

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

It was perhaps the single greatest collective failure of leadership in the Torah. Ten of the spies whom Moses had sent to spy out the land came back with a report calculated to demoralize the nation.

“We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large ... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are ... The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height ... We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.” (Num. 13: 27-33)

This was nonsense, and they should have known it. They had left Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world, after a series of plagues that brought that great country to its knees. They had crossed the seemingly impenetrable barrier of the Red Sea. They had fought and defeated the Amalekites, a ferocious warrior nation. They had even sung, along with their fellow Israelites, a song at the Sea that contained the words:

The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted
away. (Ex. 15: 14-15)

They should have known that the people of the land were afraid of them, not the other way round. And so it was, as Rahab told the spies sent by Joshua forty years later: I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were

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by Avraham Herschel ben Yitzok

beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your G-d, he is G-d in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. (Joshua 2: 9-11)

Only Joshua and Caleb among the twelve showed leadership. They told the people that the conquest of the land was eminently achievable because G-d was with them. The people did not listen. But the two leaders received their reward. They alone of their generation lived to enter the land. More than that: their defiant statement of faith and their refusal to be afraid shines as brightly now as it did thirty-three centuries ago. They are eternal heroes of faith.

One of the fundamental tasks of any leader from president to parent is to give people a sense of confidence: in themselves, in the group of which they are a part, and in the mission itself. A leader must have faith in the people he or she leads, and inspire that faith in them. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School writes in her book *Confidence*, “Leadership is not about the leader, it is about how he or she builds the confidence of everyone else.”¹ Confidence, by the way, is Latin for “having faith together.”

The truth is that in no small measure a law of self-fulfilling prophecy applies in the human arena. Those who say, “We cannot do it” are probably right, as are those who say, “We can.” If you lack confidence you will lose. If you have it – solid, justified confidence based on preparation and past performance – you will win. Not always, but often enough to triumph over setbacks and failures. That, as mentioned in a previous Covenant and Conversation, is what the story of Moses’ hands is about, during the battle against the Amalekites. When the Israelites look up, they win. When they look down they start to lose.

That is why the negative definition of Jewish identity that has so often prevailed in modern times (Jews are the people who are hated, Israel is the nation that is isolated, to be Jewish is to refuse to grant Hitler a posthumous victory) is so misconceived, and why one-in-two Jews who have been brought up on this doctrine choose to marry out and discontinue the

¹ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Confidence*, Random House, 2005, 325.

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Jewish journey.

Harvard economic historian David Landes in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* explores the question of why some countries fail to grow economically while others succeed spectacularly. After more than 500 pages of close analysis, he reaches this conclusion: In this world, the optimists have it, not because they are always right, but because they are positive. Even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement, correction, improvement, and success. Educated, eyes-open optimism pays; pessimism can only offer the empty consolation of being right.²

I prefer the word “hope” to “optimism.” Optimism is the belief that things will get better; hope is the belief that together we can make things better. No Jew, knowing Jewish history, can be an optimist, but no Jew worthy of the name abandons hope. The most pessimistic of the prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, were still voices of hope. By their defeatism, the spies failed as leaders and as Jews. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope.

The most remarkable by far of all the commentators on the episode of the spies was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn. He raised the obvious question. The Torah emphasizes that the spies were all leaders, princes, heads of tribes. They knew that G-d was with them, and that with His help there was nothing they could not do. They knew that G-d would not have promised them a land they could not conquer. Why then did they come back with a negative report?

His answer turns the conventional understanding of the spies upside down. They were, he said, not afraid of defeat. They were afraid of victory. What they said to the people was one thing, but what led them to say it was another entirely.

What was their situation now, in the wilderness? They lived in close and continuous proximity to G-d. They drank water from a rock. They ate manna from heaven. They were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory. Miracles accompanied them along the

way.

