

"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael." (1:1)

Speaking to *Klal Yisrael*, Moshe reproves them for their failings in the desert. *Rashi* cites the *Sifri* which explains that Moshe alluded to the various sins committed by *Bnei Yisrael* in veiled terms. He mentioned names of places which implied various transgressions on the part of *Klal Yisrael*. This approach preserved the dignity of *Klal Yisrael*. Even when rebuking someone, one must be sensitive not to unnecessarily embarrass the sinner. Rebuke can be made less humiliating by expressing it in subtle terms, when possible. We may wonder why Moshe spared no words in clearly outlining the sin of the *meraglim*, spies. What distinguishes this transgression from the others?

Horav Nissan Alpert z.l. asserts that the sin of the *meraglim* was unique in that it did not merely represent a temporary failing, a momentary inebriation, on the part of *Bnei Yisrael*. Rather, it was a sin that manifested an evil within their character. The sin of the *meraglim* was not superficial in their spiritual development; it was a blemish on their personality. This type of sin must be clearly defined, so the perpetrators will be able to purge themselves of its effect.

What really was the distinguishing nature of the *meraglim*'s sin and *Klal Yisrael*'s ensuing reaction of bitter, overreactive crying? We might suggest that it indicated a lack of *emunah*, faith in the Almighty. Why then does the *Torah* not focus upon the sin of Refidim, in which their lack of *Torah* study led to Amalek's attack, or the sin of Massah and Merivah, in which they also tested Hashem? Should we also "dismiss" the sin of the Golden Calf as being the result of temporary insanity? *Horav Alpert* suggests that the sin of the *meraglim* indicated an unforgivable flaw reflected in a specific character trait. *Klal Yisrael* demonstrated a lack of appreciation of Hashem that was reprehensible.

During the height of their overreaction *Bnei Yisrael* exclaimed, "*Because Hashem hated us, He has brought us out of Egypt, to deliver us into the land of the Emorites*" (*Devorim* 1:27). This malcontent criticism of Hashem is shameful. It reveals an insensitivity on their part towards recognizing the need for offering gratitude when appropriate.

The exodus from Egypt is one of the foundations of our faith. To deny its providential nature is to impugn the selection of *Klal Yisrael* as the *am ha'nivchar*, chosen people. To defame its experience as a necessary preliminary step in preparation for receiving the *Torah* is an inexcusable form of impudence and spiritual insensitivity. To take a gift and throw it back in the face of the benefactor is an unpardonable sin which must be effectively censured.