

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shlach – 5783

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וַיִּלְנוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם כָּל-הָעֵדָה לִי-מִתְנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לִי-מִתְנוּ:

“And all Bnei Yisroel complained upon Moshe and Aharon; and the congregation said to them, ‘Better to die in the Land of Mitzrayim or better to die in the desert.’”  
(Bamidbar 14:2).

This pasuk seems to have superfluous wording as it says, Bnei Yisroel complained and then it says, the congregation said to them. Also, is it better to die in the Land of Mitzrayim and or in the desert? Additionally, why is it better to die anywhere else other than fighting for the Land? What was the fear?

The word הָעֵדָה “congregation” in these segments always refers to the ten corrupted scouts. They are referred to as the evil congregation. (Ibid 14:35). The context is discerned when after Calev defends Hashem and the Land, it says “the men that went up with him.” (Ibid 13:31). That indicates that the “congregation” that complained against the Land were the same “men” that went with Calev to scout the Land.

When reading this segment with the understanding that “congregation” refers to the ten evil scouts, a lot more of the episode, including intentions, complaints, and sins can be derived. The scouts returned from scouting the Land. (Ibid 13:26). They went straight to Moshe and Aharon but made sure the entire Bnei Yisroel were gathered. (Ibid 13:26). וְאֵת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ. “and the entire congregation, they showed off the fruit of the Land.” (Ibid). Initially, they showed them how good the Land was. “It, indeed, is a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Ibid 13:27). They commenced their scouting report with good news, to seem like good people. They care about Bnei Yisroel and the Land. They even showed off the great produce.

Then they turn their reports evil. The people are powerful (ibid 13:28), the people are too large and too great (ibid 13:32), they are giants (ibid 13:33), and our enemies the Amalekites live there (ibid 13:29). וַתִּשָּׂא כָל-הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת-קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא. “And all the congregation raised up and gave out their voices, and the people cried on that night.” (Ibid 14:1). The scouts raised their voice and kept harping about Eretz Yisroel and that caused Bnei Yisroel to cry that night.

The people complained to Moshe and the scouts said it would better to have died in the Land of Mitzrayim or in the desert. Moshe, Aharon, Calev, and Yehoshua all plead with Bnei Yisroel to end this anxiety and have faith in Hashem. (Ibid 14:9). The congregation – the ten scouts – then wanted to pelt their two detractors with stones. (Ibid 14:10). What was the scouts’ motivation?

Moshe, too, comes to the people’s aid. Hashem wants to destroy them with pestilence. (Ibid 14:12). Moshe repeats what worked before and asks Hashem to think of the optics Mitzrayim will have if Hashem is “unable” to bring the people up to the

Land. (Ibid 14:13). Hashem forgives the nation. (Ibid 14:20). Despite the forgiveness, Hashem promises that none of the men who have seen Hashem's signs and wonders, who have seen the land, and refused to listen to Hashem and spurned Him, shall see the Land again. (Ibid 14:22,23). Calev is singled out that he will not be harmed. (Ibid 14:25). Why was Yehoshua left out?

The next segment, that chronicles further about the people being doomed to die in the desert and ending with a group trying to go to the Land and being defeated, took place first. The two segments ({פ} break to {פ} break) are chronologically switched because the Torah wanted to relay the forgiveness in the first segment first. This next segment explains that the evil congregation kept on saying bad things about the Land (14:27) and Hashem planned to mete out punishment according to their own words (Ibid 14:38). They will die in the desert. (Ibid 14:29). Their children, however, whom they were so afraid of being taken captive (ibid 14:3) will see the Land and possess it. (Ibid 14:31). Yehoshua and Calev were exempt from this. (Ibid 14:30). The evil congregation died in a plague, immediately. (Ibid 14:37).

The segments are switched and so it is plain to understand that Yehoshua was saved from calamity. Calev is singled out against the doom of the ten scouts because he spoke up against them. Hashem was trying to single him out for praise, not to leave out Yehoshua from rescue. Further, the sin of the scouts was that they wanted to "die in the desert." They liked their position of authority and knew in the Land they would just be one other person. Here they were special. Why did Bnei Yisroel suffer?

"All of Bnei Yisroel complained upon Moshe and upon Aharon." Bnei Yisroel complained to Moshe and Aharon about their ability to take the Land. They certainly complained after hearing the report, but the Torah does not specifically indicate what they said. However, they did join in with the evil congregation, and that is why they were punished based on the sentiment about it being better to die than to leave their children vulnerable to kidnapping and enslavement in a lost military campaign.

The scouts' lack of faith was contagious. The people's complaint was that while they saw the wonders and signs that Hashem did in the Land of Mitzrayim, splitting the Yam Suf, the defeat of Amalek, and of being fed in the desert, they did not see Hashem's power in Eretz Yisroel. As odd as this sounds, their ideological perspective was that Hashem had power over the desert and Mitzrayim. However, could Hashem defeat the gods of the Canaanites? This was their concern and lack of faith.

"And the congregation said to them." The evil congregation of ten scouts whispered the slander, repeatedly. *Better to have died in Mitzrayim* – a land Hashem has power over and full of lush fields, water, and food. *Better to die in the desert* where Hashem can provide water and manna. They kept spurring Bnei Yisroel to cry and lose their faith. Because they lost their faith, or did not have full faith, Hashem realized that the next generation, who were not spoon-fed signs and wonders, would have to be the ones to take the Land.