



The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

Shelach 5782

How to be Dishonest Without Telling a Lie

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered June 18, 1955)

The central theme of our Sidra this morning is the reconnaissance mission of *meraglim* which Moses sent into Canaan to spy out the Land and see if it can be taken by the Israelites grouped in the desert, at its borders, as G-d had promised. These *meraglim* were important people, people held in respect by their peers and leaders of their tribes. When they returned from their tour of duty they reported to Moses and to Israel: the Land is rich - it is indeed a Land flowing with milk and honey. They brought back tremendous clusters of grapes to prove its fertility and the richness of its natural resources. However, they said, the Land was inhabited by a race of giants who dwarfed the Israelites and made them look like locusts. They were a mighty people, heavily armed and their cities powerfully fortified. By no stretch of imagination, by no exercise of military optimism is it conceivable, they reported, that this band of newly freed Semite slaves could fight and beat the race of armed Canaanite giants. This is what they had seen, and so had they reported. As a consequence of their report, the anger of G-d was kindled against the entire people, and especially the *meraglim*. It was then that G-d determined the punishment: 40 years of circuitous and tortuous travel in the great burning desert. Plague was to strike these people, and this entire generation would die out in the desert, not one of them would ever set foot on the Promised Land of Canaan, only their children, who had not been partner to this pessimistic report, only they would enter Canaan.

It is a story which is well-known but which is puzzling. They were punished in a most harsh manner - an entire generation killed off. And we sometimes wonder at the justice of the penalty: did the *meraglim* not tell the truth? They reported just what they saw. They did not lie, they did not tell one untruth. All was truthful. Why should people be punished for telling the truth?

In the answer to that question, supplied by the eminent Rabbi of Kotzk, lies a whole *Weltanschauung*, a whole view on life. It is true, he says, that the *Meraglim* did not lie; it is not true, however, that they told the truth. One can refrain from lying, and still not be telling the truth. *emes*, truth, is more than an accurate recital of facts. Rendering the facts precisely down to the last detail means that one has not lied and that he has achieved accuracy. But *emes* - truth - that is a religious and moral technique, a G-dly essence, and not a scientist's instrument. *emes*, he says, means not only finding and telling the facts as they appear, but finding and telling the facts as they bring out the Will of G-d; it means raising appearances until they become one with the view of G-d; it means finding the hidden G-dliness in any situation. That is *emes*, the Seal of G-d.

And that was the sin of the *Meraglim*. They reported accurately, but not truthfully. To give the *emes*, they should have reported the fertility of the Palestinian soil and the power of its inhabitants, as they did, but they should have added: these giants are only men. Where there is the Will of G-d no giant can resist it. It is indeed the Land which G-d has promised us, and so let us go up and take it. It is a Land worthy of the Divine Name, let therefore the will of G-d be achieved. Instead of seeing only clusters of grapes and walls of cities and tall men and many weapons, they should have seen the figure of Abraham as G-d promised him this land; they should have heard the Divine Word foretelling its future as the Land of Israel; they should have felt the Divine presence already penetrating it. That would have been *emes*. But they failed *emes*, though they did not lie, and hence the terrible punishment and the death of *Dor Hamidbar*.

Take that criterion of *emes* and you see how it applies to every aspect of our contemporary life. The American Jew who visits Israel today - the modern counterpart of

the *meraglim* - who comes back from the Holy Land and does not fabricate any stories, can do one of two things: he can be just accurate, or he can give *emes*, Truth. The traveler who is merely accurate will come back armed with statistics and anecdotes - he will tell you the level of unemployment, the terrible drinking water, the new construction, the Yemenite habits, the many languages, the Haddassah hospital, the high political tension, the extremely tense religious situation between extremists on both sides, the communal life of the kibbutzim, etc. It is a report you could hear about any small country, newly formed, in a process of rapid and at times uncontrolled development. That is mere accuracy.

Truth, however, *emes*, should make these people detect the Will of G-d in the turmoil that is modern Israel. *emes* means to understand that History is a gradual process leading to a definite goal, and that the Designs of the Almighty are accomplished only through mighty wranglings. It means to understand that here is being forged a rejuvenation of Torah, that out of this tumult and tempest, even out of the positive negativism towards religion adopted by the ruling party, even out of the very cynicism and hypocrisy of the leftist groups who crusade for so-called Freedom of Religion while denying it to new immigrants, even out of all this shall arise the splendor of Torah, the visions of our Prophets realized. *emes* means that the visitor must come back imbued with Torah ideals, understanding that this is not merely an Eastern station overflowed with east European Jews. This the Holy Land, 1955; and the Holiness should be evident on every inch of its soil. To be able to detect and report that is *emes*.

We are all in a sense *meraglim*. Our lives seem to be spent in a desert, in a wilderness of purposelessness, but occasionally, though rarely, it is given to us to make a spiritual expedition, a religious reconnaissance of another kind of world, of the Canaan of our souls, of the delights and heights of a different and higher kind of life and living. Some of us make this trip into greater spirituality during great religious moments - the time of Shofar blowing or Kol Nidre or Neilah might provide some people with a deepened sense of G-dliness, or with a heightened sensitivity to the call of Torah, with all the ecstasy and spiritual delight it signifies. Others might find it in the study of Torah, in the comprehension of one of its great and eternal truths. Others might experience this sudden reconnaissance in a greater and much different world at a

time of personal significance - a Bar Mitzvah or wedding or, may Heaven forbid, a tragedy, such as the passing glimpse of Eternity some of us get as we stand beside the coffin of a beloved one. It is what happens when we get back to the mundane routine of daily living and when we then consider this special experience that determines whether we have achieved *emes*. If we pass it off as a psychological release or emotional experience, it might not be inaccurate. But we have then lost *emes*. *emes* means to understand that this glimpse can become a stare, and the stare can become a lifetime of higher and greater experiences. *emes* means to act so that this land we have reconnoitered becomes our own. It means that the inspiration becomes permanent so that greater and deeper awareness of G-d will result.

