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Racial Profiling
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Parshat Sh'lach L'cha

The people have been complaining, and now, with the negative report of ten of the twelve spies whom Moses has sent into the land, they yield wholly to despair. **Better that we had died in Mitzrayim (Egypt), for we shall die here in the wilderness!** (Numbers 14:2)

G*d then determines to annihilate the entire people, all but Moses, and then to make Moses into an even greater people. Moses replies to G*d (Numbers 14:15-16), **“If Thou shalt slay this people as one man, then the nations which have heard Thy fame will say of Thee, ‘The Eternal was unable to bring this people into the land despite having promised to do so, and has therefore slain them in the wilderness.’”** Moses, in short, says to G*d, “No! Thou art G*d, but Thou art not G*dding well. Do not do this terrible thing, killing the entire nation as a single individual, lest the nations which have heard of Thy great deeds hold Thee in contempt.”

And then G*d yields to Moses' rebuke and declares (vv. 20, 23), **I shall forgive, as thou hast said. But those who provoked Me, who despised Me, will not enter the land which I swore to their ancestors.**

As we focus on Moses' rebuke of G*d, we find in it a most interesting concept. Not even G*d – not even G*d! – Moses is saying, may judge the nation as if they were a single individual. And G*d concedes, for it is only those who were individually guilty who will be kept from entering the Land of the Promise. Each individual, G*d concedes, will be judged individually. No collective guilt. No “racial profiling.”

And if not even G*d may engage in collective judgment, how much more are we forbidden to do so! And yet, how often we do!

To an awareness of our mutual humanity may we all soon be led.

Shabbat Shalom.