

Send forth men, if you please. (13:2)

The *Baal HaTurim* makes an interesting observation which gives the reader an opportunity to pause and question. The letters at the end of the three words: *shlach*, *lecha*, *anashim* are *ches*, *chof* and *mem*, which spell the word *chacham*, wise man. This spurs the *Baal HaTurim* to say that there was Heavenly instruction concerning the quality of the person Moshe *Rabbeinu* would select to be among the *meraglim*, spies. He was to be a *chacham*, wise man. These men were *Nesiim*, Princes, of each *shevet*, tribe. It, thus, makes sense that they were individuals not lacking in wisdom, and they were G-d-fearing, able leaders. Yet, despite their incredible achievements, they fell *meigra ramah l'bira amik ta*, "from a high mountain to a low pit." They rebelled against G-d by saying, "We are unable to conquer the land." How did this occur?

Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, cites the *B'chor Shor* in his commentary to *Shabbos* 150A, who explains *Chazal's* well-known definition of a *chacham*: *Eizehu chacham? Ha'roeh es ha'nolad*. "Who is a wise man? One who sees what is 'born' (who perceives the results of his actions; who understands the consequences of his decision)." The *B'chor Shor* explains that every *aveirah*, sin, has *avos* and *toldos*, fathers, primary sin and offspring, consequences, result/secondary actions. For example, consider the transgression of idol worship, which consists of actual service to the idol. This is the *av*. The *toldos* would be similarities which *Chazal* have stated are "as if" one has worshipped an idol, such as: arrogance, anger, refraining from giving charity by turning his head away from noticing the poor man; not keeping his word. Likewise, the sin of adultery has such *toldos* as various forms of flirting with women, or, as *Chazal* state, one who eats bread without washing his hands. The sin of murder might be about taking a life, but *ha'malbin pnei chaveiro*, one who embarrasses his fellow in public, is considered as if he killed him.

We, therefore, see two distinct levels or aspects of sin: the primary transgression which is prohibited by the Torah; and its offshoot, which, when violated, may lead to the violation of the primary transgression. Thus, the *B'chor Shor* posits that one who is not careful with regard to the precursor of sin; i.e. one who has no compunction about humiliating his fellow in public, will eventually lose respect for the value of human life. As such, *Chazal* teach that a wise man is one: who perceives the results of his actions; who understands that the *toldah*, offshoot, can lead to greater and worse actions and sinful behavior, such as the violation of the original Torah prohibition.

Veritably, this is how the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, plays on our mind. He understands that he will have little success in convincing someone to sin. The individual is far-removed from the primary transgression, but, if he can persuade his target to commit a *toldah*, then he has captured the person. The rest will now be much easier. "Who is a wise man? One who sees the *molad*; what will be born from his actions." One should realize and take to heart that the "minor" actions will lead to much greater evil.

Indeed, *Chazal* (*Pirkei Avos* 4:2) state, *Mitzvah goreres mitzvah; aveirah goreres aveirah*, "A

mitzvah leads to another *mitzvah*; a sin leads to another sin.” Good deeds, as well as bad, are not performed in a vacuum. A good deed leaves an imprint on a person and motivates him to do some more good. Sadly, the same is true with evil. A bad deed begets another bad deed.

We now return to our original question: How did such exalted men, members of *Klal Yisrael*’s elite, fall to such a nadir of sin that they rebelled against Hashem? The *Zohar HaKadosh* posits that the *meraglim* spoke ill of *Eretz Yisrael* because they feared that their positions as *Nesiim* would be in jeopardy when they entered the Land. They were the *Nesiim* for the wilderness. *Eretz Yisrael* would have a new generation of Princes. The root of their sin was a taint of arrogance. No one wants to give up his position of leadership. As a result of this, they were willing to slander *Eretz Yisrael*, so that the nation would fear entering the Land.

In his *Zera Kodesh*, the **Ropshitzer, zl**, writes in his commentary to our *parsha*: *V’yasuru es Eretz Canaan*, “And they shall spy out the Land of Canaan,” that the word *Canaan* is superfluous. Obviously, since this was the land in question, it was *Canaan* which they would be spying out. The *Rebbe* explains that *hachnaah*, humility, submission, is one of the most important and critical character traits that one should possess. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was lauded as the most humble man on earth. *Eretz Yisrael* has this advantage over any other land - in that it imbued its residents with *hachnaah*. Thus, despite the large, fortified cities that dotted its landscape, it was a land that infused humility within the psyche of its citizens. This, says the *Rebbe*, is the reason it is called *Canaan*, which is a derivative of *hachnaah*.

Moshe instructed the *meraglim* to take a penetrating look at the land. “See the Land, what it is; and the nation that lives there: Are they really strong? Do they consider themselves mighty? Are they many? Do they view themselves as all-powerful, or are they a nation affected by the land’s climate?” Moshe was acutely aware of the issue that plagued the spies. He understood the damage that a smidgeon of arrogance, left unchecked, can cause. As a person who personified the very epitome of humility, Moshe understood its significance. He saw the *meraglim* were headed toward infamy – if they did not allay their misplaced fear born of arrogance.

Regrettably, they did not take the hint. They did not take the definition of wisdom to heart. Had they heeded the words of *Chazal* to perceive what can result from a minor infraction; had they been *chachamim* who are *roeh es ha’nolad*, they would not have fallen into the trap set for them by the *yetzer hora*.

We now understand the *Baal HaTurim*’s emphasis on the word *chacham*. Had they acted with *chochmah*, wisdom, the entire debacle for which we are still paying today would never have occurred. This is true for so much of our everyday lives. We make minor, foolish mistakes which we view as isolated, insignificant errors that have little or no bearing on our lives. How wrong we are! These “minor” errors are the *toldos*, which sadly lead to *avos*. A little *chochmah* at the right moment will prevent much of life’s problems later on. Every time we do something which we feel is “not so terrible,” we should stop to think of the consequences that it might catalyze. This is the definition of

a wise person.