

“We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so were we in their eyes.” (13:33)

What did the spies want to prove when they said, “And so were we in their eyes”? The Kotzker Rebbe, z.l., said that this comprises, in effect, a major aspect of their sin. The fact that the spies felt small in their own eyes is something we can accept. They saw these giant men, and they felt overwhelmed by them; they felt small compared to them. While a Jew who has faith in Hashem should not have feelings of inadequacy, it is understandable that some of us have a difficult time dealing with pressure. What the Canaanites thought, however, also concerned them. Who cares what they think of us? Our self-esteem should not be determined by the opinion of others – especially not by those whose lifestyle is based upon the values and morals of contemporary society.

The first Bobover Rebbe, z.l., quoted by Horav Yissacher Teichtal, z.l., explains that there are two types of modest people: the sincere and the insincere. The latter is an individual who makes it a point to “display” his modesty. He presents himself as the paragon of humility as long as it serves his purpose. Heaven forbid should someone offend or embarrass him. He will immediately take offense and spew forth a venomous diatribe against the unlucky soul who offended his honor. The former maintains his humility under all circumstances, because it is sincere humility. The spies could not tolerate the fact that the pagans looked down on them. They were concerned with the opinion of others, even the lowest of the low. When they made this statement, they indicated their true colors.