What would be their situation in the land? They would have to fight wars, plough the land, plant seed, gather harvests, create and sustain an army, an economy and a welfare system. They would have to do what every other nation does: live in the real world of empirical space. What then would happen to their relationship with G-d? Yes, He would still be present in the rain that made crops grow, in the blessings of field and town, and in the Temple in Jerusalem that they would visit three times a year, but not visibly, intimately, miraculously, as He was in the desert. This is what the spies feared: not failure but success.

This, said the Rebbe, was a noble sin but still a sin. G-d wants us to live in the real world of nations, economies and armies. G-d wants us, as he put it, to create “a dwelling place in the lower world.” He wants us to bring the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, into everyday life. It is easy to find G-d in total seclusion and escape from responsibility. It is hard to find G-d in the office, in business, in farms and fields and factories and finance. But it is that hard challenge to which we are summoned: to create a space for G-d in the midst of this physical world that He created and seven times pronounced good. That is what ten of the spies failed to understand, and it was a spiritual failure that condemned an entire generation to forty years of futile wandering.

The Rebbe’s words ring true today even more loudly than they did when he first spoke them. They are a profound statement of the Jewish task. They are also a fine exposition of a concept that entered psychology only relatively recently – fear of success.³ We are all familiar with the idea of fear of failure. It is what keeps many of us from taking risks, preferring instead to stay within our comfort zone.

No less real, though, is fear of success. We want to succeed: so we tell ourselves and others. But often unconsciously we fear what success may bring: new responsibilities, expectations on the part of others that we may find hard to fulfil, and so on. So we fail to become what we might have become had someone given us faith in ourselves.

The antidote to fear, both of failure and success, lies in the passage with which the parsha ends: the command of tzitzit (Num. 15: 38-41). We are commanded to place fringes on our garments, with among them a thread of blue. Blue is the colour of the sky and of heaven. Blue is the colour we see when we look up (at least in Israel; in Britain, more often than not we see clouds). When we learn to look up, we overcome our fears. Leaders give people confidence by teaching them to look up. We are not grasshoppers

³ Sometimes called the “Jonah complex” after the prophet. See Abraham Maslow, *The farther reaches of human nature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, 35-40.

² David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London, Little, Brown, 1998, 524.

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd the Lord spoke to Moses saying 'send forth for yourself men to explore the land of Canaan...' (Numbers 13:1-2) The great sin of humanity was Adam's disregard of G-d's command not to eat the fruit of knowledge; the great sin of Israel was the Israelites' disregard of G-d's command to conquer the land of Israel. The result of both rebellious actions was Paradise lost, redemption unrealized.

A proper understanding of the sin of the scouts will serve to illuminate our true mission in the world, and the role played by Torah and the land of Israel in fulfilling that mission.

First, three questions: (1) If indeed the sending out of the spies was to result in such a disaster, why was it initially commanded by G-d? (2) Rashi links the sin of the scouts to the last incident of last week's Torah portion when Miriam slandered her brother Moses for sending away his wife Zipporah, for which she was punished by leprosy—What does the sin of the Scouts have to do with the sin of Miriam? (3) How is the commandment of the ritual fringes at the end of our portion connected to the sin of the scouts?

Rav Soloveitchik explained that Miriam was upset with Moses for divorcing Zipporah after the Revelation at Sinai, because she thought he was disobeying G-d's command to all of the Israelites to "return to their tents" (Deut 5:30), that is, to resume their usual sexual relationships. Miriam and Aaron both maintained that this command applied to everyone, including the prophets, because, as they both said, "Was it only to Moses that G-d communicated? Did he not communicate to us as well?" (Num. 12:2)

But Miriam and Aaron were wrong. Moses is a qualitatively different prophet than they or any other prophets were or will be. G-d speaks to Moses "mouth to mouth..., in a clear vision, not in riddles: he gazes upon the image of the Lord" (Num. 12:6-8). And indeed, G-d Himself tells Moses not to return to his tent with the rest of Israel, but rather to express his unique prophetic status by always being "on call" to receive G-d's words: "Let the rest of the Israelites return to their tents and wives) but you (Moses) are to remain standing here with me..." (Deut. 5:30; see Maimonides Laws of the Foundations of Torah 7:6 and Avishai David, Discourses, Shelah, p.317).

