

CHIZUK *and* IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

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Once again we are forced to confront the enigma of the spies' rejection of Eretz Yisrael; a sin whose repercussions continue unabated throughout the entirety of Jewish history. The spies turn their back on the Land and the verse in Sefer T'hilim tells us: "They despised the desirable Land, they had no faith in His word." By slandering the Land and stating that the land devours its inhabitants they displayed lack of faith, and as a result "they are cast down in the wilderness, and their descendants are cast down and scattered among the lands" (T'hilim 106:24-27). In other words, the exile of the Jewish People throughout the world is a direct consequence of the sin of the spies.

Although many suggestions have been put forth in order to understand the puzzling source of the spies behavior, I would like to focus upon one interesting suggestion found in the Ishbitzer's Sefer "Mei HaShilo'ach". The Ishbitzer entertains the peculiar notion that the key to the

matter lies in the difficult and dangerous concept of AVEIRA LISHMA - a sin which one does knowingly albeit with good intentions. Regarding the case at hand, he imagines the following picture: The ten spies knew that Moshe would die prior to the peoples' entry into Eretz Yisrael. Fearing Am Yisrael's inability to stay on a straight course without benefiting first from Moshe's leadership and wisdom for an extended period of time, they acted in a way designed to bring about a prolonged postponement. This was their AVEIRA LISHMA. Was this scheme helpful in any way? Most certainly not, as they all died during the intervening years... The lesson to be derived is that we must do all that which we are called upon to do, and rely upon G-d to help us solve any difficulties which might arise. A possible analogous situation today would be those who clearly state their understanding that making Aliyah is a mitzva, however, they nonetheless muster different reasons to explain why they must stay behind...

Another suggestion put forth by the Ishbitzer is that the spies did not truly appreciate the inner qualities of Eretz Yisrael, regarding it as one might any other Land. This is akin to Rav Soloveitchik's explanation of the

connection between the incident of the spies and the sad story of Miriam speaking Lashon Hara against Moshe which immediately precedes it: Just as Miriam's actions stemmed from a lack of appreciation of Moshe's unique qualities, so too, the spies did not appreciate the singular qualities of Eretz Yisrael - Eretz Segula. The Rav pointed out that in Hebrew the word Segula connotes an exceptional and unique quality. Just as the Land of Israel is exceptional so too was Moshe Rabeinu - B'chir Han'vi'im - qualitatively different from all other N'vi'im.

Most troubling, though, is the fact that the spies were KULAM ANASHIM, RASHEI B'NEI YISRAEL HEIMA - they were all upstanding tzadikim. How then could they have turned so suddenly? How could they have caused such calamity? The Zohar tells us that the spies realized that their position as leaders was only temporary. They understood that once the People entered the Land new leaders would be chosen. The Midrash says it thus: "It is easy to step up to the Bima, it is hard to step down..." Realizing this, the question is turned on its head, and we are left wondering: How were Yehoshua and Kalev safeguarded from this danger? What enabled them to remain true to their mission when

all the others fell by the wayside?

Yehoshua was an utterly dedicated disciple to Moshe. When Hashem told Moshe to lay his hand on Yehoshua, Moshe did more - he lay both his hands as a sign of transference of Torah leadership to Yehoshua. If Yehoshua represents Torah learning, filling the role of the disseminator of Torah, Kalev ben Yefuneh represents a second trait - following the Patriarch's fealty to the Land of Israel. Upon entering the Land, Kalev immediately went to Chevron (BaMidbar 13:22) in order to pray at the gravesites of our Patriarchs in Maarat Hamachpela and receive inspiration from the Avot. Rabbeinu Bechayei quotes the Midrash on the words VAYAVO AD CHEVRON - saying that these words do not refer to Kalev but rather to Hashem who came to Chevron in order to notify the Avot that the time had arrived for His oath to the Avot to be fulfilled, and for the Jewish People to come into the Land.

Thus the successful partnership of Yehoshua and Kalev signifies the necessity of Torah learning being joined together with settling the Land.

MAASEH AVOT SIMAN L'BANIM. - Which of the actions of the twelve spies will be a Siman for us? Will we

**fall into the same trap that brought us down so many times throughout history, or will we rise to the occasion following Kalev's courageous lead, and echo his timeless proclamation:
ALOH NA'ALE VE'YARASHNU OTA KI
YACHOL NUCHAL LAH -**

We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it!