

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Shelach Lecha

Title: Bring Out Your 'Yay-Sayer'!

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

The Mission – The Israelites are about to prepare for entering *Eretz Canaan*, which is the Land of Israel. Towards this goal, God speaks to Moshe in this *parsha* and tells him:



Send for yourself men to spy out the land of Canaan.	שְׁלַח-לְךָ אַנְשִׁים, וַיִּתְּרוּ אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן.
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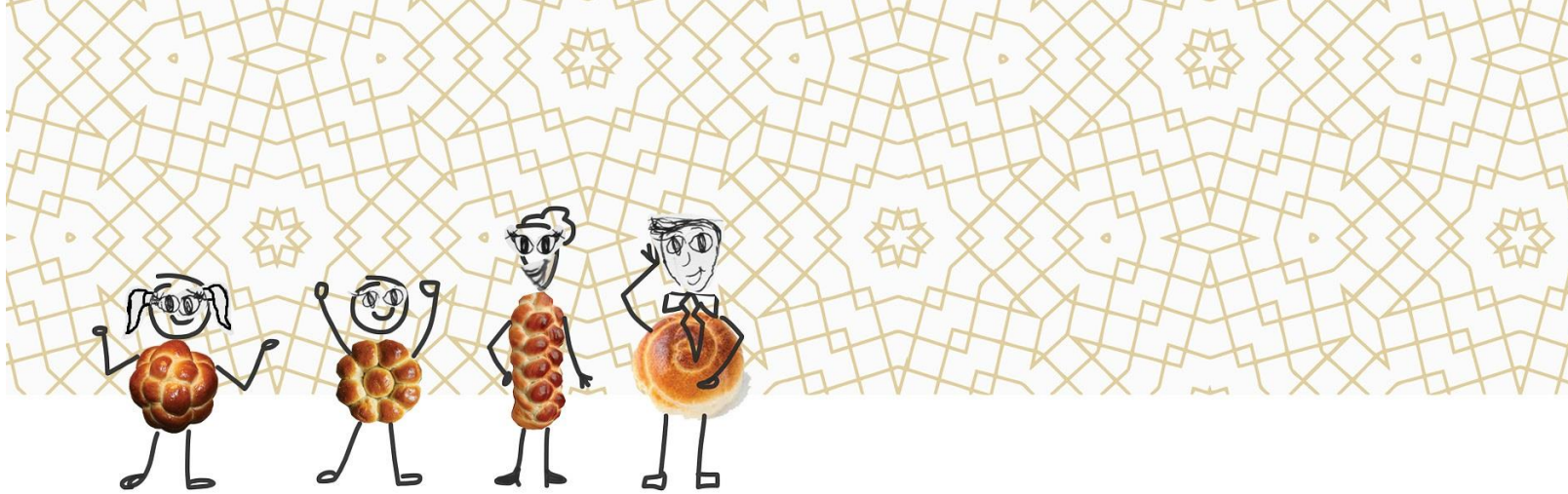
For this very important mission, Moshe chooses 12 spies, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Before they set out he gives them some instructions. Moshe tells them to travel around the country to see what kind of land it is, whether it is 'fat' or 'lean' and if 'there are trees there.' God also tells them to check out the people who live there, whether they are 'strong or weak,' 'few or many.' He ends with the word **וְהִתְחַזְּקוּתֶם**, "be courageous!"

The spies are on their mission for 40 days and then they return. (We can imagine that all of the people left behind, including Moshe, must have been anxiously and perhaps eagerly awaiting their return to hear what they had to say.)

The Report – The news the spies have to share is mixed. There's good news and bad news. Ten of the spies tell about how the land is beautiful, 'flowing with milk and honey.' However, they also say that the people living there are very powerful and the cities are strong. They claim there are giants there! Their conclusion is: "We cannot attack that people, for they are stronger than us."

Yehoshua and Calev return from the same trip but come back with a different report. They agree with the other 10 tribes that the land is a 'good land' and that it 'flows with milk and honey.' They also say that we should 'have no fear of the people in the country.' Calev tells the people, "Let us by all means go up (and conquer the land), and we shall gain possession of it, we can do it!"

Sadly, the nation is persuaded by the opinion of the 10 spies. They become frightened by their report and refuse to listen to Calev and Yehoshua's positive



words of encouragement. The Israelite people become so discouraged by the words of the 10 spies that they even lament and want to go back to Egypt!!