Miriam did not recognize the uniqueness of Moses' prophecy, and the scouts did not recognize the uniqueness of the Land of Israel. The mission of Israel is to be G-d's witnesses (Isa. 55); and G-d communicated His word to all of Israel at Sinai and through Israel (eventually) to the entire world. But G-d

still had an exclusively and uniquely intimate relationship with Moses. G-d loves the entire world and He created every human being from His womb (Job 31:15); but nevertheless He enjoys an exclusive relationship with Israel, His witnesses, the carriers of His Torah. Similarly, G-d's command, "you shall love your friend, created – like you – in the Divine Image, as you love yourself," (Lev.19:18) still allows for a unique and exclusive relationship between husband and wife. According to the Talmud, this emanates from the very same verse (B.T. Kiddushim 44a).

This combination of universal love and exclusive intimacy applies as well to the land of Israel. "The earth and its fullness belongs to the Lord" (Psalms 24:1), but there is a unique portion of the earth, the land of Israel, which must express the will of G-d in its very earth (shmitta), in its produce (tithes, pe'ah), in the teachings of peace and redemption for all humanity which will emanate from the Jerusalem Temple at the end of the days. G-d told Moses to "explore" the land, not to spy it out (le'ragel). The Hebrew word used to explore is la-tur. Tur means to love, even to lust after, as we learn from the command of the ritual fringes (Num.15:37-41). Just as the Talmud teaches that a man must first see his bride before becoming engaged to her so that he may be certain that he loves her (BT Kidushin 41a), so must Israel the people see and love Israel the land (even through the eyes of their agents, the tribal princes) before conquering it, before becoming engaged and wed to it. The desert generation did not understand G-d's command.

Our task is to make earth a sanctuary for G-d's Presence, so humanity will finally accept G-d's definition of good and evil rather than humanity's subjective and self-serving self-justification. Heaven kissed Earth when G-d uniquely informed Moses of His will, Heaven kissed Earth when G-d chose Israel as His agents; Heaven will kiss Earth eternally when Israel lives on its land and builds a sanctuary to encompass all of humanity and G-d together, "His house a House of Prayer for all nations." (Isa. 56:7) We must strive for Paradise to be regained, for the great and sacred marriage between G-d and the world to be consummated. ©2014 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The fundamental issue raised in this week's parsha is how could so many wise and ostensibly pious leaders of Israel make such a fundamental error in vision and judgment and thereby condemn them and their constituents to death and ignominy? All of the commentators to Torah from the Talmud and Midrash forward in history have attempted to unravel this mystery for us.

Various theories, each one correct in its own

view, have been advanced to deal with this difficult issue. Yet, as is the case so many times in trying to analyze human behavior and thought, after all of the answers are considered and accepted, the question still remains to trouble us. And that in itself is perhaps one of the main lessons of this sad narrative of the Torah.

Human beings are prone to error, even great and noble human beings. Man proposes but only G-d disposes. Rashi, based on Midrash, comments that even Moshe misunderstood the situation and sent the leaders of the tribes to spy out the land even though the Lord had never specifically told him to do so and left the final decision to do so to his judgment.

Life is usually not so much a comedy of errors as it is a tragedy of errors. And many times in history we can easily note that great people are also prone to make great errors of judgment and policy. So was it in First Temple times with the kings of Judah and Israel and so was it certainly in Second Temple times even with the descendants of the righteous Hasmoneans. And the story of our people in exile is strewn with erroneous messianism and bad policy decisions. Such is life and human folly.

We cannot live without leadership and direction, opinion and advice. But we should always be aware that human beings by definition are not omniscient and all knowing. The gift of prophecy no longer resides with our community. Because of this, caution is always advisable in matters of trust of others. The Psalmist cautions us not to trust the great, generous, noble and mighty blindly for they too are only mortal and subject to the decay of dust.

