



Leadership and Diversity • Parshat Shelah

Diversity in groups creates a higher chance of seeing positive change according to Forbes Council Panel in the Important Benefits of a More Diverse Leadership Team. Because societal diversity leadership means greater depth and breadth of experience and perspective. Diversity increases awareness of different pockets of societal sensitivity to others as of looking at the same scenario or set of facts and pressures tests assumptions and judgments. This almost always makes learning innovation and honest diverse groups help create more inclusive decisions and outcomes.

Every team must be made up of people with different roles, strengths, temperaments, and perspectives. writes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his essay *The Counterpoint of Leadership*. Tetrahedron *Lessons in Leadership*. The must always be open to criticism and the must always be on the alert against groupthink. The glory of Judaism is its insistence that only in heaven is there one commanding Voice. Down here on earth no individual may ever hold a monopoly of leadership.

Diversity in teams has many positive dimensions but it's not always easy to create or navigate. Jonathan Katzenbach writes in *The Wisdom of Teams* that

Teams do not seek consensus; they seek the best answer. If there is too much consensus then diversity fails in its entirety.

This is apparent when reading this week's Torah portion *Shelah*. Send agents to scout the land of Canaan which I am giving to the Israelite people. Numbers 13:17 reads as we open the parsha. Whereas God generally told Moses what to do here He imbued Moses with the authority to select leaders for this reconnaissance mission from each of the twelve tribes. Send one participant *ish ehad, ish ehad* from each of their ancestral tribes each one a chief *nasi* among them. The verse stresses both the singularity of each leader within his tribe and the group as a whole. *homestork* together as one.

Rashi explains that each one was a leader among them. Seforno adds that the individual selected had to be the best leader from his tribe. One who could recognize the significance of the land. For Rashi it's a leader. For Seforno it's *the* leader. Moses needed to think carefully about the qualities of each person and the composition of the group. Select the wrong people or the right individuals but not a productive combination of them and the mission would fail. And the mission did fail.

The Torah names each person selected according to his tribe. These men had a historic role. People long into the future would need to know their names. Each of these leaders carried the important task of evaluating the land according to Moses' specific objectives. See what kind of country it is. Nahmanides told them:

Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak?
Fertile or barren?

Is the country in which they dwell good or bad?

Are the towns they live in open or fortified?

Is the soil rich or poor?

Is it flooded or not? Nahmanides

Moses concluded with one request: And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land. It was the grape harvest season. Seeing is believing. When the people saw the sweet and large fruit, they would be impressed and feel motivated to complete the journey with enthusiasm. The tribal leaders were to gather this report together and present one report.

Nahmanides wonders how Moses sent out the mission in the first place. It was a risk. If the report was negative, as Moses going to take the people back to Egypt. Certainly not. Nahmanides explains that the Israelites wanted a group to reconnoiter the land as a standard procedure of military reconnoiter.