

And Kalev silenced the people. (13:30)

Some of the greatest tragedies result from petty jealousy. At times, one misplaced word purposely rendered to cast aspersions on someone can have deleterious ramifications – for the slanderer. The spies returned with their slanderous report concerning *Eretz Yisrael*. Yehoshua and Kalev knew these were lies. They attempted to quiet the nation, to get them to listen to reason. Kalev succeeded in getting their attention. The *Talmud* (*Sotah* 35a) posits that Yehoshua made a futile attempt, but the people refused to listen to him. They said, *Dein rosh ktiya yimallel*, “he whose head is cut off is speaking.” This is reference to the fact that Yehoshua had no sons to continue his legacy and inherit his portion in *Eretz Yisrael*. The people were intimating, “Should one who has no sons to inherit his portion in the land speak before us?” It troubled them that Yehoshua rose to address them. What right did he have to speak about *Eretz Yisrael*? He had nothing to lose, because his land would not be passed on.

This attitude should not be a surprise to us. How often are decent, well-intentioned people ignored and even rejected, simply because someone found a way to impugn the integrity of their intentions? It all could be (and probably is) a lie, a deep-rooted slander founded upon a foundation of envy. Yet, people listen, because we have a problem giving credit where credit is due. It is so much more convenient to ignore someone’s idea than to give him credit, because, by giving him credit, in our small minds, we envision that we are taking away from ourselves.

The *Netziv*, *zl*, (*Meromei Sadeh*) offers an alternative explanation for the words, “*Dein rosh ktiya yimallel*.” It is a reference to the prophecy of Eldad and Meidad, prophecy which portended that Moshe *Rabbeinu* would die and Yehoshua would lead *Klal Yisrael* into the Promised Land. Thus, when Yehoshua attempted to quiet them, they challenged him, “You want to go to *Eretz Yisrael*, because you thirst to become leader and assume Moshe’s position.” Imagine how far a sick mind could go! They suggested that the disciple extraordinaire, Yehoshua, who had never left the side of his *Rebbe*, Moshe, was waiting for him to die, so that he could assume the mantle of leadership. Is this rational? No. That is envy speaking. It has the power to bring out the worst in a person.