Another important lesson that appears here in the parsha is that the majority opinion is not always the correct one. Calev and Yehoshua dissented from their colleagues. The Jewish people disregarded their words and followed the overwhelming majority verdict regarding the Land of Israel.

The strength of the survival of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been its ability to dissent from majority opinions and ruling cultures. Cultures change and opinions shift with time and circumstances. But G-dly truth never wavers and changes. Democracy may represent the will of the majority. But even democracy is never infallibly right on major crucial issues.

The Torah serves as a brake against the tyranny of the majority. It provides a standard by which events and opinions can be judged and measured. Calev and Yehoshua will survive and lead the Jewish people into the Land of Israel. The other nobles and leaders, the wise men and naysayers, the majority and the politically correct will fade away and die in the desert. ©2014 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Piece of Cake

It was not a good scenario. The twelve spies returned from their forty-day sojourn to the Land of Canaan and ten of them were not happy campers.

They left as an enthusiastic and united crew, selected by Moshe for what should have been an easy mission of assurance -- confirming what they were already told by their forebears, as well as the Almighty - Eretz Yisrael is a beautiful land that flows with milk and honey. Instead, the only two who had anything positive to say about the land of Israel, were Calev and Yehoshua. The rest of the spies claimed that the land was not good and that there were dangerous giants living there who would crush them. And now, in the face of the derogatory, inflammatory and frightening remarks that disparaged the Promised Land, Calev and Yehoshua were left to defend it.

It was too late. The ten evil spies had stirred up the negative passions of a disheartened nation. The people wanted to return to Egypt. But the two righteous men, Yehoshua and Calev, tried to persuade them otherwise.

The first and most difficult task facing them was to get the Children of Israel to listen to them. The Torah tells us: "They spoke to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, saying, "The Land that we passed through, to spy it out -- the Land is very, very good.

If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!" (Numbers 14:7-9).

What did they mean by saying that the giants were "our bread"? Did they mean that the children of Israel will eat them like bread? Why bread of all things?

A story that circulated during the 1930s told of Yankel, a Jewish immigrant from the Ukraine who made his livelihood selling rolls on a corner in lower Manhattan. He was not an educated man. With poor eyesight and a hearing problem, he never read a newspaper or listened to the radio. He would daven, say Tehillim, learn a bit of Chumash, and bake his rolls. Then he would stand on the side of the road and sell his fresh-baked delicious smelling rolls.

"Buy a roll, mister?" he would ask passersby, the majority of them would gladly oblige with a generous purchase. Despite his simple approach, Yankel did well. He ordered a larger oven and increased his flour and yeast orders. He brought his son home from college to help him out. Then something happened. His son asked him, "Pa, haven't you heard about the situation with the world markets? There are going to be great problems soon. We are in the midst of a depression!" The father figured that his son's

economic forecast was surely right. After all, his son went to college whereas he himself did not even read the papers. He canceled the order for the new oven and held s for more flour, took down his signs and waited. Sure enough with no advertisement and no inventory, his sales fell overnight. And soon enough Yankel said to his son. "You are right. We are in the middle of a great depression."

Bread is the staple of life, but it also is the parable of faith. Our attitude toward our bread represent our attitude toward every challenge of faith. If one lives life with emunah p'shutah, simple faith, then his bread will be sufficient to sustain him. The customers will come and he will enjoy success. It is when we aggrandize the bleakness of the situation through the eyes of the economic forecasters, the political pundits, or the nay sayers who believe in the power of their predictions and give up hope based on their mortal weaknesses, then one might as well close shop.

Yehosua and Calev told the people that these giants are no more of a challenge than the demands of our daily fare. They are our bread. And as with our daily fare, our situation is dependent totally on our faith.

If we listen to the predictions of the forecasters and spies, we lose faith in the Almighty and place our faith in the powerless. However, by realizing that the seemingly greatest challenges are the same challenges of our daily fare -- our bread -- the defeat of even the largest giants will be a piece of cake. ©2014 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

What is the purpose of wearing tzitzit, the ritual fringes that are attached to the four cornered garment mentioned in our parsha? (Numbers 15:37-41) Several classic answers come to mind.