In a similar fashion, I can understand someone talking about Kodimoh and describing it in one of two ways: accurate - or *emes*. It is not inaccurate to say that the foremost Orthodox synagogue in Springfield is housed in an old building, that it has architectural features which are unpleasant: the lighting is poor, the seats uncomfortable, the quarters cramped, facilities insufficient, room sparse and crowded. It is accurate to say that not only on High Holidays is it terribly insufficient, but on every Sabbath, when our junior Congregation must move to less convenient quarters and our Sr. Cong dismissed when there is any kind of Simcha. That is all accurate. But from that sort of accuracy one might conclude that there is a lack of vitality in this institution. While *emes* means the reverse - it means adding that Kodimoh has the largest Sabbath attendance of any synagogue within 25 miles of it, that it has daily minyanim every day of the year, that it has its youth returning to it and its people practicing, by and large, more and more of their beliefs. It means that those very facts - cramped quarters, insufficient facilities, overcrowded synagogue, the need for newer, fresher looking externals - all this proves that Kodimoh has so grown that it has outgrown its past building and must do something constructive so that its facilities keep up with its vitality and its message to the community. *emes* means to lead to the only logical conclusion: the conclusion to which David was lead some 2400 years ago when he saw the Ark unhoused properly: build - and build graciously and spaciouly, for the success of Kodimoh will reflect and inspire the success of genuine and authentic Judaism every place else in the country. That is *emes*.

We say in our morning prayers: *le'olam yehei adam yerei*

shamayim beseiser uvagalui umodeh al haemes - at all times let a man fear G-d, in private and in public, and testify the truth. In our private lives may we learn to be more than accurate - may we learn that to be *modeh al haemes* means to be a *yerei shamayim*, to fear G-d and find His will; and

as for fearing G-d in public, in public worship, *emes* directs us to one goal: the expansion of our facilities so that more people will flock to this center of Torah in ever greater devotion.

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Truth or Consequences

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

In the aftermath of the sin of the spies, having heard that the entire generation would die in the wilderness, and only the coming generation would enter the land, we are told, "and the people mourned greatly. And they rose up early in the morning. And went up to the top of the mountain, saying, 'we are here, and will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned'" (Bamidbar 14:39-40). A group of people, lamenting their fate and expressing apparent regret over what they had done when they accepted the evil report of the spies, attempted to enter Eretz Yisroel. Moshe told them not to go against the word of God, but they did not listen, and they were swiftly wiped out by the Amaleikim and the Canaanites who dwelled on the mountain that they had ascended. Many commentators, both medieval and modern, were bothered by God's failure to accept their repentance, which appeared to be sincere. Rav Yehudah Shaviv, in his commentary Misinai Ba, points out that many basic elements of repentance seem to exist here, including regret over the past, confession of the sin, and a desire to correct the sin. After all, didn't the sin of the spies consist of a rejection of 'the coveted land,' of Eretz Yisroel that had been promised by God? Now that this group of people, the 'ma'apilim,' or 'intransigent ones,' was willing to fight for the land, didn't they correct the wrong that was done by the spies and the people who accepted their evil report about the land? Why, then, were they killed?

Rabbi Shaviv cites Ramban, who, in his commentary to Devorim (1:15), explains that even though the nation now regretted what it had done, repentance alone is not effective enough to rescind a divine decree once it has been issued, and especially when the decree is accompanied by a divine oath, as it was here. The ma'apilim, then, were not allowed to enter the land, even though they made a supreme effort to repent and correct the wrong that had been done. Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl, in his *sichos to parshas Shelach*, however, takes a different approach. He

writes that, in fact, the ma'apilim did not truly repent. The sin of the spies, and, in their wake, the rest of the nation, was not simply a rejection of Eretz Yisroel as a value in itself, but a rejection of Eretz Yisroel as promised to them by God. When they rejected the land in this context, God suspended the fulfillment of His promise until the next generation. When the people insisted on fighting for the land, their emphasis was on the land itself, rather than on fulfilling God's word in regard to the land. At this point, God's word was that they could not enter the land. By insisting on fighting for it anyway, they were rejecting God's word, just as they had rejected it when they accepted the evil report of the spies. Therefore, they did not have divine protection against the local inhabitants, and were wiped out by them. The land, in other words, did not have significance per se, as the ma'apilim thought, but only as a way of carrying out God's will in this world. Once it was God's will that they should not enter the land, the effort to enter it, in itself, constituted a further rebellion against Him, for which the ma'apilim were punished.

In support of Rav Nebenzahl's approach, we can perhaps mention the fact that according to one opinion in the midrash, Zelaphchad was one of the ma'apilim. This opinion may have been merely based on a tradition, but the context of the midrash lends itself more to suggest that there was some discernable connection between what we know about Zelaphchad and what we know about the ma'apilim that led to the conclusion that he was part of that group. Perhaps the idea is that the ma'apilim exhibited a great love for the land, but they did not pass that love through the prism of what God's purpose for the land was. The daughters of Zelaphchad repaired that mistake by coming to Moshe and Aharon and asking what the halacha did, in fact, say in regard to their father's rights in the land. They presented their claim, but patiently waited for Moshe to tell them what God had determined for them. Unlike their father, who tried to capture the land

against God's will, they surrendered to God's will in regard to their fate in the land. I believe, however, that there is another dimension to the sin of the spies and the nation which moved God to decide not to accept the repentance of the ma'apilim, and necessitated the people's being in the wilderness for the duration of the forty year period that was decreed upon them.

Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekudah, in his *Duties of the Heart*, writes that people make a mistake when they think that they have free will over every act that they do. Rather, a person has freedom to enter on a certain path in life. Once that path has been chosen, however, a certain process of causation has been started, and in order to change that process, it is not sufficient to change just one act. Thus, if a person makes certain decisions that set him off on a path of sin, he cannot merely repent for specific actions, but must change his entire path in life. This process of change can take a long time, depending on how far along the path the person has gone. In the case of the spies, then, the people,

by accepting the evil report on the land, had left the path of reliance on God that Moshe had painstakingly been leading them to, and demonstrated that they did not trust Him. We have, in fact, noted, in the past, based on a comment of Rashi in this week's parsha as expanded upon by the Shem MiShmuel and others, that the sin of the spies was really the culmination of a process that had begun with the sin of the golden calf. The formula of one year in the wilderness for each day of the spies' excursion in Eretz Yisroel, says Rashi, takes into account the time the nation spent in the wilderness after the sin of the golden calf. This only makes sense if there is some connection between the two sins, and this connection is a lack of trust in God. To change that path of distrust in God, it was not sufficient to say, merely, that they would now rely on God and the promises He had made to the people. The consequences of their decision to rely on the spies rather than on God indicated that they were on a path that needed forty years to correct, and that one single act could no longer correct their wrong.

