

How could Moshe *Rabenu* entertain the possibility that the land of Israel could be bad in any way. Rabbi M. Kormornick quotes the Kotzer Rebbe, that Moshe did not really consider the land could be bad in any way. However, he knew that the spies may not be capable of perceiving everything that they saw in a positive light. Therefore, Moshe wanted them to report to him first and tell him their impression of what they

saw, and then he would show them how in reality, everything that they experienced was actually very good, and not as they initially perceived it.

The greatness of our Torah leaders is their ability to see beyond the field of vision that we are capable of. The following story, which took place in 1939, demonstrates this point very well.

In 1939, as Germany invaded Poland, Rabbi Yitzchak Guirzman fled with many other Jews to Lemberg, which was under Russian control. Once in Lemberg, the Jewish refugees had to decide whether they should accept the Russian citizenship that they were immediately offered, or to reject it. No one knew what to do. Should they accept in order not to offend their new hosts, or remain in a state of limbo waiting to see how the war would end? They asked the Rabbi and he advised that citizenship should not be taken up. Most listened to the Rabbi; some didn't.

On the 20th of *Sivan* the following year, the KGB stormed into Lemberg and arrested all the Jews who had refused citizenship and sent them to Siberia. There was anger and depression in the air, and many people voiced their rage against the Rabbi. However, the words of the Rabbi proved to be lifesaving. Soon after their deportation the Germans invaded Lemberg and killed almost all of the remaining Jewish population there. Those in Siberia were far out of reach of the German army and were saved from certain death. In addition, their refusal to accept Russian citizenship meant that after the war, they were free to leave Russia, unlike those surviving Jews who had sworn allegiance to mother Russia. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Yehoshua – May G-d Help You

Rashi says that Moshe prayed that Hashem save Yehoshua from the *meraglim's* scheme (*Sotah* 34b). The commentators ask: Why did Moshe pray only for Yehoshua and not for Caleb and the other spies?

A possible answer: Yehoshua was Moshe *Rabenu's* *talmid muvhak*, his quintessential disciple, as it says (*Shemot* 33:11), "His servant, Yehoshua son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from within the [Moshe's] tent." The nature of a perfect disciple is to cling as perfectly as possible to the ways of his master. He strives to mirror his master's *midot* and to internalize those characteristics so that they become part of his own personality. Therefore, just as Moshe *Rabenu* had perfected the trait of humility, as it says (*Bemidbar* 12:3), "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth," Yehoshua, too, was exceedingly humble.

Moshe perceived that due to Yehoshua's great humility he was in danger of being swayed by the other *meraglim*. They were all exalted leaders, and Moshe feared that, as a result of his great humility, Yehoshua might discount his own opinion in favor of theirs. Moshe's prayers, therefore, were very important; they succeeded in protecting Yehoshua from the *meraglim's* influence. This is what *Targum Yonatan* means when he writes, "When Moshe saw Hoshea's humility he changed his name to Yehoshua.

Caleb did not possess Yehoshua's level of humility, and he was therefore less likely to be influenced by his peers. However, as the *Ohr Hahayim* explains, Even Caleb struggled against his peers' influence. The *pasuk* says (*Bemidbar* 14:24), "But My servant Caleb, because a different spirit was with him, and he followed Me wholeheartedly..." The *Ohr Hahayim* explains that "a different spirit" does not mean that it was easy for Caleb to oppose the *meraglim*. On the contrary, it means that Caleb had within him a contrary spirit, an innate desire to oppose the authority and an urge to join the *meraglim*. Nevertheless, although he was possessed with this urge to rebel, "he followed Me wholeheartedly." He didn't succumb to this instinct. Instead, he struggled with this urge and ultimately succeeded in overcoming it. Our Sages point

out that in order to save himself, he threw himself onto the burial places of the Forefathers, pleading for Hashem's assistance in overcoming his tendencies. How much more difficult would it have been for Caleb to ignore the *meraglim's* influence had he been endowed with Moshe's natural humility! (Rav Schwab on *Chumash*)

Proper Focus

When Moshe sent the spies into the Land of Israel, he did not anticipate two wildly disparate reports regarding what they would find. An argument breaks out between the spies upon their return: only two of them, Caleb and Yehoshua, say that Israel should enter the land. The other spies insist that it is a hopeless effort.

The spies concede that the Promised Land is a "land flowing with milk and honey," and bring back huge fruits to demonstrate the bounty they found there. But, they say, it is all worthless, because the occupants are strong giants. Although Caleb says that Israel can surely succeed, the others insist it cannot be done. They repeat that the population are giants, so much so that they saw the Israelites as if they were locusts. For this reason, the spies insist that it would be better to turn around and return to Egypt.

At that point, Yehoshua and Caleb stand up and say, "The land through which we passed, to spy it out, is a very very good land!" [14:7] And then they go on to say that if Hashem desires to bring them to that land flowing with milk and honey, then none should rebel against Him, nor should they fear.

What was the point of starting off by telling the people that it is a "very very good land?" The other spies agreed that this was the case! They were the ones who first called it a land flowing with milk and honey, and came back carrying huge fruits. In an argument you focus upon the areas of disagreement, so why should Caleb and Yehoshua underscore how good a land it is?

The truth is that the rest of the spies had digressed from their mission in the first place. At the outset, Hashem told Moshe that he may send spies into the "Land of Canaan that I am giving to the Children of Israel." The spies were supposed to see the land, and decide tactically how to enter. Questioning whether it was possible wasn't part of the mission, because G-d said this is the land "I am giving." There is no question of whether it was possible. Given that they had digressed, Caleb and Yehoshua realized that they needed to first get the nation to focus back upon the value of their goal, and then tell them to rely upon Hashem's promise.

They understood that having a "good eye" isn't merely about how you judge what you see, but what you choose to focus upon. They knew that if the people paid attention to what giants the occupants were, they would be afraid to enter their land. But if they could convince the nation to pay attention instead to how wonderful a land it was, then the people would be receptive to G-d's promise that they would inherit it.

We are told to judge every person favorably, with a good eye. Sometimes, this is best accomplished not by trying to see a particular act in the best positive light, but by looking at the totality of the person. The same individual who got angry and acted out in a particular situation might also be the same person who is incredibly generous with both time and money when someone needs his help. A community cannot be judged by the behavior of a few bad actors, not because we can justify how those individuals behaved, but because those individuals do not represent the community.

Part of the harmful effect of *Lashon Hora*, gossip about others, is that it inevitably focuses our attention upon a single bad action, rather than the totality of the individual. Our obligation is to look at the bigger picture, seeing that the person cannot be judged by a single misdeed, even if true. When we look at others this way, we inevitably find that we live in a much better world! (Rabbi Yaakov Menken)

Ugly Picture

Most of us don't like to lose our temper. Our egos always prefer to preside over a situation with cool control. Unfortunately, subduing the demon of anger is more easily