Some suggest the meaning lies in the tekhelet, the unique blue color found amongst the fringes. This color "is like the sea, the sea is like the sky and the sky like the throne of glory." (Menahot 43b) In other words, wearing tzitzit reminds us of G-d's presence.

Still others suggest that the tzitzit remind us to commit to G-d's mitzvot. The numerical value of tzitzit, coupled with the number of knots and strings used to make these fringes, is 613, equal to the number of commandments. Beyond feeling G-d's presence, one, through the wearing of tzitzit, has a constant awareness of responsibility to G-d's law.

Yet another thought comes to mind. The tzitzit remind us of the first garment recorded in the Torah, the one made by G-d for Adam and Eve after they ate from the tree in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Adam and Eve disobeyed G-d, following the temptations of their eyes and heart. (Genesis 3:6) Here, G-d commands the wearing of fringes in order to avoid

being seduced by our own hearts and eyes. (Numbers 15-39)

Note also the use of the verb "tur" (to go after) found in the portion of fringes, (Numbers 15:39) and found when Moshe (Moses) sends the spies out to check out the land at the beginning of our parsha. (Numbers 13:16) Our In the case of the spies, they followed their inner whims and brought back an evil report. Here, in the paragraph of tzitzit, the Torah teaches us not to make the same mistake, not to be led astray.

Ibn Ezra's comments about the prayer shawl worn during services now become clear. He insists that "it is much more necessary...to wear tzitzit during the rest of the day and not merely during prayers, in order to remember not to err and commit a sin, since during prayers [he will be in a holy frame of mind and] in any case, [will] not sin."

In a sense, the prayer shawl serves a different function than that of the fringed garment worn all day. Wrapping ourselves with the prayer shawl helps us to feel G-d's love, G-d's protection and G-d's embrace.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the tzitzit has impacted upon our national psyche as well. David Wolfsohn records in his memoirs that during the first Zionist Congress, it was unanimously decided that the Israeli flag be blue and white, the same colors as the tzitzit. He writes, "This talit is our coat of arms, our emblem. Let us take out the talit and unfurl it before the eyes of Israel, before the eyes of all the nations."

May it represent for us as individuals and as people the enveloping love from G-d and, at the same time, the continued need to remind ourselves of our goals and our collective focus. ©2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah displays the power of perfect faith and its miraculous results. The haftorah begins with Yehoshua sending two special individuals on a secret mission to investigate the land of Israel. The Jewish people were camped directly facing the Promised Land and Yehoshua sought to determine the most strategic point of entry. This mission was extremely dangerous because the land's inhabitants natives were well aware of the pending Jewish invasion of their land.

Yehoshua instructed the spies to survey all of Eretz Yisroel but devote special focus on Yericho. They crossed the Jordan and went directly to Rachav's inn, the first one inside the city's walls. The king discovered them immediately and sent messengers to order

Rachav to release the intruders. Out of the goodness of her heart, Rachav engaged herself in an unbelievable act of heroism. She swiftly hid the spies and then persuaded the king's messengers that the spies fled the city. Once the messengers were out of sight she informed the spies that everyone was awestricken by the Jewish nation and its Hashem. She then proclaimed her personal recognition of Hashem as master of the universe and her firm belief that He would easily defeat all in His way.

