



Akiva pithily summarizes in *Pirkei Avot*. God and humanity partner in advancing the world.

Emphasizing agency is the antidote to the attitude of the spies. This explains, writes Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, why the commandment of separating *hallah* is introduced in *Parshat Sh'lach*, whereas the other agricultural commandments are set forth in *Parshat Korach*. The latter laws are completely dependent on the land. Their obligation takes effect while the produce is still growing. In contrast, the obligation to separate *hallah* only takes effect once the dough is prepared. *Hallah* fuses reliance on God and human enterprise. The spies believed they were *ephes*, passive failures, incapable of settling the land. The message of *hallah* is that we are active agents, capable, with the help of God, of effecting change.

The precept of *hallah* also encourages optimism and imagination. The commandment was presented while the Israelites were in the desert. The prospect of kneading dough was a distant