The True Vision

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted from the YUTorah shiur given at the Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on June 11, 2015)

The Midrash uses the harsh punishments of the meraglim to illustrate the severity of lashon ha-ra. They saw Miriam talk lashon ha-ra and her consequent punishment, yet they did not learn from that—they also spoke lashon ha-ra. It's noteworthy that when we learn through the Sefer Chafetz Chaim, we usually think of lashon ha-ra as bad because it could cause harm to the person you speak about. Speaking unflatteringly about someone, you can damage their reputation or their business, and hurt their feelings. In our Parsha, the meraglim didn't utter lashon ha-ra in the classical sense. Who was the subject of their negative speech? Eretz Yisroel. But they didn't hurt Eretz Yisroel. It doesn't have feelings, and it didn't lose any money. Eretz Yisroel is not really a *bar-hachi* to claim injury. Who did they hurt by telling lashon ha-ra? And who did the Jews hurt by listening to their lashon ha-ra? They really hurt non-other than themselves—not Eretz Yisroel—because they lost this great opportunity. So on the one hand, lashon ha-ra—on some surface level—is about hurting people. You should not hurt people through your actions, and you should not hurt people through your words. Instead, be

sensitive and careful not to cause damage. But maybe it goes even deeper than that. Ultimately, what does lashon ha-ra mean? The Chafetz Chaim paskens in his halacha sefer that motzi shem ra is something that is not true, while lashon ha-ra is factually correct. All the meforshim ask: What did the meraglim do that was so bad? Everything they said was true! The answer is that there are multiple true facts, but it's a matter of perspective. If you focus on a true, negative aspect and make it a keystone and a yesod of everything—while ignoring the positive—then you are just looking for the negative in the world. And even the true facts are not always true, because looking just at the negative does not reveal the true nature of the world. The meraglim could have come back with a complimentary report of Eretz Yisroel and emphasized the positive. They did say that it's *eret zavas chalav u-devash, ve-zeh pirya*. However, they chose to underscore the negative. And I think that someone becomes a ba'al lashon ha-ra by looking at the negative in everything. That's the root of lashon ha-ra. And the job of a Jew—certainly of an oved Hashem—is to look for the positive in everything. Seeing the positive in Eretz Yisroel is one application of this principle, lema'ase.

Eretz Yisroel nowadays has challenges in so many different realms. You can look at it from different perspectives, in inyanim of ruchnius and gashmius. And people come, and they truly see a lot of negative things. If you want to see the negative, you can look at things that way and convince yourself that those aspects are defining, and they are “the truth.” And you will come out hurting yourself and hurting the people who listen to you and not seeing the real essence of Eretz Yisroel. And the same applies to people. You can always find the negative—*Ein tzadik ba’aretz asher ya’ase tov ve-lo yecheta*. You can always look for the negative, and you will find it. And the lesson from the meraglim is that anyone could fall into this trap. According to Rav Kook, Emuna is not believing that G-d exists. That’s for philosophers and kindergarten kids. Emuna means that if the whole world is divine, and it’s from Hashem, then it’s

really positive. And the negative is a passing phase, a *levush*, a *klipah*, whatever you want to call it exactly. So, I think that the mussar haskel of the meraglim is: When we look at the world—even just for ourselves, and even when you are not hurting anyone—to look for the positive, whether in Eretz Yisroel, in the Jewish people, or in any individual. And ultimately, if you look for the positive, appreciate it, and focus on it, it really becomes true. It brings the whole world to a more positive state. And if you do the opposite, unfortunately, the opposite occurs. But we should start by looking for the positive in Eretz Yisroel and in the Jewish People, by believing in ultimate goodness and in ourselves, in the Jewish People, and in Eretz Yisroel. And then, im yirtze Hashem, we will metaken everything wrong with the meraglim, and bring the ultimate Geula. Shabbat Shalom.

You Are Great, But...

Rabbi Yosef Goldin

The Cheit Meraglim, the Sin of the Spies, is one of the most dramatic and tragic episodes in the entire Torah.

However, a close reading of the text reveals a fundamental question. What, exactly, did the spies do wrong? Where was the sin? In the beginning of the parsha, Moshe commands them to bring back a detailed report about the land and its inhabitants. And that seems to be exactly what the meraglim do- they return and give an honest assessment- which includes positive aspects of the land as well as several negative aspects. Everything they mention appears to be the truth, at least their perspective. Why was this so problematic?

The Ramban, on this episode, suggests that the sin of the Spies lay not in the content of what they said, but in the way that they presented it. While it may be true that all the details the spies told the nation regarding the land were factually true, they were deliberately told in a way that would dishearten Am Yisrael.

There is one word, suggests the Ramban, that is the key to understanding their sin. The spies begin their report on a positive note, confirming that the land is in fact flowing with milk and honey, and has beautiful fruits. But the very next word undoes it all- “efes, however, the nation is strong, and the cities are fortified, and giants live amongst them”. The word “efes” typically means “zero”

or “nothing”. In our context, it is taken to mean “but”, or “however”- and as the Ramban notes, the deliberate use of the word “efes” is meant to connote a sense of hopelessness and despondency- that despite everything that has been said so far, there is no chance they will be successful.

With this word, says the Ramban, the meraglim flip the entire narrative on its head- the entire atmosphere of the conversation shifts. They go on to outline a number of negative aspects about the land, and by the end of the report, the main feeling that the nation is left with is one of despondence and hopelessness. All the positive aspects of the report are forgotten, and the nation has no confidence in its ability to conquer Eretz Yisrael.

Therefore, while it may be that everything the spies say is factually true, the way that it was presented was misleading and deceptive. It showed that the spies had a clear agenda- to discourage the nation from conquering the land- and they therefore presented the facts in a particular way. By starting with the positives but then transitioning to the negatives using the word “efes”, they ensured that the lasting impression that the nation received from their report was pessimistic and gloomy. That, according to the Ramban, was the crux of the Sin of the Spies.

There is an important lesson that we can glean from this understanding of the Ramban- an important lesson in all

relationships, but particularly for parents. When giving positive feedback or encouragement to our kids- which is something we should do often- it is important that the feedback not only starts on a positive note but ends on a positive one. We should not combine it with negative feedback as well. If we praise our child about something, and then continue with “but...”, that “but” will often undo any of the positive comments that were said beforehand. Our child will mostly hear the negative comments and feel criticized, not even remembering the initial praise that we started with.

Of course, there is always a place for negative feedback, and sometimes even criticism- as we all could benefit from hearing about areas where we could improve. However,

Ascending the Mountain Alone

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

The ten slaves spoke about how small they felt in comparison to the giants who lived in Eretz Yisrael at that time: ונהי בעינינו כחגבים, וכן היינו בעיניהם – “We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes” (13:33).

