

You approached me, all of you, and said, “Let us send men ahead of us and let them spy out the land.” (1:22)

Rashi describes the contrasting scenario in which the people came to Moshe *Rabbeinu* and “suggested” that spies be sent to reconnoiter *Eretz Yisrael*. “And you approached me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders...” This was a reference to the decorum manifest by the people when they accepted the Torah. That approach was proper. The young honored the elders and sent them ahead of them. And the elders honored the heads of the tribes by allowing them to precede them. In this case, however, “You approached me, all of you as a rabble, with the young pushing the elders, and the elders pushing the heads.” Moshe’s critique focuses on two deficiencies: first, a lack of decorum whereby the young showed no respect for their elders – the common Jew for his leaders. Second, the disorderly formation in which they approached Moshe was indicative of a stressed out people who were giving rise to panic. This showed that the mission to send spies was the result of a lack of faith on their part. Hashem had promised them that they would enter and conquer the land without any problem. They seemed concerned. Otherwise, why did they come in such chaos to demand spies?

Arvuyyah, disorderly, mixed-up, is an apt description of the lack of decorum with which the people approached Moshe. On paper, their motivation appeared bona fide and sincere. They were apprehensive about entering a new, strange land, about which they knew nothing. They were not soldiers who could adapt to any given situation. For the previous two centuries, they and their ancestors had been slaves. Who was to say that their motives were anything but honorable? *Arvuyyah* determines the source of one’s motives.

At times, one feels motivated to do what appears to be correct and proper. His *yetzer tov*, good inclination, spurs him on to undertake, to do, to endeavor. He could be wrong, however, and actually, he is being motivated to action by none other than his *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination. He is being convinced that he is about to perform a *mitzvah*, create/establish an organization, or undertake an endeavor that is positive and appropriate, when, in fact, it is not. He is being manipulated by the *yetzer hora*, convinced to do something that is wrong, and duped into signing up for something that he will later regret.

How does one recognize the signs of distortion? How does one determine the true source of his motives? The **Alter, zl, m’Kelm** teaches us an important rule. The way to determine if the catalyst is good or bad is to introspect on how one came to the decision to move forward. Was it impetuous, done quickly, without aforethought? Or was it the result of deep reflection, patient analyses, rational thinking, and studying all aspects from every angle? Whenever one jumps the gun (so to speak), rushing into a project without properly thinking it through, it is an indication that he is being provoked by the *yetzer hora* – who “knows” that if one were to give his proposal some thought, he would change his mind and back down.

This was Moshe's proof that the Jewish People were up to no good, that they were inappropriately motivated. Their objective was flawed from the very beginning. If Hashem was taking them into the Holy Land, they need not worry. The Almighty had "proven" Himself time and again. He was functioning above convention. He could suspend the laws of nature and allow His People to emerge triumphant. Spies were appropriate for usual warfare. However, there was nothing normal about the march of the Jewish People towards *Eretz Yisrael*.

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, explains that the *yetzer hora* rests between the two "openings" of the heart – representing the path towards evil and the path towards good. From his vantage point, he has the ability to influence one to sin and also to have "input" in his *mitzvah* performance. The *yetzer hora* is focused on evil, but it is able to promote evil by convincing a person that the endeavor he is about to do is a *mitzvah*, when, in fact, it is not. Misrepresentation is an integral component of the *yetzer hora*'s bag of tricks. By masquerading a sin in the guise of a *mitzvah* or by taking a *mitzvah* and persuading the person to execute it improperly, the *yetzer hora* has succeeded in its work. It has distanced us from Hashem.

Rav Elchanan relates that *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, came to his *Rebbe*, the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna* and informed him that he wanted to establish a *yeshivah*. He defined his goals and objectives, describing what would ensure the success and viability of the *Volozhiner Yeshivah*. Surprisingly, the *Gaon* dissuaded him from undertaking this endeavor. He was instructed to shelve the project.

A few years passed, and *Rav Chaim* once again presented the *Gaon* with his request to establish a *yeshivah*. This time the *Gaon* encouraged him and gave his blessing to the project. Understandably, *Rav Chaim* was incredulous by the *Gaon*'s change of position. "Why did the *Rebbe* previously rule negatively concerning this project, while now I receive his blessing?"

The *Gaon* replied, "I sensed that you were overexcited about the project. Therefore, I feared that your motivation did not emerge entirely from a holy source." The desire to be *Rosh Yeshivah*, to be in control, can often cloud one's mind and cause him to act when the time is not yet propitious. *Rav Elchanan* added, "Imagine how careful must one be not to rush into something. *Rav Chaim Volozhiner* was an individual of unprecedented spiritual stature. Yet, the *Gaon* sensed that his passion and drive might not be one hundred percent pure. So, he halted the founding of *Volozhin* – until it was appropriate."