and soul** (*Shavuot* 13a).<sup>2</sup>

b. אֶת־יְהוָה הוּא מְגַדֵּף — He blasphemed Hashem.

**Rambam points out that the intent of the public sinner is resistance to the Law and rebellion against it. He does not act out of passion or desire, but rebellion and antagonism** (*Guide for the Perplexed*). Hence it describes him as a blasphemer of Hashem, and he undoubtedly deserves death. That is why, according to the traditional interpretation, this passage is speaking of the sin of idolatry which attacks the very basis of the Torah.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, BaMidbar*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), p. 175.