Rav Soloveitchik commented that slavery comes in two different forms – physical slavery, and a slave mentality. Physical slavery means that a person is literally under the control of somebody else, who decides what he can and cannot do. Benei Yisrael were under the rule and control of the Egyptians, and they were released from this form of bondage at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim. However, as evidenced by the spies’ cry, וכן היינו בעיניהם, they still were not freed from their slave mentality. They still felt inferior, subservient to the opinion and perspective of other people. They assumed that others viewed them as “grasshoppers,” as small and inferior, and this frightened them.

In the beracha with which we conclude the maggid section of the seder on Pesach, we express our hope to experience our final redemption, when we will praise Hashem על גאולתנו ועל פדות נפשנו – “for our redemption and the redemption of our souls.” Rav Soloveitchik explained that we anticipate the time when we will experience not only גאולתנו, physical redemption, freedom from those who oppress and exert control over us, but also פדות נפשנו – mental freedom, the freedom from our insecurities and our sense of inferiority, so that we will have the confidence to act as we are supposed to act without worrying how we will

such feedback must be given with sensitivity and in the right way. Otherwise, it may hurt more than help.

As understood by the Ramban, the Sin of the Spies lay not in what they said, but in how they said it. By combining the positives and negative together- but starting with the positive, and then declaring “but...” as they transitioned to the negatives, they left Am Yisrael with a sense of despondence and negativity regarding their mission. We, as parents, must also think about the way that we relay messages and feedback to our kids. It is crucial that our praise and encouragement by our kids be experienced as such, rather than be swallowed up by any criticism that follows.

be perceived.

When Hashem summoned Moshe back to the top of Mount Sinai to receive the second set of tablets, He commanded, ואיש לא יעלה עמך – “and no man shall ascend with you” (Shemos 34:3). The Degel Machaneh Efrayim comments that whenever we “ascend,” seeking to grow and lift ourselves higher, we should not bring anyone else with us; we should not be worrying about what other people are thinking or saying about us. What others think about us is their problem, not ours. We should live with the freedom to “climb the mountain,” to rise to the greatest heights we can, without worrying at all what people are thinking.

The Kotzker Rebbe similarly remarked that the essence of the sin of the spies is expressed in this sentence: וכן היינו בעיניהם. Hashem has told us that we are “giants,” that we are competent and qualified for the mission assigned to us. What right do we have to view ourselves as “grasshoppers” just because we think this is how other people perceive us? Why should other people’s perception matter more than Hashem’s perception? Why should they define for us who we are?

If we are doing what we think is right, living the way Hashem wants us to live, trusting that He sees us as “giants,” then we can enjoy the freedom to ignore and disregard what other people think and say about us, and live the lives that we want to live and should be living..

Shabbat in the “Fields” or in “Shul”

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Things were dire. A death sentence was handed down to an entire population. For the next thirty-eight years, they would aimlessly wander through hot desert sands without hope and without future. An unimaginable horror of inescapable death, life slowly ticking away amidst endless dunes. All horizons of hope and of opportunity were shuttered. Overnight, their entire world changed. They woke up to a dark and gloomy world, beyond promise and beyond dreams.

That “lost generation” squandered more than just their future. They lost their common narrative. Previously, they shared a common story: selected by Hashem, liberated from two centuries of slavery, they were in transit “on eagles’ wings” to a land of destiny. Whatever their differences, they all shared one common “story”.

That common story went up in flames. The desert, once a bridge to a future homeland, now mocked these solitary travelers, missing in time and adrift in history. Everything had to be rebuilt from the ground up. The past had vanished, and the future had to be remodeled.

The First “Shabbat Moment”

How would they establish new traditions and new meaning? The first test came quickly enough, and it surrounded a flagrant Shabbat violation. Shabbat observance had been a pre-mitzvah, delivered weeks before Sinai, even before mitzvot became obligatory. It was a “trial” mitzvah selected because of its prehistoric resonance. Ideally, Shabbat observance would allow the young nation to slowly fashion traditions and religious culture. Observing Shabbat would build durable Jewish identity, capable of outlasting religious infidelity and indiscretion.

Sadly, the record of Shabbat observance in the desert wasn’t outstanding. The twentieth chapter of Yechezkel documents widespread and ongoing Shabbat violation. It was so dire that they formed “Shabbat patrols” to police Shabbat in the desert. In the immediate aftermath of

the meraglim debacle, these patrols discovered a man violating Shabbat “in the fields”. When most were sitting around the Shabbat table, he was busy in the fields. When most were praying and studying in the mishkan, he was roaming the desert.

How would this emergent and rebuilding society

respond to this terrible Shabbat desecration? This was a “moment”, and their response would set the tone of their new society. The decisions they took would ripple far beyond this weekend. It would shape their future. Shabbat is that formative.

The Second “Shabbat Moment”

A similar crisis developed a little more than a thousand years later. Once again, we were in rebuild mode. Exiled from Israel for seventy years, we lost many of our national traditions. Returning to Israel and rebuilding the mikdash, we were also in the process of reconstituting national identity. Once again, Shabbat was the cultural and religious pivot, and once again it was being grossly violated. Apparently, newly emergent societies struggle with Shabbat observance. Without our prior “traditions” and without memories of the past, Shabbat observance isn’t natural or instinctive.

Nechemiah, the prophet was horrified at the scene: Shabbat in Yerushalayim was a bazaar of commerce and tradesmen. Frustrated and terribly worried about the long-term ramifications, he locked the doors of the city, banning merchants from entering, and forcing them to camp outside the city walls until the end of Shabbat.

When our traditions become misplaced, Shabbat observance declines. When we lose the continuity of tradition Shabbat suffers. So it was in the lost desert and so it was when we returned from the rivers of Babylon. So it always is, whenever we reboot community, family or identity. Shabbat isn’t a given.

But it is formative. It is a social tone-setter. As communities achieve greater Shabbat observance they religiously flourish. Shabbat observance becomes a “mile marker” on the road to communal and religious success.

My grandfather left white Russia as a teenager in the 1920’s. He emigrated to Baltimore, which was known as the “Torah town” of the United States. It attracted immigrants serious about Torah and religious life. He attended what was generally regarded as the most religious Synagogue in town. In his Synagogue he launched a club which only attracted a few members. It was known as the “Shomer Shabbat” club! Given the six-day work week in the USA, Shabbat observance was rare. Shabbat is never easy during reboot mode.

