

And not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. (15:39)

Rashi explains that the heart and eyes are like the body's spies, catalyzing a gravitation toward satisfying his animal nature. Human cognition is selective. As a result, it is influenced by improper thoughts. When one wants something, it suddenly becomes permissible. Desire has a way of limiting one's ability to think properly. The heart and the mind procure for the body. The eye sees, the heart desires, the body follows through when it commits the sin. Having said this, we wonder why the heart's desires precede the eye's perception. The *pasuk* should have instructed us not to explore/probe after the eye's perception and (then) the heart's desires. The passion that emanates from the heart has a powerful effect not only on how one perceives a given object. The heart guides the individual about what he should focus his attention upon. Perception which is motivated by the heart is often biased, selective and malleable. We process visual information based upon our desires and expectations. Psychologists refer to this phenomenon (which the Torah teaches us) as perception bias. It is the process by which people's active desires, needs and motivations share their perceptual experiences. The heart decides what to look at and how to define it.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, observes this self-limited perception playing itself out in the contrasting discernments of Yitzchak *Avinu* and Eisav *ha'rasha*. We find in *Parashas Chayei Sarah* (*Bereishis* 24:63), "He lifted up his eyes and behold! Camels were coming." He was aware that his *kallah*, bride, selected by his father's *eved ne'eman*, trusted servant, was on her way to meet him. This is why he went out to the field to pray to Hashem that everything should work out. Rivkah had been betrothed to him, and he was about to meet his future wife for the very first time. Yet, when he saw a caravan approaching, he saw camels! Conversely, in *Parashas Vayishlach* (*Bereishis* 33:5), when Eisav greeted Yaakov, what did he see first? "He saw the women." He saw Yaakov *Avinu's* wives. They were untouchable to him. Yet, he saw what he wanted to see. Yitzchak saw camels; Eisav saw women.

This can be likened, explains the *Rosh Yeshivah*, to a family (mother and children) staring out their window looking at the street. One child sees a dog, because he is afraid of dogs. Another child sees two children arguing on the street. This is something to which he can relate. A third child sees a fancy, luxury car, because this is what he thinks about. The mother sees a dirty window sill. Each one sees what he wants or expects to see.

Were the *meraglim* any different? They went to *Eretz Yisrael* to spy out the land. Their attitude was jaundiced. Thus, their report was negative. They saw what they wanted to see, and we are still paying for it today.