

“Moshe sent them to spy out the land of Canaan.” (13:17)

Yehoshua also sent spies to spy out the land prior to conquering it. He had no problem with his spies. In contrast, when Moshe Rabbeinu, his rebbe, sent twelve distinguished leaders of the Jewish nation, a terrible calamity resulted. The impact of this calamity affected the entire Jewish nation. Wherein lay the difference between the two groups of spies?

Perhaps the difference is in the numbers. Doleh U'mashkeh cites the pasuk in Devarim (1:22): “Vatikrevun eilai kulchem”, “And you all came close to me,” when the people requested spies. Yehoshua sent two representatives of the people, whom he felt were the most appropriate individuals suitable for this mission. On his own volition, Moshe would have sent two meraglim, which is really all they needed. Yehoshua, his devoted disciple, and Calev, the prince of Shevet Yehudah, the most distinguished tribe, would probably have been the individuals he would have sent. However, the other tribes would not accept this approach. They each wanted their own representative. They did not trust one another.

What happened to their kinship? Apparently, it took a hiatus that presented itself as a breach among the tribes. If all the tribes could not agree on a leadership that was to represent them all, then it is no wonder that this feeling of insecurity catalyzed this enormous tragedy.