Our “Moment”

We are currently in a mini-rebuild. The pandemic radically transformed every aspect of our lives. One of the areas most affected was the Synagogue or shul. Facing a health crisis, we all splintered into smaller minyan -groups conducted in safer outdoor settings. To the surprise of many, we discovered many unforeseen benefits of smaller and more intimate minyanim. We learned a lot about our own prayer habits and desires.

The plague appears to have subsided, synagogues have reopened, but not everyone has returned. We are all reconsidering the role of a Synagogue within religious and communal life. These issues are complex and touch at the heart of Jewish identity. This recalibration must be navigated with sensitivity, complexity and nuance.

Much of the “conversation” surrounds the role of a synagogue as a site of prayer. Additionally, we are weighing the role of a synagogue in forming community. Are we sufficiently considering the role of a synagogue in creating Shabbat? This is our “moment” and if we don’t get Shabbat right, the consequences will be severe and long-lasting.

Shabbat allows us to disconnect from a booming and buzzing world of non-stop “busyness”. Shabbat allows us to reconnect with family, in an era of stressed family relationships. But Shabbat also calls us to higher spiritual ground and to expanded religious consciousness. To get to that higher “place” we must travel “somewhere else”, beyond our homes and beyond our backyards. Shabbat outside of the Synagogue may be relaxing and replenishing,

The Power of Prayer

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week’s parsha, Parshas Shelach, we learn of the tragic Cheit Ha’Meraglim - the sin of the spies who went to scout out the Land of Israel. After walking the breadth and depth of the Land, the spies returned to the Israelite encampment with a negative report about the Land. It is a Land that consumes its inhabitants! Amalek dwells in the south! There are giants in the Land! The fruits are enormous! The Canaanites dwell along the sea and the Jordan River! We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes! לֹא נוֹכְלִים לָעֲלוֹת - We cannot possibly ascend! (Num.13).

As a result of their report, the nation panicked en masse, and the pasuk tells us: וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם

but will it be transcendent? Will it be sacred ground and sacred space? Without a pilgrimage to a different place, will

Shabbat become flat? This is a crucial question, and we dare not belittle it or ignore it.

Heritage Becoming Legacy

Shabbat is a both heritage and legacy. We recall the legends of past Shabbatot and our grandparents’ struggle to observe Shabbat. In our minds we revisit past Shabbatot, which we observed alongside people who no longer walk this Earth. It is a day of common memory and of charming nostalgia. It is a day of stories from our past and traditions from earlier generations. A day of heritage.

Can we also sculpt it into a day of legacy? Can we create our own traditions and write new stories that will be retold to later generations? The work week is too busy for story-telling. Shabbat is the day we author our stories and entrench our traditions. Without those stories and without those traditions, religious identity will be brittle. Shabbat is that vital to Jewish identity. It always was, and always will be.

So ask yourself this question: prayer can be conducted in backyards and tents. Torah can be studied around private dining rooms. Family time can be enjoyed in upholstered living rooms. Can stories be told, can traditions be forged, can communities be assembled, and can joint narratives be written without a Synagogue? This is our moment, let’s get it right.

וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא וַתִּשָּׂא רַבָּה אֶמְרַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אוֹתוֹ לַיְלָה לִיל תִּשְׁעָה בְּאָב הִיָּה. אָמַר לָהֶם הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אַתֶּם בְּכִיתֶם בְּכִיָּה שֶׁל חֲנָם — וְאֲנִי קוֹבֵעַ לָכֶם בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת.

On this verse, Chazal teach us the tragic consequences, and inter-generation reverberation, of this crying:

וַתִּבְתִּיב: “וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ הָעָם בְּלַיְלָה הַהוּא”, אָמַר רַבָּה אֶמְרַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אוֹתוֹ לַיְלָה לִיל תִּשְׁעָה בְּאָב הִיָּה. אָמַר לָהֶם הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אַתֶּם בְּכִיתֶם בְּכִיָּה שֶׁל חֲנָם — וְאֲנִי קוֹבֵעַ לָכֶם בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת.

And it is written: “And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried and the people wept that night” (Numbers 14:1). Rabba said that Rabbi Yochanan said: That night was the night of the Ninth of Av. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: You wept needlessly that night, and I will therefore

establish for you a weeping for generations. (Taanis 29a)

Since that very first Tishaa B'Av, the 9th of Av has become a day of great calamity, weeping, exile and mourning for our nation. Once the nation rejected the Land, our fate was sealed, and in the future, the Land would reject us, R"l.

It is compelling to note that of all the spies and the entire nation that mourned over how 'terrible' (keviyachol!) the Land of Israel was, there were two scouts who maintained their faith in the Land, their faith in G-d and their faith in themselves. Unlike those who said, "we cannot ascend!" these spies offered a different report: "כִּי-יָכוֹל נוֹכַח, לָהּ - *we can surely do it!*" (13:30) and "הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר עֲבַרְנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶתְהָהּ - *the Land through which we passed to scout it out; the Land is very, very good!*" (14:7).

These two scouts were Calev ben Yefuneh from the tribe of Yehuda (13:6) and Hoshea bin Nun from the tribe of Ephraim (13:8). What saved these scouts from joining their comrades in the evil report? What gave them the kochos and emunah to say that the Land was very, very good and conquering it was possible?

The pasuk tells us: וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן-נוּן, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ - *and Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun "Yehoshua"*. (13:16). Why did Moshe change his name, and what does the extra 'yud' symbolize? Answers Rashi (ibid): Moshe davened for him: May G-d save you from the plot of the spies. Hence, the added 'yud' symbolizes Shem Hashem and Divine protection that was granted to Yehoshua. As for Calev, when the scouts arrived in the Land, he took a detour and went to the Me'aaras Ha'Machpela to pray for himself by the graves of our Avos and Imahos, that he should not be involved in the wicked plot of the spies (13:22 w/ Rashi).

In both cases, these two men had prayers offered, and it was these very tefillos that saved them from the slanderous, evil reports of their fellow spies.

The question is: Why did the two scouts specifically need prayers on their behalf, more than any of the other men?

Achieving Immortality

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

One of the most heartrending and challenging juxtapositions in the Bible appears in this week's parasha, parashat Shelach Lecha.

