

# Shelach: The Grasshopper Complex

- Nisson Shulman.

What, after all, was wrong with their report? They told the truth reporting exactly what Moses asked them to discover! And what was the difference between what they told the people and what Caleb and Joshua told them? Caleb and Joshua even agreed that the land was fruitful, the people strong, living in fortified cities!

(Based on a thought written by Avi Mori, Harav Moshe Yitzchok Shulman zt"l)

1. The "Meraglim" are amongst the Torah's arch-villains. Why? What, after all, was wrong with their report? They told the truth reporting exactly what Moses asked them to discover! And what was the difference between what they told the people and what Caleb and Joshua told them? Caleb and Joshua even agreed that the land was fruitful, the people strong, living in fortified cities!

2. Answer. Two kinds of truth: What is, and what must become; fact-finding, and truth which creates and compels facts and events. One kind of truth reports history. The other makes it.

3. Spies told what they saw. The two heroes, Caleb and Joshua, told what could be.

4. In Jewish history and in Jewish life, telling the facts alone can be a great sin. Why? Because the Almighty often demands that we disregard facts and make our own history come true, through faith, courage, loyalty and the stubbornness that only our stiff-necked people can know.

5. For it is usual in our history to find ourselves facing impossible odds. Under such conditions, merely telling the facts and observing statistics can be overwhelming, and in fact can kill our courage and lose us our hope, as indeed happened on that fateful night in the desert when the spies returned their report.

6. At the end they added their own opinion: "We felt like grasshoppers next to those giants, and they considered us grasshoppers too".

7. The grasshopper is the symbol of insignificance. It is like saying "I felt like an insect". I can understand that the spies felt fearful and insignificant and thought they were like grasshoppers next to the giants of the land. But how did they know that the inhabitants considered them grasshoppers too?

8. The answer is that if you feel like a grasshopper, it is absolutely certain that everyone around will consider you one. If a person has a grasshopper complex, the beholder will know that he is, in fact a grasshopper.

9. Imagine

A. If Moses, confronting Pharaoh.... Instead of demanding binurenu ubizekenenu...

B. Or if the Macabbees had only considered the facts, we would have ended our history then and there.

C. Or if Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had taken the facts into account when he requested from Vespasian, Yavneh and its sages, to which we owe our survival.

D. The great Zionists who brought about the Jewish state would have given up before they started if they had taken facts into account. The same with the Israelis who suffered and fought and triumphed in five wars. Thank God the great men who gathered that fateful 5th of Iyar 1948 did not feel or think like grasshoppers, and with pride and courage they declared the State and so it stands today.

10. Our boys and girls on the college campuses today, faced with anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism are sorely tempted to feel like grasshoppers. God forbid that they should do so. Let them speak up like our people's heroes of the past.

11. Assimilation strikes the grasshoppers amongst us. Those with pride in our faith and people rarely succumb.