

The entire assembly raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night. (14:1)

The *Talmud Sanhedrin* 104b states that the fateful night on which the *meraglim*, spies, shared their slanderous report of *Eretz Yisrael* with the nation was the Ninth of Av. The people reacted with unwarranted, incessant weeping, which consumed the entire nation. The weeping was a reaction to a report that was foundless. Furthermore, they had been guided by Hashem in the wilderness under the protective shield of the Clouds of Glory. For them to cry without reason was ludicrous. Hashem said, "You cried a *bchayah shel chinam*, unwarranted weeping. I will establish for you a *b'chayah l'doros*, weeping for generations." This refers to our national day of mourning – *Tishah B'Av*, when we mourn the destruction of our *Batei Mikdash* and the ensuing exiles which resulted from their loss. In other words, the sin of the *meraglim* catalyzed the destruction of our *Batei Mikdash*.

Megillas Eichah laments the *churban*, destruction of Yerushalayim, and the loss of the *Batei Mikdash*. The *Talmud* (mentioned earlier) intimates the catalyst which led to the *churban*: "They jeered at you" (*Eichah* 2:16). *Rava* says in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "Why did Yirmiyah (author of *Megillas Eichah*) place the *pay* before the *ayin*? (This refers to the fact that the *pasuk*, *patzu alecha pihem*, which begins with a *pay* is written prior to the *pasuk* which begins with an *ayin*. Since *ayin* precedes *pay* in the *Aleph-Bais* sequence, it raises concern, obviously implying a key to understanding the sin of the *meraglim*.) It was because of the spies who spoke with their mouths (*pihem*) (*pay*) what they had not seen with their eyes (*eineihem*) (*ayin*)." This is the meaning of the *pay* preceding the *ayin*. Simply, *Chazal* are teaching us that the *meraglim* spoke before they saw. Since they did not see, they should have refrained from speaking. This is questionable, since everything that came from their mouths was actually true. The land was unique; the people were giants; the fruits were exceptionally large; people were dying everywhere. The nation that inhabited Canaan was very strong and prepared. To overwhelm them would take a miracle. Their problem was not what they said, but rather, how they presented their story. It came across as being negative, suggesting that the Jews had no chance whatsoever of successfully conquering *Eretz Yisrael*. Why did the *pay* precede the *ayin*?

A person's senses are capable of experiencing only what a person's personality allows. Thus, two people can look at the same object and see two different images. An individual who is profoundly spiritual sees the spiritual potential in a given object, while his counterpart looks at the very same edifice and sees nothing but stone, mortar and wood. A classic example is cited by *Horav Shimon Schwab*, *zl*, from the preparation for the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, Binding of Yitzchak. As Avraham *Avinu* and Yitzchak (*Avinu*) neared the site, the Torah records their reaction. *Va'yaar es ha'makom meirachok*, "They saw the place from a distance" (*Bereishis* 24:4). The *Midrash* asks, "What did he see? He saw a cloud hovering over the mountain. Avraham commented, "It appears that this is the place where Hashem wants me to sacrifice my son." Avraham then asked Yitzchak, 'My son, do you see what I see?' Yitzchak responded affirmatively. Avraham then turned to Eliezer and

Yishmael who had accompanied him, and asked, 'What do you see? Do you see what I see?' They responded that they saw nothing, to which Avraham remarked, 'Since a donkey does not see and you do not see, you might as well remain here with the donkey.'" This indicates that the ability to perceive a spiritual image from a physical entity is determined by a person's spiritual persona and plateau. One who is not spiritually connected has limited vision.

This, explains *Rav Schwab*, was the sin of the spies. They looked at *Eretz Yisrael* through the lens of physicality. Had they applied their spiritual perspective, they would have perceived the *Shechinah* resting on *Har Ha'Moriah*, the place where the *Akeidah* took place. They would have perceived the unparalleled sanctity of *Kiryas Araba*, and, with every step on the soil of the Holy Land, they would have sensed the *kedushah*, holiness.

Why did they not perceive the *kedushah*? They left with malevolent intentions to slander the land; thus, whatever they saw was tainted by their preconceived notions. Their mouths reported what they saw with their physical eyes. They told the truth – from a physical sense. From a spiritual perspective – they lied. By placing their *pay*, mouth (for which they had prepared) before the *ayin*, eyes, of what they really saw, they were unable to render a positive report on *Eretz Yisrael*, because, after all was said and done, they saw no *kedushah*.