The twelve scouts have returned from their visit to

Rabbi Zev Leff shlita (of Moshav Mattityahu) explains as follows: Yehoshua came from the tribe of Ephraim, whose father was Yosef. When Yosef was a lad of seventeen, he saw his brothers involved in questionable behavior, doing things he did not understand, and the pasuk tells us: וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת-דִּבְרֵיהֶם רָעָה, אֶל-אָבִיָּהֶם - *And Yosef brought slanderous reports about them to their father (Yaakov)* (Bereishis 37:2). Hence, Yehoshua, a descendant of Yosef, from the tribe of Ephraim, had a "spiritual DNA" that was prone to speaking slander and negative reports.

As for Calev, from the tribe of Yehuda, he too had a "spiritual DNA" that lent itself to twisting the facts in order to deceive others. When the brothers threw Yosef into the pit, and sold him to the passing Midianites, it was Yehuda's idea to do so. R' Zev Leff notes that it was Yehuda, leading the way, who came home with Yosef's torn cloak, which had been dipped in goats blood, and said to father, "הֲכֵר-נָא, הַכֶּתֶנֶת בְּנֶדֶךָ הוּא—אִם-לֹא - *recognize please, is this the cloak of your son or not!?*" (37:32).

While Yosef spoke outright lashon harah about his brothers, Yehuda spoke words of deceit and deception to trick and mislead his father. It was these very traits that Moshe Rabbeinu knew lay dormant within the spiritual DNA of Yehoshua and Calev, respectively, and so it was these two scouts who needed tefillos to spiritually fortify them against failure.

We see from here the tremendous power of prayer. While Yehoshua and Calev should have been the first to sin, once they were fortified with tefilos, they were the only two who stood up and declared: טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ, מְאֹד מְאֹד - *the Land is very very good!*

We learn from here a very important lesson. No matter what one's "natural" tendencies are, nor one's negative "inherited traits", nor one's evil inclination to sin ... with much prayer, combined with much effort and hard work, one's actions, thoughts and speech can always be channeled for good and utilized positively in one's avodas Hashem.

Canaan, and ten have come back with an evil report that the land is, (Numbers 13:32), אֶרֶץ אֹכְלֵת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ, *a land that devours its inhabitants*. Despite Caleb and Joshua's best efforts to restore a sense of balance to the report, panic

spreads among the people. The people, who are in dread fear of the new “Promised Land,” are convinced that they will be consumed by the giants who reside in Canaan. They cry through the night, blaming Moses and Aaron for their troubles, and even express the wish that they had never left Egypt! They brazenly declare their preparedness to find a new leader and begin the return to Egypt that very moment.

G-d’s wrath is kindled. He tells Moses that He wishes to destroy the entire nation and rebuild a new nation through Moses. Moses pleads on behalf of the people for mercy. G-d yields, but vows that none of the men alive at the time of this rebellion will live to see the land of Canaan—they are all destined to die in the wilderness. For each of the 40 days that the scouts spent in Canaan, the Israelites are doomed to wander a year in the wilderness. To top off those grievous tidings, the 10 scouts who delivered the evil report die in a plague before G-d.

Imagine the hysteria of the people following the decree that they will not enter Canaan. Some are so distraught that they attempt to immediately force their way up to Israel and are beaten back in a savage attack by the Amalekites and the Canaanites. This final tragedy adds only more pain to the survivors.

The story of the scouts, and the resulting ban against entering Canaan, now concludes, and a new chapter, Numbers 15, begins that appears to be totally unrelated to the previous narrative.

The Torah states Numbers 15:2: כִּי תֵבֹאוּ אֶל אֶרֶץ מִוְשְׁבֵי תִיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם. This new chapter predicts that there will come a new day, when the People of Israel will enter into the land of their dwelling (Canaan, of course) that G-d gives them. The prediction is followed by a host of elaborate laws, replete with technical details regarding the amounts of meal offerings and wine libations that must accompany the sacrifices that will be brought by the nation, when they enter the land of Canaan.

How cruel! G-d has just finished informing the people that they will not enter the promised land. Then, as if pouring salt on their wounds, the Al-mighty cites a series of laws that will apply to the sacrifices that will be brought 39 years later in the land of Israel! Must G-d hurt the people even more by taunting them! Why would a so-called “compassionate G-d,” tell the people that they will

never enter the land, and will never be privileged to bring these sacrifices together with the meal offerings and wine libations!?! Is this a manifestation of G-d’s cruel cosmic sense of humor, to rub in the pain? Isn’t the punishment—the ban from ever entering Canaan, sufficient?

The intriguing juxtaposition of these two chapters reveals one of the fundamental principles of Jewish philosophy. While the Al-mighty decrees that the generation who sinned with the scouts will never be allowed to enter the land of Israel, G-d consoles them by promising them that while they will not make it, their children and their grandchildren surely will, and promises that their descendants will bring sacrifice libations and celebrate fully in the Promised Land.

As we all know, all humans are mortal. No one lives forever. Furthermore, while we may hope, no human can ever actually accomplish and fulfill all their life’s dreams and desires during their lifetimes. But as Ernest Becker argues in his brilliant Pulitzer Prize winning volume, *The Denial of Death*, we humans can indeed achieve immortality by passing on our values to our children and having them perpetuate our dreams and our desires.

“While I am punishing you by not allowing you to enter into the land of Canaan,” says G-d to the stiff-necked generation, “You will not die! In fact, you will live on—through your children who will be loyal to the faith system of Israel and will joyously celebrate in the land of Israel.”

Is this not true for all of us, as well? We all face the inevitable reality that our physical life is finite, and that while we “have miles to go,” we will all ultimately “sleep,” some sooner, some later. But, if we truly wish to achieve immortality, it is most crucial that we bear in mind that our life’s priority must be to properly and effectively transmit our values to the next generation, so that our ultimate dreams will be fulfilled and maintained by them, in the future.

This is one of the meanings of the Hebrew prayer that is pronounced at the time of death, וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת, נִשְׁמָתוֹ, that the deceased’s soul “*be bound up in the bond of eternal life.*” It is certainly one of the greatest blessings that G-d has graciously bestowed upon us.

Let us seize this opportunity to achieve immortality, embrace it, and incorporate it into the essence of our being.

Do Not Feed a False Fire: When to Confront, When to “Lay Low”

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Of the twelve meraglim dispatched to scout the Promised Land, only Yehoshua and Caleb escaped the unforgivable sin of disparaging the land promised by God Himself. It would not be unreasonable to measure their righteousness and their merits equally, both faithful but the Chofetz Chaim notes real differences in manner and approach between the two.

