



“To share, to care. To make the world a better place...”

Parsha favorites of **Moreinu HaRav Avraham Chaim Tanzer zt'l**. Including his uplifting and edifying teachings. Ideas and values with which he raised and educated 4 generations, including lessons gleaned from his great character. Brought to you by Yad Avraham. Compiled and elucidated by Rav Dov Tanzer *le'iluy nishmas* Abba Mari hk'm.

Please share at your table as an Aliyas Neshama

## GRASSHOPPERS IN THE FIELDS – A THOUGHT ON SELF IMAGE

וְהָיָה בְּעֵינֵינוּ כְּחַגְבִּים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם

*We were in our own eyes as  
grasshoppers, and so were we in their  
eyes*

Abba used to often repeat the idea of the Kotzker Rebbe, who explained that the real sin of the ten spies, was not really that they returned with an alarming report – because that is, in fact, how they saw the situation. Rather, the real 'Chet' lies in these words: 'and so we were in their eyes'. The Kotzker exclaimed that they should never have given a thought to how they appeared in the eyes of the locals. It should never have occurred to them how they are viewed by others.

Kotzk, the bastion of fearless truth and honesty, could not tolerate a self-image that is based upon what others think of you.

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk famously said: "If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you", but, he continued: "if I am I only because of you, and you are you because of me, then I am not I, neither are you, you."

One who is busy identifying him/herself based on the impression they are making on other becomes a mirror, in which exists a shifting, alternating illusion, changing even more than a chameleon, every time the mirror is in front of someone else. Such a person has no depth,

has no integrity, and has no essence. Life is a picture.

Thus, Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk declared, the Spies should have been so focused on their mission, and their essence as People of Hashem, that their appearance in the eyes of the locals couldn't impact them.

Actually, we have no true and accurate way of knowing how we appear to others. Hashem could plant in their eyes to see the Spies as Angels of Heaven with frightful powers.

We see that when people base their identity on others, their lives are about comparisons, external and inappropriate comparisons, since you never know what is really going on in some else's life and heart. We then project our insecurities on others, and reflect back to them our feelings of inadequacy and detachment. These are hardly the seeds of success.

As per the common quotation: 'If you think you can succeed or if you think you can't succeed, you are probably right'. Abba used to expand that if you feel and think of yourself like a lowly grasshopper – you become one!



## BE YOURSELF - REALLY

Abba used to quote Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir, who offered a scintillating insight into an expression of Rashi: 'Due to Klal Yisrael dearness to Hashem, He counts them at every hour (*'bechol sha'a vesh'a*). Reb Yechezkel explained this based on a Mishna in Avos

which states (4, 3) *don't be scornful of any man... because there is no man who doesn't have his hour (to shine)*'. He explained that every person will rise to his own level of greatness for a moment. It is that moment that Hashem '*counts him*', ie, determines his place. That is through Hashems love for Klal Yisrael, He defines us by our moments of spiritual triumph, not failure.

We too, need to note our own moment of personal triumph, of spiritual heroism; and then we need to base our self-image and definition on our successes.



### טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד

## *The Land is very, very good* (14, 7)

Abba was of the belief that it's not appropriate to comment negatively about the Land of Israel and all, not even to complain about politics. The Pasuk '*Ur'eh betuv Yerushalayim*' resonated deeply with him – See only the good of *Yerushalayim*, never the negatives.

He had an additional angle to his positive vision of Israel: To many people, who were not exposed to a true Torah education, Israel is their key identity and relationship with Torah and Yiddishkeit. Therefore, to purvey any cynicism regarding Israel could only be counterproductive.

He used to quote Rabbi Moshe of Lelov, who noted that the above Pasuk doubles the word 'very, very' good. He noted that the Mishna in *Avos* (4, 4) uses a similar expression regarding the trait of Humility: 'Be very, very humble'. Rabbi Moshe of Lelov explained the similarity: Only if you are exceedingly humble will you be

able to see that in fact, the land is exceedingly good. He continued to explain that if you see the negatives of Israel, you are simply showing that you need to work on humility.

When a person realizes that Eretz Yisrael is the King's palace, designed and nurtured by the King, how can he possibly go around finding fault?! This is the way the King designed it! Much of life is also that way. Hashem created situations through which we can grow. He brings people and interactions into our lives through which we can develop our character. To go around malingering and gossiping and fault-finding, is an arrogance and a lack of vision that the King has arranged it thus.

Humility, Abba explained, was never about thinking that: 'I wish to be the humblest person in the world' – that's arrogance! You're thinking about yourself! True humility, he quoted Rav Hirsch, is about focusing on the Will of Hashem. You only acquire humility '*beheisech hada'at*' – when you are focused on the things that need to be done – *oblivious* to the way you appear.



The Spies are criticized by our Sages for not learning the lesson of Miriam. They merited the immense *zechut* of travelling the Land of Israel, but they were not mindful of the reality of being a guest in the King's Palace. The reason they forgot, is because they were thinking too much about themselves, and their high station in the Jewish Nation, therefore they forgot that we are living out our lives in the palace, before the Throne, in the direct presence of the King of Kings. Let's not complain or make snide remarks about the Palace...

