

# Two Models of Leadership: Calev and Yehoshua

**Dedicated to the memory of Marc Weinberg z"l; a passionate leader, and a dear friend.**

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The long awaited delegation of twelve Spies returns from Eretz Canaan after 40 days. The nation of Israel listens to their report, drinking every syllable with baited breath. And when the Spies deliver a negative assessment, apprehension turns to despair, hope to tears. However, two men stand steadfast against the crowd, two lone figures resisting the peer pressure of the Spies and the jeers of the tumultuous throng. These two individuals – Calev and Yehoshua - stand apart from their brethren insisting that "The Land is exceedingly good!"<sup>1</sup> Calev and Yehoshua are the heroic figures who take a principled stand, who remain loyal to God and truth when all the odds are against them.

Who are these two men? We traditionally view them as a twosome, coordinated in attitude and spirit. But a closer look at the Parsha will reveal an interesting contrast between them, as we engage in a study of these two tenacious leaders of the Jewish People.

## TOGETHER OR ALONE?

We shall begin our investigation by examining the scene in which the people are exposed to the Spies' findings. We can well imagine the tense anticipation and the nervousness with which the nation listen to their report of the Promised Land.

**'27** We came to the land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. **28** However, the people that dwell in the land are fierce, and the cities are fortified, and very great; and moreover we saw the children of the Giant there. **29** Amalek dwell in the land of the South; and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite in the mountains; and the Canaanite live by the sea, and along the side of the Jordan.' **30** Calev

**quietened the people toward Moshe, and said: 'We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'** (Bamidbar 13:27-30)

If Calev had to quieten the people, then it is apparent that the report aroused a stir amongst the people. It is difficult to pinpoint which detail in particular triggered the panic: Was it the lengthy list of the enemies of Israel, the inhabitants of Canaan? Was it possibly, the name Amalek, or the news of the enemy's formidable military fortifications? Whichever way, the debriefing of the Spies sent a shockwave of fear and worry through the crowd. Immediately, Calev took the podium and expressed his confident opinion. "We can do it!" says Calev. "We should set forth immediately! My assessment is that we can overcome the obstacles in our path and succeed."

But where is Yehoshua? If Calev and Yehoshua are a pair, unified in their opposition to the "bad" Spies, then why does Yehoshua fail to speak up?

Later we read:

**'And Yehoshua the son of Nun and Calev the son of Yeffunneh**, who were amongst those that spied the land, tore their clothes. And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land which we explored is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD desires us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us--a land flowing with milk and honey. Only rebel not against the LORD, and do not fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is removed from over them, and the LORD is with us; fear them not.'  
(14:6-9)

Now Yehoshua and Calev stand united against the crowd. But it is too late:

"The congregation wanted to stone them!"

Why, initially, when the panic sets in, does Calev respond alone? Where is Yehoshua? Why does Yehoshua remain in the shadows to emerge only as the intensity of the crisis gains momentum? Why didn't Yehoshua speak out initially? Was he still unsure of his opinion? Or was something else on his mind?

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<sup>1</sup> Bamidbar 14:8

This is the first of our questions regarding the difference between Calev and Yehoshua. When do they function together and when does Calev act alone?<sup>2</sup>

## NAME CHANGE

But a further question warrants our investigation. In anticipation of the Spies' expedition, Moshe changed Yehoshua's name:

'And Moshe called Hoshea-bin-Nun, by the name, Yehoshua.'(13:16)

Why is Yehoshua singled out amongst the Spies? What is Moshe doing when he changes Yehoshua's name? Rashi understands this phrase as indicative of a blessing of Divine protection:

Moshe said "May God save you from the evil designs of the Spies."

Rashi tells us that Moshe anticipated the "evil designs" of the Spies and boosted Yehoshua's immunity so that he would be resistant to their powerful ideas. But this explanation is difficult. If Moshe knew what was about to transpire, why did he not act to stop the entire mission? And if he was concerned for the success of the mission as a whole, why did Moshe bless only Yehoshua and not all twelve of the delegates?

