

“AND YOU WILL SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘IT IS MY STRENGTH AND THE POWER OF MY HAND THAT DID THIS VALOROUS DEED’.”

(DEVARIM 8:17)

**B’**NEI YISRAEL were nearing their destination of Eretz Yisrael; Moshe took this opportunity to warn them of possible emotions they might experience as they forge their way into the Promised Land. As Hashem had already promised, they will undoubtedly conquer the seven mighty and deeply rooted nations living there, which might give rise to feelings of extreme pride. The Children of Israel would, perhaps, believe that it was actually their own strength and military prowess that defeated their enemies. They may forget that G-d had long ago promised these events would occur, and only through His divine assistance.

**Could they really take credit for such an obvious miracle?**

How is it possible that this nation that was enlightened by so many miracles in the desert could make such a mistake? Could they really take credit for such an obvious miracle? Could they logically explain how a ragtag group such as themselves, untrained in the ways of war, could totally defeat the tremendous military might of the seven nations who were entrenched and waiting for B’nei Yisrael’s arrival? Of course, the hand of Hashem was the only answer!

We see that our evil inclination could force one to deny even this clear and obvious answer. Gradually, it seems very feasible to believe that one’s cunning, talent and strength were the factors that brought about victory and success. It is extremely easy to become enthralled with such a notion. For this reason, Moshe continues, verse after verse, admonishing against this dangerous self-aggrandizement. He warns even the faithful and G-d fearing people, telling them it will not be by their merit that they will triumph, but rather the merit of their forefathers. Furthermore, the evil of the seven nations is what will subject them to their own defeat. “It is not by your [B’nei Yisrael’s] righteousness ... that you have come to inherit the land,” Moshe emphasizes (ibid. 9:5).

**Reflecting in this manner will allow the truth to shine forth**

This lengthy and harsh warning is given in order to battle the almost inevitable reaction of our *yetzer harah*. Reb Yisroel Salanter, similarly, gave advice to counter feelings of pride and arrogance. When it seems we have accomplished something wonderful, we must also remind ourselves of our deficiencies and shortcomings, and not just give ourselves a pat on the back. Reflecting in this manner will allow the truth to shine forth: It is only through the ability Hashem has bestowed upon us that we accomplish anything. Logically, we will understand it is Hashem, not ourselves, who is the moving force behind our successes. Instead of basking in the thrill of victory, let us praise and thank Hashem for all that He makes possible for us