



PROBING

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THE PROPHETS

This week's *haftarah* is taken from the second perek in Sefer Yehoshua which, interestingly, relates events that took place before those found in the first chapter. The first chapter includes the commands that Yehoshua gave to B'nai Yisra'el to prepare for entering Eretz Cana'an within three days. The story of the spies related in the second perek, however, reports that the spies stayed in the house of Rachav and, subsequently, were forced to hide for three days in the mountains. Only then did they cross back over the Yarden to rejoin their people who had not yet crossed the Jordan, clearly indicating that the spies were sent even before Joshua's pronouncements in the first perek.

But far more essential to understanding the *haftarah* is answering the question as to why Yehoshua sent them at all. Joshua himself was one of the spies sent by Moshe and knew quite well the terrible sin that led to the 38 year delay in entering the land. Why would he, of all people, repeat

the same mistake? Why would he decide to send spies?

Yehoshua wanted to build up the confidence of his people

In response, we can point to the differences between the two missions. Clearly, this was not espionage for any military purpose, as was the mission sent by Moshe Rabbeinu. In the *haftarah*, we find no doubt in the people's belief in Hashem's promises. Yehoshua never asked his spies to report upon the size of the armies or their relative strength nor did he tell them to bring proof of the land's fertility or the cities' fortifications. Similarly, these spies were sent "cheresh", clandestinely; it was a secret mission sent by Joshua, and therefore the spies reported to Yehoshua alone. Moshe, however, felt constrained to send his spies as a result of the people's doubt in Hashem's promise of victory.



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They were sent with the knowledge of the entire nation and delivered their report publicly, in front of the entire people.

Our meforshim point to other differences as well, differences which would avoid the pitfalls and mistakes made by the first set of spies. But all of these approaches do not answer the basic question: Why did Yehoshua send the spies at all? What was his reason? And what was their purpose?

The Ralbag takes an interesting position on this matter and proposes that Yehoshua's purpose in sending the spies was not a military one but a psychological one. Pointing to the story found in Sefer Shoftim (chptr 7) when Hashem built up Gid'on's confidence by sending him to the Midianite camp to listen to their growing fear of Israel's army' so too, the Ralbag argues, Yehoshua wanted to build up the confidence of his people by sending these meraglim to witness the growing panic amongst the local population.

How important it is for a nation facing war to be united in their confidence in victory! We must realize that when there is division among the people-even the greatest leader will not succeed; when there is harmony and accord even a new leader will succeed.

We, perhaps more than other generations, must learn this important lesson. ■

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