## PRAYERS FOR THE SPIES

Let us start with the Gemara in Sota in our search for some answers.

'They went up via the Negev and HE came to Hevron.' (13:22) It should read: 'And THEY came up to Hevron!' Rava taught: This tells us that Calev separated himself from the council of the Spies and went to pray upon the graves of our forefathers. He prayed: My fathers! Seek mercy on my behalf that I be saved from the conspiring plans of the Spies. As for Yehoshua, Moshe had already

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<sup>2</sup> This problem is compounded further as God pronounces the punishment for this sinful episode. The pronouncement is made in the form of two separate "speeches." (see 14:20-25 / 26-38.) In the first paragraph, Calev alone is singled out as possessing a "different spirit." In the second speech, both Yehoshua and Calev are contrasted with the other 10 Spies. Once again, a differentiation is made between the two personalities. What is at the root of this difference?

beseached God on his behalf, as it states: 'Moshe named Hoshea bin Nun Yehoshua' (13:6) – May God save you from the evil council of the Spies. This explains the phrase 'And my servant Calev had a different spirit about him.' (Sota 34b)

The Gemara here makes a deeply insightful contrast between Calev and Yehoshua<sup>3</sup> that will be critical for our analysis. Calev "has a different spirit" - he has his own will, independence of opinion. In this Gemara, we see how Calev with his strong will and independent mind senses the immense psychological pressure of the group – the council of the Spies – that is affecting his opinions, his orientation. He enters Hevron **alone** in order to pray at the graves of the forefathers and ask God to grant him strength to retain his own perspective, his independent mind.

Calev receives his inspiration in Hevron, from the Avot who are buried in Hevron. Calev prays for himself. And it is at this point that we understand a deep contrast with Yehoshua. How does he gain his fortitude in the face of the evil Spies? Yehoshua is different. It is Moshe who prays for Yehoshua. Moshe is the source of Yehoshua's strength. Or as the Gemara puts it, he bestows God's protective blessing upon him.

## MOSHE'S PROTÉGÉ

Let us focus for a moment upon Yehoshua's name change. Why is it specifically at this juncture in the Torah that the text stresses that Yehoshua's name was changed?<sup>4</sup> And what is the meaning of this change happening by virtue of Moshe?

The Rashbam notes that there are other instances in Tanach in which a master renames a prodigy or a person rising to a new status. Pharaoh, for example, renamed Yoseph as Zofnat Paneach when he appointed to a new position of power. The Babylonian king Nevuchadnezar renamed Daniel as Belshazar. In that case, we might suggest that Moshe renamed Yehoshua "when he became his assistant and he gave him responsibility for his affairs." (Rashbam)

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<sup>3</sup> My analysis here has been influenced by a number of sources. See Rav Yaakov Medan's article in Megadim #10, in particular pgs 32-37. See Rav Moshe Lichtenstein's book "Tzir Vetzon" pgs 131-136.

<sup>4</sup> See the Rashbam and Hizkuni who suggest that this name-change had taken place at an earlier time. After all, already in Shemot chapter 17 Yehoshua is known under this name and not Hoshea. This may well be the case. Nonetheless, this merely reinforces the question as to why the Torah records Yehoshua's name change by Moshe at this particular juncture.

In other words, the Torah in detailing this name change at this juncture wishes to transmit the fact that Yehoshua draws his strength and power from his status as Moshe's student, Moshe's assistant.

Yehoshua is already familiar to us from the Torah. Our first glimpse of him was when Moshe hand-picked him in order to lead the battle against Amalek<sup>5</sup>. Next we see him at Mt. Sinai<sup>6</sup> waiting faithfully for forty days and forty nights at the foot of the mountain for Moshe. Later, by the Tent of Meeting<sup>7</sup>, 'His (Moshe's) assistant, Yehoshua bin Nun ... never left the Tent.' Yehoshua is Moshe's apprentice, his partner and assistant par-excellence. He exhibits phenomenal loyalty and dedication to Moshe. In the book of Bamidbar when prophecy is expanded beyond Moshe, and granted to the seventy elders, we read how Yehoshua was passionate and zealous for Moshe's honour.<sup>8</sup>

But it is not merely that Yehoshua is dedicated to Moshe. If Yehoshua functions as Moshe's personal helper and advisor, he is located at the epicentre of the Israelite government. He knows all the leadership and he understands how to manoeuvre the corridors of power, how to work within the political system of Bnei Yisrael. Yehoshua is an "establishment" figure.

