

Oneg Shabbat – Insights from Reb Ephraim Z”l

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The Spies: How Could They Speak Bad About the Land of Israel?

It is possible to explain the whole perplexing episode of the spies in the following manner. The Torah recounts how when the spies entered into the land they were amazed at the sheer size of the fruits. Now if we keep in mind that the Generation of the Wilderness is also called the Dor Deah or Generation of Knowledge (referring to Divine/spiritual knowledge,) the big fruits really threw them off. Imagine travelling through the desert, you get hungry, manna falls from the sky and you are satiated (by the way we are taught that this was the food of the Heavenly Angels.) You don't have to be afraid of any "unwanted guests" since the Clouds of Glory lead you on your merry spiritual way. We cannot fathom the great spiritual level of this generation whom merited receiving the Holy Torah – the book of instruction for living a G-dly life. When the spies realized that the dream was over, that they would soon have to till, plow and work the land, they really got thrown off. When they saw the size of the fruits, when they witnessed that this is a land filled with "dew, milk and honey," they started to question: Are we going to become absorbed in the physicality of the land and fall from our great spiritual height? We shall run back into the wilderness and continue serving G-d as we have until now. Now, what should they have done? It is not our role as Jews to run away from this world. Rather it is a much loftier for us to uplift and transfer the physicality of this world into holiness. The lesson is simple. When we find ourselves in places that we would rather not be in – weather physically or spiritually speaking, we must have

emunah-faith and work at finding the spark of G-dliness in the situation. As our sages have taught us: "When one comes to purify himself, he is helped." If our intention is to uplift and we are strong in our Emunah, then we need not run. In fact the opposite is true; precisely in that place are we rectifying the world and bringing it closer to perfection.

Based on Oneg Shabbat

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