

“Moshe came and spoke all the words of this Song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea bin Nun.” (32:44)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* stood with his trusted disciple, Yehoshua, indicating that the transfer of leadership would soon occur. It was important for the people to see Yehoshua up there together with Moshe during Moshe's lifetime, so that no one would say that he rose to power only after Moshe's death. Interestingly, here the Torah refers to Yehoshua by his original name, Hoshea. Moshe had changed his student's name prior to leaving for *Eretz Yisrael* with the *meraglim*, spies. The added letter was to protect him from the spies' false counsel. *Kli Yakar* explains that since that whole generation was now gone, he no longer needed the name change. *Rashi* says that the Torah is teaching us that although he was elevated by Moshe, he remained the same modest Hoshea as he was before.

There is an interesting *pshat*, exposition, rendered by the *Netziv*, z.l., which comes to us by way of a story. The *Netziv* was *Rosh HaYeshivah* of Volozhin, a *yeshivah* that prepared and graduated the pre-eminent *rabbanim* and leaders of European Jewry. As *Rosh HaYeshivah*, the *Netziv* took a personal interest in his students, assisting them in their positions. Once, one of his graduates came to him saying that he had recently accepted a position as *rav* of a community. He was concerned, however, that politics and controversy reigned in the community – especially among its leadership. He, therefore, turned to his *rebbe* for a *brachah*, blessing, that he be spared the *lashon hara*, slander, reserved for the community's leadership and that he be successful in shepherding the community.

The *Netziv* spoke to his *talmid* with the special love that a true *rebbe* has for his student: "I would very much like to bless you with every blessing in the world, but, alas, unfortunately, you cannot escape the ill effects of *lashon hara*. This disease destroys our finest and most promising *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars. When Yehoshua was selected to be among those who would spy out the land, Moshe called him aside and changed his name. He added a *yud* implying, 'May Hashem save you from the false counsel of the *meraglim*.' Conversely, when Moshe was about to step down from his position, when he was about to transfer the scepter of leadership to Yehoshua, he called him once again by his original name, Hoshea. Why? Why did Moshe not once again pray on behalf of his student that he be spared the consequences of *lashon hara*? The answer is that Moshe knew from personal experience that this was impossible. No leader is spared the sharp, lacerating tongue of *lashon hara*. Once one has ascended to a position of leadership over others, he is immediately subject to the abuse of disparaging speech."

The *Netziv's* words are not very encouraging. Indeed, the *nisayon ha'chayim*, life's experience, shows them to be very true. If one, however, understands the role he has accepted, the harmful side-effects of his position can be ameliorated.