When the Gemara contrasts Calev praying for himself and Yehoshua being prayed for by Moshe, it grants us a deep insight into the inner world of these two individuals: **Calev is a loner, a man who stands apart, holding his own ideas. Yehoshua is the protégé of Moshe.** To that degree, Calev works outside the system. Yehoshua IS the system!

## CALEV ALONE

Let us dwell for a few minutes upon the personality of Calev. First of all, Calev is not being groomed for future leadership; his is a new face in the public arena. He, beholden to no one, can speak his mind freely. In Calev's lone visit to Hebron, he is depicted as separating from the group to visit the city. He carves out his own path.

But this story reveals more about Calev than his rugged independence. Let us stress the fact that Hebron is not just any city. After all (see 13:22) Hebron is the city of the giants, and

(see 13:28, 32-3) it is precisely the "men of unusual physical proportions" as witnessed by the Spies that most frightened them and animated their self-perception as "grasshoppers." If Calev entered Hebron alone, then he was inspired by more than a simple desire for prayer. His act of entering Hebron clearly demonstrated his fearlessness, his courage, in the face of the imposing enemy. As the other eleven Spies cowered in fear at the outskirts of the city, Calev was unfazed by these formidable citizens of the land.

Maybe we can illustrate this by probing the textual origins of the Midrash brought in the Gemara in Sota. How does Rav in the Gemara know that Calev visited Hebron alone? Yes, there is the grammatical form within the Passuk – "They went up via the Negev and HE came to Hebron" - The verb that indicates entry into Hebron is phrased in the singular form. But how did Rav know that Calev in particular, of all the twelve, was the spy who ventured into Hebron? The answer to this is based in a textual connection between Sefer Devarim and the Book of Yehoshua.

In Devarim 1:35 we read:

"Not one of these men, this evil generation shall see the good land... none except Calev ben Yeffunneh; he shall see it, and **to him and his descendents I will give the land on which he set foot...**"

Later in Sefer Yehoshua we read the following episode:

'The tribe of Judah approached Yehoshua in Gilgal; and Caleb the son of Yeffunneh the Kenizzite said to him: 'You know what the LORD told Moshe ... concerning me ... I was forty years old when Moshe the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him back word as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moshe swore on that day, saying: Surely **the land upon which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you and to your children** for ever ... And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He spoke, these forty and five years ... I am this day eighty five years old. I am as strong today as I was in the day that Moshe sent me; as my strength was then ... Now therefore give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke that day; for you heard how the giants were there ... and I shall drive them out ... And

<sup>5</sup> Shemot 17:9

<sup>6</sup> Shemot 24:13 and 32:17

<sup>7</sup> Shemot 33:

<sup>8</sup> Bamidbar 11:27-29

Yehoshua blessed him; and **he gave Hebron to Calev** the son of Yeffunneh as an inheritance.' (Yehoshua 14:6-13)

The land that Calev walked upon in particular is Hebron. This is not coincidental; after all, Calev is the representative of the Tribe of Yehuda, and Hebron is the capital city of Yehuda. It is only natural for Calev to want to investigate this city during his spying mission. But let us draw out some other details from this passage in Sefer Yehoshua.