This failure to listen to the voices of Calev and Yehoshua, voices that told them that they should be courageous, that they can do it, would lead God to lose faith in this whole generation of Israelites. God will punish this generation of Israelites who lacked the confidence and courage to set out on their mission. Instead of entering the Land of Israel, this generation will continue to wander in the wilderness for another 40 years. This generation will never get to see the Land of Israel.

Questions for Consideration:

Though this story does have a sad ending, important questions remain.

- How could all the spies have been on the same trip, seen the same things, and come back with totally different impressions?
- What was it that made Calev and Yehoshua believe the nation could accomplish the task of conquering and resettling the Land of Canaan while the 10 other spies, facing the same reality as Calev and Yehoshua, believed it would be too hard and therefore couldn't be done?

Let's zoom in on one of the *pesukim* the 10 spies say when they are reporting on their mission.

Zooming In:

<p>33 And we saw the giants and we looked like grasshoppers IN OUR OWN EYES...</p>	<p>לֹג וְשָׂם רְאִינוּ אֶת הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק מִן הַנְּפִילִים ; וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים...</p>
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Let's focus on their words, "in our own eyes." The 10 spies were looking at the land and the people through their 'grasshopper eyes.' In other words, they thought of themselves as small and weak and therefore unfit for the task that Moshe and God had asked them to do.

Yehoshua and Calev did not have 'grasshopper eyes' when they looked at the land and people. They had eyes that told them, 'We can do this!'

The Parsha Through Another Lens

The Parsha in Practice:

Let's call the 10 tribes the 'nay-sayers' and Calev and Yehoshua the 'yay-sayers.' We all face tasks and challenges that might seem overwhelming or really hard. When we face these tasks most of us have both of these voices in our head.

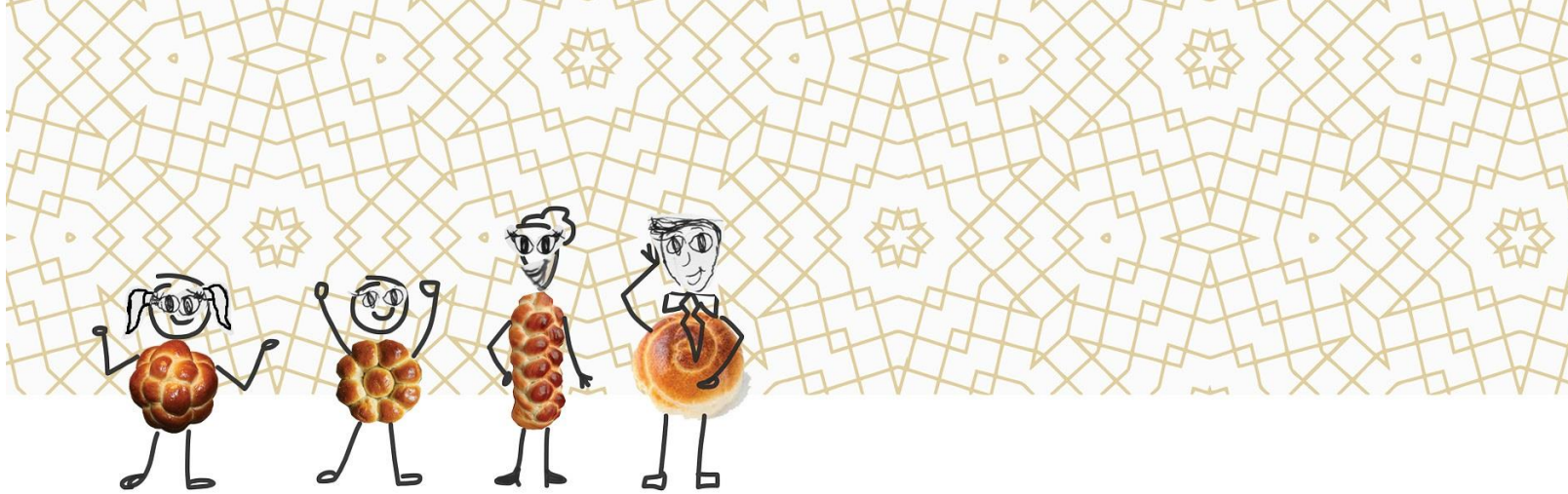
The 'nay-sayer' is saying, "Oh, I'll never be able to do this," or "It's too much or too hard," or "I'm just a grasshopper."

The 'yay-sayer' is saying, "I can try," or "I will start and do my best."

