

Mussar HaTorah

ד'ס"ב

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

18 Sivan, 5768 Vol. 9, No. 8

Parashas Shelach

“BUT MY SERVANT CALEV, BECAUSE A DIFFERENT SPIRIT WAS WITH HIM...” (BAMIDBAR 14:24)

WHAT WAS THE “DIFFERENT SPIRIT” THAT Calev possessed? Rashi (ibid.) tells us that it refers to Calev being “two faced,” speaking one way, while feeling the opposite. While Calev was in the presence of the spies, he told them that he was with them and concurred with their opinions. In his heart, though, Calev planned to tell the truth to B’nei Yisrael: that the land of Israel could be conquered – with Hashem’s continued assistance. This deception allowed Calev to successfully bring his message to B’nei Yisrael. The spies and the nation allowed him to speak because they thought he was on their side. What he actually said, however, was the truth about Eretz Yisrael.

Why does the Torah praise Calev for this charade?

Why does the Torah praise Calev for this charade? He and Yehoshua were out-numbered ten to two. This tactic seems to have been the only sensible way for him to eventually get his message across and perhaps the only way for him to safeguard his life (they might have killed him if he disagreed). If this was an obvious approach that any sane individual would take in such a situation, why praise Calev for doing so?

Only Calev had the fortitude

Perhaps anyone would try this subterfuge – but only Calev, summoning all of his self-control, succeeded. If you are in a situation where you must vocally express an opinion that is the opposite of how you truly feel, it will eventually affect you. The way you speak and act penetrates to the very essence of your being and changes the way you feel. Only Calev had the fortitude, courage and inner strength to speak one way and maintain the opposite feelings. Calev had to travel the land together with the spies and espouse their beliefs – beliefs that ran against the grain of everything that he stood for – and still effectively preserve his lofty moral values and his sense of judgment. Those words and actions would normally have changed him, and Calev deserves the praise for not allowing himself to be affected.

We should not underestimate the power of our words

We are all familiar with the power of our words to influence others and change their way of thinking. However, we should not underestimate the power of our words to influence our own character and personality. How often do we say things to fit into a group, to find favor or be accepted by others – statements that may not exactly reflect our own opinions, or statements that express our thoughts in a less refined manner. Words said in jest, phrases said for effect or to mimic others – they all have an impact upon us. Conversely, every effort we make to speak in a more positive way, using a more refined vocabulary and certainly expressing thoughts of Torah and *middos tovos*, of ethical excellence and sensitivity, will surely uplift our character and change us for the better.