

Torah Portion Preview for Sh'lach L'cha

Sabbath beginning June 16, 2023

In Sh'lach L'cha (Send for You) God tells Moses to send emissaries to scout the promised land. All remark on the land of milk and honey. Ten found inhabitants with invincible size and power. Only Caleb and Joshua see opportunity with God's help. In a rage tempered only by Moses's pleas, God condemns the Israelites' generation to die in the wilderness, leaving the conquest of Canaan to their offspring. Instructions follow for doing sacrifices and using fringed garments to remember commandments.

Cantor Josee Wolff (co-author of "The Art of Cantillation") saw the portion as a lesson in creativity. Success might have ensued had Moses' instructions been open-ended rather than binary (are the inhabitants "strong or weak", the cities "open or fortified") and the scouts more confident (not seeing themselves as "grasshoppers"). Rabbi Sonja Pilz (in *The Mussar Torah Commentary*) saw it as a failure of love due to impatience for trust. Combining both reveals how loving relationships are essential to community productivity. Rabbinical educators tell us that effective life-cycle events arise after creators learn the highs and lows of participants' lives. We create together only through having the confidence to patiently learn what our collaborators know that we do not.