

If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son (21:18)

In his commentary to *Bamidbar* 13:3, *Rashi* writes that *ish/anashim* is a singular title describing a distinguished, accomplished man. The *meraglim*, spies, that left to do a reconnaissance tour of the Holy Land were men of repute and stature—when they left. Sadly, their positions did not save them from plummeting to the *nadir* of slandering *Eretz Yisroel*. Where do we see that the father of the *ben sorer u'moreh* is a distinguished member of the community? The *Torah* refers to him as *ish*; wherein is his *ishius* manifest?

Maharal Tzintz (Melei Ha'Omer) explains that it takes a strong, resolute man who is prepared to confront the truth, to be able to say, "Enough!" His son is not educable. Nothing he does seems to work. Such a boy is, sadly, a rotten seed that, if left unchecked, will resort to the greatest sin: murder -in order to satisfy his desires.

While this may be true, and, indeed, the father is an *ish*, what had happened to him years earlier when he decided to give in to his passions and marry a *yefas toar*, beautiful captive? He did not exemplify his distinguished status- then. Perhaps the *Torah* underscores the father's *ish* status, not as a plus, but rather, as a contributory factor in the *ben sorer's* refusal to accept any sort of direction from his father.

Unfortunately, such a scenario plays itself out more often than we care to consider. When the father criticizes his son's unrestrained behavior, the young boy looks his father in the eye and says, "What about you? You were a distinguished member of the spiritual elite. Indeed, you were one of the few who were chosen to serve in the Jewish army. Then you went off and deferred to your passion and married a *yefas toar*! Who are you to criticize my behavior when, in fact, your behavior does not serve as a good example?"

Apparently, the *ish* plays both ways. If the father is such an *ish* that he was sufficiently spiritually committed to be selected for service, his behavior on the field of battle indicated a serious weakness. When such a person criticizes others—especially his son- it comes across as hypocritical. One should focus on self-reflection before passing judgment on others.