Chazal reflect upon this most unusual welcome and sharply contrast it with the disheartening experience of this week's parsha. Therein we read about ten men of distinction who were sent on a similar mission to survey Eretz Yisroel. Yet, their results were devastating and the spies ultimately convinced the nation to reject Eretz Yisroel. Chazal reveal the fundamental difference between the two groups. The spies in Yehoshua's times were totally devoted to their mission. They were prepared to overcome every obstacle in their way and therefore met unbelievable success. Conversely, the spies in Moshe's times were not fully committed to their mission. This apparently tainted their vision and created their distorted impression of the land and its inhabitants. (see Yalkut Shimoni 8)

In truth, Eretz Yisroel presented extraordinary challenges to the Jewish people. Its inhabitants were far from friendly to its intruders and nothing short of an open miracle could secure the nation's safety. Moshe Rabbeinu's spies displayed grave concern over this. They observed the giant's towering stature and took note of their constant preoccupation in eulogies and funerals. The spies sadly succumbed to their well-grounded fears and forfeited their privilege of entering the land. Yehoshua's spies possessed perfect faith and total commitment to their mission. This inner strength dissuaded them from the influence of their frightening experiences and assisted them in their perfect fulfillment of their mission.

This stark contrast serves as a profound lesson in total faith and trust in Hashem. From a practical standpoint, Yehoshua's spies stood no chance and faced guaranteed death. The Jewish nation was camped within earshot of Eretz Yisroel and this secret mission was bound to be discovered. Although, the spies disguised themselves as traveling salesmen it is hard to fathom that such pious men could truly pass as Canaanites. All they had going for themselves was steadfast faith and trust in Hashem. They bravely entered the "lion's den" and lodged in Rachav's inn. Rachav was fondly known throughout the land and enjoyed warm personal association with all the authorities. The results were no different than one would predict and the spies were discovered the moment they entered her inn.

However, with perfect faith in Hashem the

events that followed were far from predictable. Chazal reveal a most startling display of Divine Providence and inform us that Rachav had recently embraced the Jewish religion. (see Yalkut Shimoni 9) Hashem had actually directed the spies to the only Jewish soul in the entire land of Canaan. Their faith proved rewarding and instead of delivering the spies to the king, Rachav extended herself in every way to her recently discovered Jewish brethren. She encouraged them with profound statements of faith and was ultimately a catalyst to deliver the Promised Land into Jewish hands. Hashem favorably rewarded her for her heroism and she subsequently merited to marry Yehoshua himself. Her new life was very fruitful and she became the mother of many Jewish prophets and priests. In retrospect, the spies' perfect faith resulted in securing the deliverance of the land into their Jewish brethren's hands. Instead of immediate death the spies returned with total confidence that Eretz Yisroel would soon be theirs.

These are some of the unbelievable results of perfect faith. Let it be the will of Hashem that we continue our strides in faith and commitment serving as a special merit for us to return to our Homeland in peace and harmony. ©2014 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "And Moshe called Hoshea, the son of Nun, Yehoshua" (Numbers 13:16). What did Moshe hope to accomplish by changing his name? What can we learn from it?

Rashi tells us that Moshe called him Yehoshua because Moshe prayed that the Almighty should save him from the plans of his fellow spies. Targum Yonason (an Aramaic commentary on the Torah) comments on this verse that Moshe called him Yehoshua when Moshe saw Hoshea's humility.

Rabbi Avraham Mordechai of Gur explained that the nature of a person with humility is not to be stubborn about his own opinions and wishes. He is compliant and will easily give in to the opinions and wishes of others. The other spies were all very distinguished and important men. Moshe feared that Yehoshua might concede to their opinions and be swayed by them even though he felt differently. Therefore, Moshe especially prayed for Yehoshua not to be negatively influenced by the others.

When a question of Torah ideals is involved, one must not budge. That is when it is appropriate to resist. When dealing with basic principles, remain steadfast and do not allow others to sway you. One needs wisdom to know the difference between situations when it is proper to give in to others and when it is not. For this we need the Almighty's assistance. *Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2014 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd Moshe sent them from the Desert of Paran according to G-d's instructions. All of them were [significant] men; they were heads of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 13:3). Rashi explains that the intelligence officers sent to scout out the Promised Land were referred to as "significant men" because, at this time, they were still "kosher." However, when they returned from their mission (13:26), Rashi tells us, quoting Sotah 35a, that the Torah compared their "coming" to their "going" because they had bad intentions from the time they left. In his commentary on the Talmud, Rashi explains that from the very beginning they intended on being "motzie dibah" (usually translated as telling lies), the sin these officers committed and were punished for (14:36-37). Were they bad from the get-go, as the Talmud implies, or did they first become bad, as Rashi seems to be saying, after they left? How could Rashi say both?