Most obvious, Moshe changed Yehoshua's name. “Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun, ‘Yehoshua’” (13:16) Why? Rashi understands the name change as a form of prayer. *Yah Yoshia-cha*. “May Hashem save you.” Save you? From what? From the plot of the meraglim! Moshe suspected the meraglim mission would end tragically, but he allowed them to go for that was their desire. Even so, he prayed fervently for his dearest and most committed disciple, Yehoshua. But there were two who remained faithful! Why did Moshe only pray for one?

Here, we come to the heart of the Chofetz Chaim's insight. We read that, unlike Moshe praying for Yehoshua, Caleb prayed for himself. *Vayavo ad Chevron* – “And he arrived at Chevron.” (13:22). The singular form suggests that only one went to Chevron; that only Caleb went to pray at the Mearat HaMachpela – the Tomb of the Patriarchs – and ask to be spared of the conspiracy.

The Chofetz Chaim asks, “What about Yehoshua? Why didn't he join with his chavrusa in prayer?” And what, he wonders, has this to do with the posuk at the end of this tragic episode – *ve'avdi Caleb* – “But my servant Caleb, because a different spirit was with him and he followed Me wholeheartedly...” (14:24)

Where is Yehoshua's mention?

We live in a time of fiery passions. The question is always, do those passions burn hot for righteousness and God, or do they burn hot for something else?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that there are two approaches to those who stand against God, His Torah and tradition. One, to oppose directly, arguing loudly against false ideas and disproving them one by one or, two, to remain reserved initially, to not attract attention and then, when the time is right, when his listeners are ready for the message that they've been taken in by “false prophets”, speak honestly and respectfully.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages.

“Biding one's time” is fraught with danger because it gives false ideas time to settle and take hold. Certainly, we understand that danger today, with non-stop social media platforms and cable news spewing out falsehoods. When is the right time to respond? Is there ever a right time? The only sure benefit to remaining quiet is that you are saved from physical danger. With your actual position unknown, you are not a target.

The one who attacks immediately does not allow falsehoods to simmer. His own position is clearly understood. He might place himself in danger however – to his livelihood, his social standing, even his physical well-being. After all, those who present lies as truth have little patience with real truth-tellers!

Moshe Rabeinu understood the neshamot of Yehoshua and Caleb and knew well the dangers each faced. He knew that when the spies gathered during the mission, Caleb would remain quiet in order to learn the fullness of their stratagems and the better to be able to defend Moshe later. Yehoshua however would most certainly speak up and oppose the spies, which would put him in immediate danger.

He needed Moshe's prayers. Caleb did not.

It's fair to ask, Why did either need prayers? After all, both were firm in their faith.

In answering, Rabbi Dr Abraham J. Twerski cites R' Simcha Zisel of Kelm who says that this teaches that even the greatest tzadik should not be overconfident in a sinful environment. Remember, the ten other spies were anashim – men of stature. Yet look where they ended.

We all know too many who have started in observant, committed Torah environments and have fallen off the way as a result of their environment. We know that there can never be enough prayers to protect ourselves, our children and grandchildren from the “spies” all around us.

Moshe knew Yehoshua could never tolerate falsehood, not even for a moment. He would immediately and forcefully oppose anyone uttering such things. Moshe also knew that such a reaction would put his life in danger. Therefore, he prayed that no harm should come his way by the meraglim.

Caleb, however, possessed a “different spirit”. He could “lay low”, biding his time. Therefore, he was in

no immediate physical danger. Still he did need to gird himself against falsehoods. He did this with his prayer.

In doing so, he provides a vital model for our own times. Despite the various “walls” we erect to protect ourselves and those we love from the influence of the outside – the communities we participate in, the yeshivot we support, the parental controls we place on our computers, on our children’s phones – the “spies” presence and influence is constant. We must turn to prayer to protect them and our inner selves from the lies and filth swirling around us every day.

No different from Yehoshua and Caleb, we each face challenges individually and collectively, challenges to our faith, our hashkafah, our derech. We hear, see, read, smell these challenges every day. They are challenges to our practice, our observance, our faith and community. Whenever we use our phones or our computers, we are vulnerable to “spies”! After all, it’s not called “spyware” for nothing!

Our conflict is how best to stand up to these challenges. Do we behave as Yehoshua and rage directly against them or do we act like Caleb and “ride the wave”, biding our time until the moment is right to confront directly?

The truth is the answer is that no one size fits all.

Rav Itzel Volozhiner, Rosh Yeshiva of the famous Volozhin Yeshiva, would give individual guidance and hadracha to each student leaving the yeshiva for communal rabbinic positions based on his assessment of the student’s strengths, personality and – equally important – the type of community the student was best suited to lead. (as quoted in Artscroll’s *Limud Yomi I*) One student, Rav Mordechai Yaffe, was headed to a community with mixed elements and levels of observance.

The guidance he received is relevant to our own contemporary, challenged and challenging Jewish community.

Rav Itzel counseled him, Remember the plague of tzefardea – frogs – in Egypt.

Chazal tell us the plague began with one large frog

exiting from the Nile, “... and the frog ascended” (Shemot 8:2). Rashi, citing the Midrash, tells us one frog emerged, and then the Egyptians struck it again and again, until it split into swarms of frogs, inundating the entire land.

What would have happened, he asks, had the Egyptians not struck it?

Nothing.

Had they not attacked, that single frog would have remained one poor, lonely frog. But because they beat it, it multiplied over and over until it was out of control.

Referencing this plague provided the advice the wise Gaon Rav Itzel Volozhiner gave his student – overcoming challenges is not always best accomplished by public debate and attack. Sometimes such an approach only creates ‘more frogs’. By attacking, a weak challenge can be transformed into a relentless and insidious one. After all, it is not the foolish, childish or wicked tweet that damages. It is the retweets, the endless “likes”, the viral metastasizing on social media that causes the most pain.

We live in an absurd age when people can be – and often are – famous for being famous. Imagine what would happen to these individuals if they were not given attention; their fame would dissipate like a fog; they would be merely people, no more nor less than anyone else.

The wisdom then is that it is sometimes best to simply let the challenge tire itself out.

If a challenge does require confrontation, there is great wisdom in waiting for the exact, right moment. David would not have brought Goliath down had he thrown his stone too soon! Yes, there are times when an immediate and forceful response must occur. This is the eternal lesson of Pinchas, whose passion was blessed by God Himself. Still, let us recall that in God’s response He gifted Pinchas with a covenant of peace.

Passion and peace.

If we were only wise enough to know when and how to use these unique gifts, when our passion and righteousness needs to be given voice, and when we are wisest to watch and wait.