How can we let our our 'yay-sayer' voice be loudest?

Option 1: Share Around! Let's learn from those around us. Ask the people around your table to share a story of a time when they faced a challenge and let their 'yay-sayer' voice be loudest. What was the challenge? What did they say to themselves to help them face that challenge?

Option 2: Action! Practicing with your 'yay-sayer' voice and letting others encourage you are other ways to work towards facing challenges with a



Calev/Yehoshua attitude. Ask everyone to go around and share an upcoming challenge (big or small). In turn, ask each person to practice facing this challenge by using their 'yay-sayer' voice. Ask others for encouragement as well. Act it out! Practice!

Option 3: Some Examples! Here are some challenge stories that could help us practice being a 'yay-sayer.' Pick one of them, read it out loud and practice facing this challenge as a 'yay-sayer.' Feel free to get some advice from the 'yay-sayers' around you!

Up At Bat – You are the next hitter on your baseball team. You are facing one of the best pitchers on the other team. You can give up your place in the batting order or step up to bat.

Messy Room – You have quite a messy room which you must clean up!

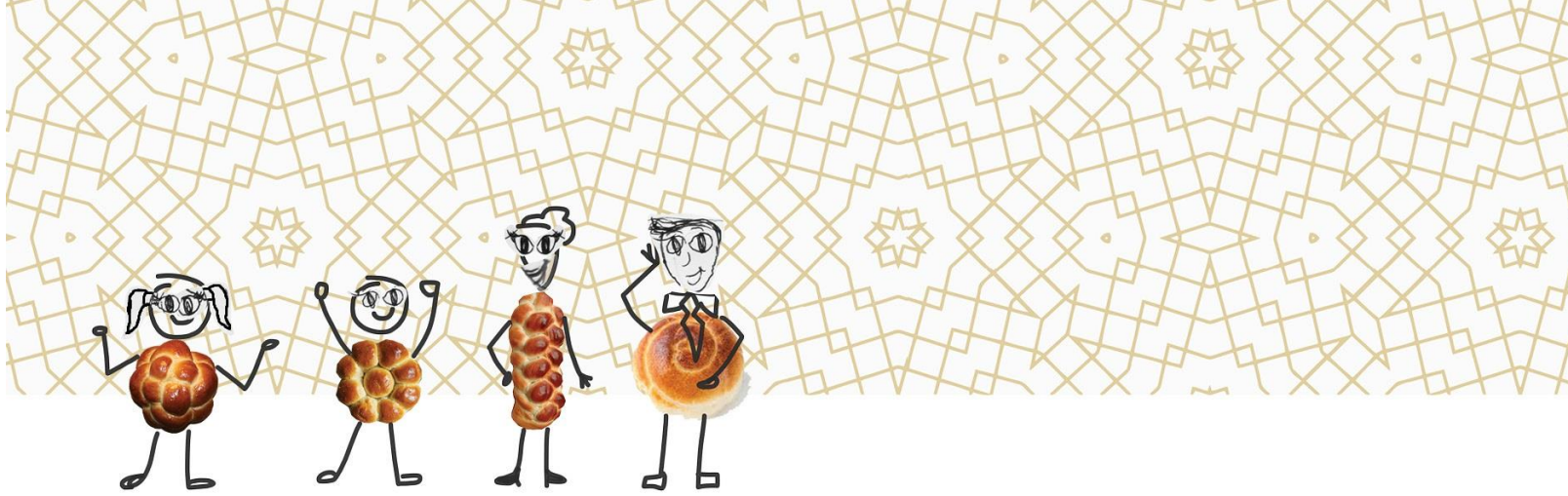
Big Assignment Coming Up – You have a very important group project coming up and are feeling overwhelmed by your part in it.

Difficult Conversation – Some of your friends have been fighting with one another. You decide that you want to try and help them make peace but it suddenly feels impossible.

Marathon – You took on the challenge of running in a mini-marathon that requires more training than you realized.

Now... just one more thing!

Remember that there is another important benefit to being a 'yay-sayer.' If you approach your challenge as a Calev/ Yehoshua 'yay-sayer,' you get to see if it will work out. If you remain a 'nay-sayer,' you'll never know.



Calev and Yehoshua remained 'yay-sayers,' and they, and not the 10 nay-sayer spies, actually *do* get to see how it worked out.

Yehoshua will become the person who will lead the Israelite nation into Israel and resettle the land and Calev will be right there with him.

Shabbat Shalom!