In this scene, Calev – Head of the Tribe of Yehuda - is depicted as a driven individual, a man with a mission. He initiates the approach to Yehoshua demanding his personal territory before any tribe has made its move to its designated territory. The reader senses Calev's excitement and drive to capture the land. He is bursting with energy. At the age of eighty-five, he feels that he has the same vigour and enthusiasm as he had at age forty when he toured the land with the Spies. He has retained all that passion for forty-five years! Calev is certainly an individual who doesn't wait for orders. He takes initiative. He acts independently of the system. Later, in his role as elder statesman of Yehuda, he freely distributes incentives in order to enthuse his tribe's conquest of its inheritance:

"Calev announced: I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiryat Sefer." (Yehoshua 15:16)

#### CALEV'S CONFRONTATION. YEHOSHUA'S HESITATION.

Let us now return to that scene in which the people hear the Spies' report and begin to panic. Calev steps forward; Yehoshua remains silent. What was happening?

Calev was not afraid of confrontation. Calev heard the tone; he sensed the worry that was being sown into the minds of the people. And immediately Calev reacts, reassuring, encouraging.

'We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'

He expresses his conviction that it is all a matter of attitude. After all, Calev who is so eager to conquer the land, is unafraid even of the giants.

We can only imagine that Calev who had spent the last forty days in the company of the Spies was fully aware of their mindset. They had all sat around the campfire together discussing the land they explored, and his had been a lone voice of confidence among the despair and disillusionment. Calev was used to disagreeing with his colleagues, his fellow delegates. Now, they stood before the people of Israel as they present their feasibility assessment, already familiar to his ears, a report that expressed fear and lack of confidence. He had prepared for this moment. He knew that he had to be outspoken.

Why might Yehoshua have stayed quiet at this crucial moment? After all, we know from the story's end that Yehoshua did not share the perspective of the Meraglim. What was he thinking?

Two possibilities come to mind.

#### MOSHE'S STUDENT

Yehoshua heard the report of the Spies but he did not feel that it was his place to respond. Why? Because he was standing before his mentor Moshe, the leader of the nation<sup>9</sup>. Yehoshua was sure that Moshe would find a way in which to bring matters under control, to calm the situation. It was not for him to confront the Spies. That was Moshe's job.

And then, maybe this explains the moment in which Yehoshua joins Calev in his public opposition to the Meraglim. If we are correct, that Yehoshua was waiting for Moshe to make his move, then at what point should he emerge from his silence?

'The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept all night. All the Israelites rallied against Moshe and Aharon. If only we had died in the Land of Egypt ... Why is the Lord taking us to that land to fall by the sword? ... And they said to one another; 'Let us head back to Egypt.' **Then Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces before all the assembled gathering of the Israelites. And Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yeffunneh ... tore their clothes.** And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel ...' (14:1-8)

In other words, **Yehoshua steps in at the very moment in which Moshe gives up.** Moshe falls on his face in despair, or possibly in prayer. Whichever way, Moshe at this point gives up

<sup>9</sup> See Rambam Hilchot Talmud Torah 5:4 and also Halacha 1-3.

hope of convincing the rebels. Now that Yehoshua sees his master in a state of helplessness, he takes his turn in directly confronting the people. This is our first possibility.

## THE BREAKING POINT

Our second option will come from Rav Yaakov Medan, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion. Rav Medan depicts Yehoshua as a political realist. Unable to sway the minds of the Spies during the mission, he opted to remain silent. He assumed and hoped that on his return to the camp, Moshe would succeed through political manipulation and leadership skill to minimise the damage of the *meraglim* delegation. He believed that the mission of entering the land could be salvaged despite the Spies.

'At the very moment in which he strode, proud and upright towards the fortifications of Hevron, his glance forwards, his faith strengthening him ... as Calev's eyes burned with the divine fire of the mission, Yehoshua read the faces of his co-delegates and saw their moods: We felt like grasshoppers in their eyes. (13:33)

Yehoshua understood that any individual, however brave or courageous, would not have the power to overwhelm a nation whose leaders were those ten Spies. He had seen the heavy fortifications, the giants of Canaan. Yehoshua concluded that a nation whose leaders saw themselves as helpless as grasshoppers were simply unable to face the military challenge that they faced. He preferred to remain amongst the ten Spies ... and not to enter Hevron. Maybe he even debated with the Spies and tried to convince them of a different view. But when he failed to convince them, he saw no advantage in breaking off all connection with them. For the same reason, he did not confront or contradict them as they reported back to Bnei Yisrael regarding the strength of the enemy and the fortified cities. His faith in God and his love of the Land did not affect his understanding of the lack of confidence, the low spirit of the nation, a mood amongst the rank and file that had been engendered by the leadership. Yehoshua knew: with that national mindset, even the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud would be unable to push the nation to its goal.