The Beholder and the Beheld

Idan Rakovsky

Three times in our parshah we find the power of seeing. The first appears in the beginning, when Moshe gets permission from Hashem to send

meraglim (spies) to tour the land of Israel before the Jews will enter. Moshe commands them, “See the land, what it is.” (Bamidbar 13:18) The meraglim are sent first of all to

SEE the land, and by that to understand the quality and nature of it.

The second appears at the end of our parshah, in the mitzvah of tzitzit. Hashem commands us to wear tzitzit on our fourcornered garments, so that by looking at it we will “remember all the commandments of Hashem, and do them.” (15:39) The power of the tzitzit is in its external appearance. The Talmud (Sotah 17a) explains that by looking on the blue cord, we will remember the blue sea, blue sky, and Divine throne.

The third place where we see the power of seeing is in that same verse regarding tzitzit, “Do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes.” Here, the Torah explains that our eyes have so much power that by using them incorrectly, God forbid, we might sin. We should ask: what is the connection between all three references to vision?

When the meraglim saw what they saw, and told afterwards what they told, they were not lying. One might ask: why were they punished, if Moshe himself left open the possibility that they would see something negative?

The Eye of the Beholder

Rabbi Amnon Bazak of Yeshivat Har Etzion writes (Nekudat Petichah) that the sin of the meraglim was their unobjective perspective. The facts were clear to everyone, but their interpretation was problematic. Rav Bazak argues that this demonstrated that the power of the eye is more than seeing, it’s assimilating information. The spies demonstrated a secular view which left no room for belief in God and Moshe.

As a counter to this sin, Hashem commanded the mitzvah of tzitzit. The role of tzitzit is to serve as a reminder, in daily life, of the commandment of Hashem

Praying for Someone Else’s Choices

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן נוּן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ.

Moshe called Hoshea, son of Nun, Yehoshua (13:16)

The Gemara¹ explains that by adding the letter yud to the beginning of Hoshea’s name and changing it to Yehoshua, Moshe was praying on his behalf:

י-ה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים: *May Hashem save you from the counsel of the spies.* This idea raises a basic question: How can Moshe pray that Hashem should save Yehoshua from

¹ Sotah 34b, quoted in Rashi to Bamidbar ibid.

who brought us out of Egypt, and of the fact that we are the nation of God. Tzitzit bring the person to faith in God, and prevent him from following his eyes and heart into bad ways. Looking on the tzitzit thus symbolizes the complete opposite of the circumstances that caused the sin of the spies.

The Eye of the Beheld

We might suggest another approach, based on Rabbi Eliezer Melamed’s comments on the role of clothing in human culture. (*Peninei Halakha, Hilchot Tzitzit*) Rav Melamed argues that the garment is a form of human expression. According to the style of one’s dress, others can know something about him. People can convey messages through their clothes.

According to this approach, we may suggest that the power of the eye looking upon the tzitzit is not of the person who wears the tzitzit, but rather of the

people who look at him! When we know that people are looking at us, we constantly remember who we are, what our role is, and what we are supposed to do.

The meraglim were the opposite. When they saw what they saw, they considered no external eye looking at them that could influence their perspective. Whatever they said, they said honestly from themselves, but only from what they saw, with no exterior judgment.

In our world where “my Truth” is a sanctified value, where people are encouraged to express their inner feelings and identity, maybe we should reconsider the importance of an external point of view, to pay attention to the eyes of others as well; and to be open to the idea that the power of the (other) eye may lead us to a different, perhaps positive, interpretation of the world.

making the wrong decision? Does this not contradict the principle of free-will, whereby a person’s decisions are theirs alone to make as the Gemara in Brachos 33b states:

הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים, *Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven?* Seemingly, then, Moshe’s prayer for Yehoshua is one which is not in the hands of Heaven to grant!

Moreover, if Moshe feels that it is possible to pray for someone to make the right decision, why does he pray only for Yehoshua? Yehoshua is arguably the one least at

risk in this enterprise; if the rest of the spies act correctly, Yehoshua will be fine! As such, it is they who are more urgently in need of divine assistance. Why, then, does Moshe not pray for *them*?

R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad² explains: For the other spies, the issue of whether to bring back a good or bad report about the land was a moral one. The Zohar explains that the spies feared they would be demoted from their positions of authority once the Jewish people entered the land of Israel. This factor served as an impetus for them to then dissuade the people from entering the land, by arguing that involvement in its physical pursuits would be a spiritual step down from their lofty existence in the Wilderness. This being the case, the decision whether or not to do the right thing was one which could only be made by them, for it related to the distinctly human faculty known as 'fear of heaven'. A prayer offered by someone else in this area could not help them.

For Yehoshua, the matter was different. It was already known that he would take over as leader of the Jewish people when they entered the land of Israel.³ As such, Yehoshua was in danger of falling in league with the spies' arguments out of fear of heaven! The worry was that his humility might make him doubt his resistance to the words of his peers, and he may come to be swayed by them. For Yehoshua, the antidote was not a boost in moral fiber, which he had in abundance, but added insight to allow him to see through the specious nature of the spies' claims. Added insight is something that is in the hands of heaven, and thus Moshe was able to pray for Yehoshua, even though that insight would directly affect Yehoshua's decisions.

In this regard, R' Tzaddok Hakohen of Lublin, in Likutei Ma'amarim sec. 44, reveals a fascinating further dimension within the adding of the letter yud to the beginning of Yehoshua's name. As we know, although the spies' argument against entering the land may have sounded correct, in fact, the exact opposite is true; for entering into the more earthly sphere of the Land of Israel was in order to attain a higher spiritual level, namely, that of bringing the spirituality of the Torah and mitzvos into day-to-day living and sanctifying their earthly existence.

The letter *heh* is actually a word in Hebrew; it means

'here it is'.⁴ The letter yud, by contrast, refers to the future, as we see that a word in the future tense begins with the letter yud. Initially, Hoshea's name began with a heh, which left him inclined to relate to a situation the way it appears in front of him now. This would leave him prone to agreeing with the argument of the spies that it is not a good idea to enter the land, for at face value they are right. By having the letter yud added to the beginning of his name, Yehoshua received the capacity to judge a situation in terms of what could come from it. This helped him stay firm in his understanding that ultimately the idea of moving from the desert to the Land of Israel was a good one.

² Author of the Ben Ish Chai, in his commentary on Aggados Ben Yehoyadah to Sotah ibid.

³ See Rashi to Bamidbar 11:28 quoting Sanhedrin 17a.

⁴ See Bereishis 47:23.