

"Moshe called Hoshea ben Nun - Yehoshua." (13:6)

Chazal teach us that Moshe prayed for Yehoshua as he was about to embark on the journey to investigate the land. Moshe suspected that this mission would end in tragedy, and he was concerned lest his student be ensnared in the spies' conspiracy. The commentators all ask the obvious question: Why did Moshe pray only for Yehoshua? While it was true that Yehoshua was his foremost student, was it not a bit prejudicial to single out one individual from amongst the rest? The commentaries suggest that Yehoshua was more susceptible to the persuasive tactics of his fellow spies.

Horav Yaakov Yosef, zl, the chief rabbi of New York at the turn of the century, offers a practical insight which communicates a timeless message. There are two types of sin. One type is apparent and undeniable. The second type of sin is cloaked in the facade of *mitzvah*. The first form of sin is relatively easy to change once it has been clearly identified as evil. The latter form of sin, however, is much more difficult to limit. After all, one believes he is performing a *mitzvah*, not an *aveirah!* This spurious form of *mitzvah* has taken hold of many well-meaning Jews. It has driven them into the horrible abyss of evil before they have been able to realize that they were, in reality, transgressing. That is the way of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination.

When the *meraglim*, spies, originally left on their mission, they were all decent, upstanding Jews. Indeed, they were *tzaddikim*. Consequently, Moshe assumed that if they were to consider becoming involved in any endeavor that was disreputable, they would quickly change their minds once they comprehended its iniquitous nature. Yehoshua, on the other hand, because of his relationship with Moshe, was more emotionally reactive. When he heard Eldad and Meidad prophesizing that Moshe would die and Yehoshua would lead the people into *Eretz Yisrael*, he became angry. In fact, he wanted to imprison them.

Yehoshua might have thought that it was *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, that the Jews be barred from entering *Eretz Yisrael*, since his *rebbe's* death was dependent upon it. Yehoshua would erroneously think that he was performing a *mitzvah*. This state of mind would render it difficult to convince him to think otherwise: Thus, Moshe gave his special blessing to Yehoshua in order to protect him from doing something foolish in the name of a *mitzvah*.