Maybe Yehoshua hoped that time would pass and the people would calm down, that the fear would subside, and everything would resume its proper course. But suddenly, overnight, Yehoshua changed his mind. He shifted his

strategy and moved from his position amongst the people, to the role of opposition, of he who stood alone, against the nation." (Rav Yaakov Medan, Megadim #10.)

And yet, at a certain point in the story, Yehoshua abandons his political neutrality. Rav Medan poses the question: what made Yehoshua switch strategy? Why did he begin to confront the people? Or more accurately, at what point did he decide to speak out?

**"And they said to one another; Let us head back to Egypt!"** Then Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces before all the assembled gathering of the Israelites. And Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yeffuneh ... tore their clothes. And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel ...'

His answer is simple. The critical line that changed Yehoshua was when the people began to talk about returning to Egypt.

What is the significance of a return to Egypt? It is an entire reversal of the grand enterprise of Jewish History. It is reneging upon the promises to Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov – the covenant of the Land. It is a reversal and overturning of the entire process of Yetziat Mitzrayim and an outright rejection of its miracles and wonders. Above all, it is a downright rejection of the first Commandment: "I am the Lord your God WHO TOOK YOU OUT OF EGYPT." It is a renunciation of God!

The Jewish religion is predicated on the nation having a singular history, a distinct destiny. If we were to return to Egypt, the entire process of Jewish History would be finished, gone.

At what point did Yehoshua intervene? Very simple! We have depicted Yehoshua as a man who is measured and calculating, who understands political process and national management. At the initial level, Yehoshua assessed the likelihood of his successful intervention as low. He probably thought that the damage of the Spies could be contained. However, when Yehoshua understood that the episode of the Spies had escalated to more serious levels, he felt the imperative to stand up and confront the rebels. Why? Because here was an attack on the very essence of our being as a nation. This was a moment when one could not stand at the sidelines! One had to take sides. One had to make a statement. Either one is with God or one sides with the rebels. Either one accepts that our journey is to Eretz Yisrael and a unique Jewish history, or one

acquiesces to those who wish to return to slavery in Egypt and the disappearance of the Jewish nation. And when it comes to this, Yehoshua knows exactly on whose side he is.

Yehoshua is a realist. He knew that the Spies were dangerous, but he also knew that as a lone figure he could not stand against them and have any effect. Yehoshua is a politician. He knows when he has lost the battle. He will have to fight for Eretz Yisrael some other way, some other day. But Yehoshua is also a man of principle, and when the "*Ani Maamin*" of Judaism is under attack, when our very *raison d'etre* is in question, then Yehoshua stands against the people, declaring the truth because it is the truth, even if it will have no effect whatsoever. Like many prophets after him, some unpopular things need to be said simply because they are God's word. At this point, all that is left to do is to tear ones garments, to mourn the tragedy. But Yehoshua must look the people in the eye and state loud and clear; you have brought us to disaster. This he does, unflinchingly.

#### IN CONCLUSION

We have discussed two very different people, two very different leaders. One leader is an outsider, a passionate lover of the land who fiercely speaks his mind when all are against him. The other leader is the man who is a political realist, but a man who knows his red lines. In the long run, Yehoshua's realism and moderation, his experience and moral integrity make him God's choice for national leadership. And yet, Calev is still there, always acting outside the box, independently, with spirit and unfiltered idealism.

For us, we might learn that there is a place for many personality types within our ranks; the team-players, and the free spirits, the mavericks and the moderates. Every personality has a part to play in leading the Jewish people. But with one condition: that we follow God's plan. We must follow the path that leads to the Holy Land, to the realisation of the enterprise that we call Torah. If we follow the guidance of God's word, then we can use our varied personal talents to lead the Jewish Nation.