

## Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan. (13:2)

"*Anashim*" is not a word to indicate plain men; rather, it is a description of the men. They were distinguished men, people of stature, breeding - truly *tzaddikim* worthy of leading their respective tribes. What went wrong? How did *tzaddikim* go off the *derech*, correct path, virtually overnight? In fact, this is not the only instance where noble men, leaders of the Jewish People, "lost it." In the previous *parsha*, we learned about the "*asafsuf*", complainers, who "*lusted a lust*." There is a difference of opinion in the *Midrash Tanchuma* as to the identity of these malcontents. One opinion is that they were members of the *eirav rav*, mixed multitude, who tagged along when our People left Egypt. This group plagued *Klal Yisrael* a number of times with their influence and sinful behavior, catalyzing a host of punishment.

There is, however, another opinion that these "complainers" were none other than the *Sanhedrin*, the Elders who were the most prominent of *Klal Yisrael's* leadership. The princes of the Jewish People lusted for meat! This is incredible when we consider who these men were and what they represented. Moreover, according to another opinion in the *Midrash*, they were not crying about meat. The newly ordained laws regarding prohibited marriages made them overwrought. They were upset that they could no longer marry anyone whom they chose. This does not sound characteristic of members of the *Sanhedrin*, *Klal Yisrael's* leadership. Something must have occurred to embitter them.

*Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin, zl*, attributes their sudden spiritual collapse to timing. The unexpected exposure -- without preparation -- to the world beyond *Har Sinai*, the world outside the *Machne Shechinah*, camp of the Almighty, was too much for them to manage. It might be similar to a passenger traveling on an airplane that has suddenly lost altitude. The unexpected drop in cabin pressure requires immediate oxygen in order for passengers to survive. We are taught that *Klal Yisrael* left *Har Sinai* like a "*schoolchild leaving school*." He runs. So did they! The *meraglim*, spies, had been under Moshe's influence in an environment permeated with holiness. Suddenly, they were thrust into a spiritually hostile environment. They became "blind." No longer could they perceive with a positive outlook. They viewed everything negatively. Unable to handle the pressure of sudden change, they had no chance. The stress transformed them from *anashim*, men of spiritual distinction, leaders of *Klal Yisrael*, into ingrates. Losing their equilibrium, they turned a nation of believers into a spineless people afraid to continue their Heavenly ordained mission to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

Was this situation different from contemporary society, when some of our brightest and finest young people capitulate to the blandishments and pressures of the outside world because they lack the preparation to process the diverse stimulation? We must teach them that what is out there is not reality. They should not feel like "*grasshoppers*," small and meaningless, in the eyes of the outside world. Rather, they should learn to take pride in what they are and, above all, to trust in

Hashem to protect and guide them. If only the *meraglim* would have had the right attitude, the Jewish community might be different today.