Chizkuni (13:3) is among the numerous commentators who suggest that when they were chosen for this mission they still were "kosher," but as soon as the mission itself started (i.e. from the moment they "went"), they were no longer "kosher." [Gur Aryeh (13:3) says that once they were appointed to be the "eyes and ears" of the nation, they were influenced by the people they represented, and their intentions were no longer appropriate.] By telling us that they were initially "kosher," we know that those who were chosen weren't troublemakers, and wouldn't have been perceived as such by the nation.

Although this is the most common answer given, it does leave us wondering if, when telling us that they were initially "kosher," Rashi should have made it more clear that this was only true when they were chosen to go on the mission, but not once they started it. This could have been easily accomplished by merely changing one word, from "and at that time" to "at the time they were chosen," rather than relying on our trying to reconcile his comments here with his comments several verses later to figure it out.

It has been suggested that the expression "eitzah ra'ah," which in this context is usually translated as "bad intent," really means that it was a "bad idea." In other words, sending scouts to verify whether the land was good (and conquerable) was a bad idea from the get-go, not just in hindsight, after the scouts badmouthed the land. If it was just a bad idea, without having any bad intent behind it, there is no contradiction between it being a bad idea from the outset and those who carried out this bad idea being upstanding individuals. However, Rashi himself, in his commentary on Sotah (35a) explains "eitzah ra'ah" to be their intent to badmouth the land, not the notion of going in the first place. Since we are trying to reconcile

how Rashi could say they were initially "kosher" with his saying that the "eitzah ra'ah" was in place when they first went, it would be difficult to use a definition for "eitzah ra'ah" other than his. Besides, Moshe himself thought it was a good idea (D'varim 1:23); how could it be considered a "bad idea" if Moshe agreed with it? And G-d did acquiesce to the request (3:2); even if it wasn't ideal to have to send them, and He only agreed because the people insisted upon it (see D'varim 1:22), would He have done so despite it being a "bad idea" to send scouts after the nation demanded it? It's one thing to say that it would have been better not to need to send scouts (trusting G-d instead), but because it was unfortunately needed, it's better to send them than to force the nation to try to conquer the land without knowing what it entails. But if, even after the nation insisted on sending scouts, it was still a "bad idea" to send them, why would G-d agree to sending them?

The term "and they went," which teaches us that their "coming" was consistent with their "going," is said after the scouts had already returned from seeing the land (Bamidbar 3:25). Although saying "and they went" at this point may be superfluous, on a "p'shat" level it nevertheless refers to their return trip to the camp from the Promised Land (after having seen it), not to their trip from the camp to the Promised Land to go and see it (see Ibn Ezra). Does this change on the "d'rash" level, which the Talmud is working on? Must the trip that the "coming" is compared to be their trip from the Promised Land rather than their trip to it? It is obviously a more profound statement if they had bad intentions even before seeing the Promised Land than if they only had them after seeing it, but can we extend their bad intentions to an earlier time just to make them seem worse? If the point of the Talmudic statement was that, even before they returned, the scouts planned on doing whatever it takes, even badmouthing the Promised Land, in order to convince the nation not to try to conquer it (meaning it was premeditated, as opposed to first deciding to do so after they returned, whether before or after Kalev voiced his opposition), then there is no contradiction between the scouts being "kosher" before their trip but not "kosher" after it. This approach hits a similar roadblock though, as Rashi, in his commentary on the Talmud, is explicit that the "going" refers to their trip to see the Promised Land rather than their trip back after seeing it, making it difficult to use this approach to reconcile the apparent contradictions between Rashi's comments on the two verses in Bamidbar.

