

By Pharaoh's life – surely you are spies. (42:16)

Why of all accusations that Yosef could have leveled against his brothers, did he choose calling them spies? Furthermore, the responses they gave to confirm the veracity of their mission to Egypt misses the mark. How does it explain why they are not spies? “All of us are sons of one man.” “Your servants have never been spies.” “The youngest son is now with our father, and one is gone.” Last, what did they mean when they said, “We have never been spies”? Who ever mentioned the past? *Horav Elyakim Schlesinger, Shlita*, explains this based upon a *Midrash* that relates the rest of the story – the dialogue that ensued between Yosef and his brothers.

“I have a goblet through which I am able to divine and see into the past and future. I see that, awhile ago, two of you went into Shechem and killed all its males. Afterwards, you sold one of your brothers in slavery.” Bearing this in mind, we turn to the most powerful trait a good spy must possess, *Echad b'peh v'echad b'lev*, “One sentiment on his lips and one sentiment in his heart,” referring to the inconsistency between what one says and what one keeps within the inner most recesses of his heart.

Yosef intimated to his brothers that their actions were bespeaking the inconsistency between heart and mouth, which is the signature attribute of a spy. A spy must live a lie, successful prevarication being his most powerful attribute. Yosef accused them of this negative character, the attribute that makes for a successful spy, “You killed out an entire city out of revenge for what one person did to your sister. You claimed brotherly love and vengeance. You claimed your undying love for your sister, yet you had no problem selling your brother into slavery. How could you claim to love your siblings if you acted in such a reprehensible manner to one of them?”

Their response that they were sons of one man did not hold water, because they apparently distinguished between the children of their father's wives. True, they risked their lives to save Dinah, Leah's daughter, but when Yosef, Rachel's son, irritated them, they sold him. Yosef responded by incarcerating Shimon, Leah's son, to see if they would bring Binyamin, Rachel's son, to redeem him. Likewise, when Yosef's men discovered the goblet in Binyamin's sack, Yosef observed that the sons of Leah advocated for Binyamin.

Consistency entails that one be congruent in belief and practice. One who believes in Hashem does not act unethically, even if he thinks that it is not against *halachah*. Prohibited business practices indicate that one's belief lacks integrity. We will receive our money from Hashem – if He deems that we are entitled to it. Stealing is not entitlement. We present ourselves publicly as being strictly observant, from the clothing we wear to the manner in which we *daven*, but does it represent who we are beneath the garments?

The greatest inconsistency which harms not only ourselves, but especially our children, is the “Do as I say and not as I do” way of life. We want our children to come to *shul* on time, *daven* with *kavanah*, concentration, not speak during *tefillah* and *krias haTorah*, yet we personally violate

these sacred guidelines. When children observe a discrepancy between what their parents preach and how they act, the children receive mixed messages, which confuses them. When a disconnect exists between the external and the internal, and children note this, it impedes parents' credibility as role models. Striving for authenticity in both private and public spheres is not too much to ask of one who claims to be a parent. If for no other reason than providing a lasting transmission of Jewish values and religious practices to the next generation, we must see to it that our stated beliefs and our outward actions are aligned.

The following story is not new, but the lessons I would like to glean from it might be. A well-known *maggid*, preacher, came to Berditchev before *Rosh Hashanah* and asked permission of the *Rosh HaKhal*, President of the community, to speak to the community. The man was in dire need of funds to marry off his daughter, and this was how he earned his livelihood. He spoke; people were inspired, and they donated toward his cause.

The head of the community told him, "I will gladly allow you to speak in any *shul* in our community, but one. In order to speak in *Horav* Levi Yitzchak Berditzchever's *shul*, you must receive his permission." Since *Rav* Levi Yitzchak's *shul* was the showcase of the community, it was understandable that it was the podium which would garner him the greatest financial response. The *maggid* went to *Rav* Levi Yitzchak and presented his case, "I must marry off my daughter, and I need the money. I am an excellent orator who has successfully inspired Jews in many communities. I will not let you down."

Rav Levi Yitzchak agreed on the condition that he speak first by way of an introduction. Obviously, the man agreed. "*Ribono Shel Olam*," *Rav* Levi Yitzchak began, "this man is coming before our community with some powerful accusations. *Rosh Hashanah* is quickly approaching, and surely the *Satan* is working overtime to find evidence of our wrongdoing. Do not listen to this man, since he is only one witness, and a person may not be punished based upon the testimony of one witness. If, however, he will speak of the people's positive activities, then You must listen, since one witness, although not able to obligate a person, can force a *shevuah*, vow, to be taken (by the offender). Hashem, You made a vow to our forefathers to protect their descendants."

The *maggid* had no words. His *drashah*, speech, was filled with fire and brimstone, excoriating the community for its many faults. (I must qualify this. These faults were minor, considering that their *Rav* was the famous *tzadik*, *Rav* Levi Yitzchak Berditzchever. He surely brought light to their failings. This *maggid*, like so many others, would take a simple failing and magnify it.) He announced that, in view of their *Rebbe's* "introduction," he had nothing to say. After *Rosh Hashanah*, *Rav* Levi Yitzchak personally raised sufficient funds for the *maggid* to marry off his daughter.

The lessons to be gleaned: The *maggid* was excoriating the community for the wrong reason. While, veritably, they quite possibly may have been lax in certain areas of observance – one gives *mussar*, rebuke, because one cares, one speaks from his heart. One does not earn a living by

magnifying the faults of others. (This does not mean that we should stop engaging paid orators to point out those areas in which we may be deficient. When we have a need, when a person is ill, we seek out the best and most proficient doctors. Likewise, we should engage a speaker who is knowledgeable, sincere and caring. His time is money.)

We see how the Berditchever dealt with human weakness and faults. He understood that we are all human beings, given to human frailty and desire. We have a way of dealing with such issues. Excoriation, fire and brimstone are not among these ways. Last, even when one makes the correct decision, if it adversely affects another Jew, we make up his financial loss. It is the right thing to do.