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Rabbi Len Zucker

*Parashat HaShavuah Series*

**Sh'lach Lekha**

When Moshe Rabbeinu sent out the people to spy the land, they were not just ordinary people, but rather they were leaders within their tribes. They had seen the miracles of Egypt, and of the Reed Sea with the death of the Egyptians who were chasing them. In other words, people Moses felt he could count on.

Then he gave them a specific assignment: "And how is the land? Is it fertile or lean? Are there trees in it or not?" (13:20) Why did Moses pick trees and not the fortifications of the land? We know the comment of Rashi – that Moshe's reference to a tree is an allusion to a *tzaddik*. He was trying to teach the *miraglim* that if a righteous person were living in the land, he would protect its inhabitants from attack through the merits of his righteousness. One of my Rebbeim, Rav Simcha HaKohen Sheps, ZT"L, adds to what Rashi says was another reason for comparing a righteous person to a tree. He taught that, in addition to the shade and fruit that a tree provides, it is also good for the environment. A tree purifies the air by its existence. It balances the oxygen level in the air. Moses knew that if there were upright people in the land, they would expiate the evil and bring instead spiritual abundance to the land.

So what did ten of the spies do? They brought forth an evil report, etc. (13:32-33). We have to remember that these are leaders of the people, who have seen the miracles of being freed from Egypt and what God did to the Egyptians in Egypt, as well as at the Reed Sea. Despite all of this, they were people of little faith, except for Calev ben Yifuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun. These two said that the facts that the ten have brought back are correct, but the editorial comment, that we will not be able to take the land, is wrong and with God's help, we will be able to do that.

There are two factors in this report that I think we should bear in mind for our time. First of all, we have to keep focused on what Moses told them to do. Had they done that, we would have not had to wander in the desert for 40 years. We, too, have to stay focused on what the Torah says. There is a good reason that the Torah commands us "not to add nor to subtract" from it. By staying focused, we do not make it too difficult to observe that which God wants from us. Secondly, Yehoshua and Calev had *bitachon* – faith that with God's help, all will turn out well.

In our day and time we, too, have to believe that with the help of God, there can be peace in the Land of Israel, throughout the world and in our lives.

*Shabbat Shalom!*

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