The verses are explicit that the sin of scouts was their being "motzie dibah" about the land (14:36-37). Radak (Sefer Hasherashim, daled bais bais) and Ramban (13:32) say that "motzie dibah" refers to saying something that is not true, while "mavie dibah" refers to saying something that is true (see B'raishis 37:2), even if damaging. At first, Ramban continues, the

officers told the truth, that the land was bountiful, but it's inhabitants mighty. This concerned the nation, but Kalev's words reassured them, and they were still willing to go. It was at this point that the lies started, with the officers claiming that the land eats its inhabitants (see Ramban on 14:37), with the lies and exaggerations finally convincing the nation not to go.

Rashi, on the other hand, understands "motzie dibah" to be "propaganda" (14:36-37). While not necessarily a lie, the Old French word Rashi uses means "to slander" (Targum Hala'az). The officers used propaganda (including exaggerations and unproven conclusions) to convince the nation that they wouldn't be able to defeat the inhabitants. According to Rashi, the Talmud (Sotah 35a) is telling us that the scouts had planned, from the very beginning, to use whatever means necessary to convince the nation to follow their conclusion, even if it means spreading propaganda.

They didn't go into their mission with any preconceived notion about what their findings would be, and could therefore be considered unbiased ("keshairim") before it started. Nevertheless, they didn't plan on just reporting the facts, but imposing their conclusions based on those facts onto others. Instead of trusting the ability of the nation to decide for themselves what to do with the information they were sent to gather, they manipulated the nation to act the way they wanted them to act. I would suggest that this might be the "bad intent" that Rashi says they had from the very beginning, even before they left.

Explaining why the Torah needs to clarify that the "hotza'as dibah" the scouts were guilty of was "bad," Rashi (14:37) says that "dibah" could be used for good things or for bad things; since this one was for a bad thing the Torah adds that it was a "dibah ra'ah." Nevertheless, the mission the scouts were entrusted with was merely to gather information, not to make any decisions for everyone else based on that information. By deciding to do whatever it takes to convince the nation to follow their conclusions, they had a "bad intent" from the very beginning, even if, regarding their perspective on the Promised Land itself, they were initially "kosher." ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Shlach contains the famous story of the spies that are sent in to check out Canaan, which would later become Israel. The decision to send the twelve spies, however, was made by the people, as G-d previously assured the Jews that He would take care of everything. But they insisted on seeing for themselves, and were instructed to send the spies of their own accord (13:2). The tribe leaders went in to spy, and came back with an awful report, scaring the Jews into wanting to go back to Egypt. What happened? What happened to the faith in G-d, and with

all His open miracles? What happened to the spies that they didn't realize that everything they saw in Canaan was actually a blessing (1 -- They saw huge fortresses, but that really meant that people in them were scared of something, 2 -- They saw people dying, but G-d made it that someone died when the spies came, so that the inhabitants would be preoccupied with burying them and not notice the spies, etc.)?

The answer lies in their very first mistake.. they wanted to see the land through their own pessimistic eyes, and that's what they got to see. Seeing things without the proper perspective can make even positive things look bad, even if you're a tribe leader that people depend on and look up to, even if you've witnessed countless miracles in your life, and even if G-d just told you that He's on your side. What seemed like a harmless request turned out to be a disaster that cost the Jews 39 more years in the desert! They could have done it right had they done what Yehoshua (Joshua) did: put G-d's name first (Yud, the letter representing G-d added to the beginning of his).

Parsha Puns!

**I WOOD ask a GIANT favor & SEND
out a CLUSTER of good wishes as
follows: POLEse just say thatZ IT! SIT
down & have yourself a GRAPE**

Shabbos!



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We too can look at the world and at our lives, and see living without G-d and the Torah, and it may not seem so bad. Inevitably we'd end up wandering in circles, only to realize that it was our decision to be "free" that caused us to be slaves to nature and to our desires. Conversely, we can find our Torah goal, hang it where we can see it, and despite the challenges and through it all, we're guaranteed to "see" it through.
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