



# PROBING

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# THE PROPHETS

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Over the years of studying this week's haftarah, a selection taken from the second perek of Yehoshua, we often compared the mission of the spies sent by Yehoshua to the mission sent by Moshe, as we read in the weekly parasha. Clearly, the different outcomes of the two missions led us to analyzing the differences of the purpose and the goal of each mission.

But a very basic question remains unanswered, that being – why would Yehoshua even attempt to send spies at all? Having seen what took place years earlier and fully aware of the near-rebellion against the nation's leadership and the disastrous result of the false report...why would Yehoshua taken the risk of sending spies once again? Additionally, Moshe sent his agents at Hashem's command ("al pi Hashem"), whether by direct order or by reluctant acceptance of the people's desire. But we read of no divine command given to Yehoshua nor even the leader's request for G-d's permission!?

So, what was the purpose of "spy-sending"?

What would it accomplish?

And why take the risk?

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There is no question that the clear difference in the missions would have Yehoshua more confident in his belief that his agents would not be fated to sin - as did those of Moshe for, while his teacher and mentor instructed the spies to report on the relative fortifications and strength, Yehoshua told his emissaries to "see the land and Yericho"- requiring no military information that could be exaggerated or falsified. Furthermore, his spies were directed to leave for the mission secretly and return in the same way – reporting to Yehoshua alone (and NOT, as happened in Moshe's time, to the entire nation), thereby preventing a massive panic from spreading throughout the nation. And, additionally, Yehoshua sent but *two* individuals to carry out his bidding, far more manageable than the twelve men sent by Moshe.

All these reasons are valid and contribute to the confidence that Yehoshua felt in sending spies. But I believe there is a far

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more essential reason as to why he had little doubt in the success of his mission.

We naturally tend to compare these two spy-stories with each other, forgetting that there was a thirty-nine year gap between the two! There were different leaders, different spies and different missions. More importantly, these events involved two very different generations. In the passing years, Israel had fought and defeated, the Canaanites in the area of Arad (B'Midbar 21: 1-3), they fought and conquered the powerful Amorite states – one led by Sichon and one by Og – and they took over their land (ibid: 24-25; 35). Perhaps even more importantly, we must recall an essential truth of which many of us tend to forget or, perhaps, never knew: “Vayishlach Moshe **lragel** et Ya’zer” – “And Moshe sent [men] **to spy out** Ya’zer...”

(ibid: 32). Yes! Moshe himself sent another contingent of spies – and they **were** successful! And, crucially, these battles, victories and spy mission all took place in the final year in the desert!

In effect, therefore, Yehoshua’s decision to send spies into Eretz Cana’an was neither rash nor risky. He had much to rely upon: a young generation ready and willing to conquer their promised land, a tried and true army that had just recently scored victories over powerful enemies and a nation fully faithful to the divine promises that had already begun to be fulfilled.

Yehoshua needed no command or “permission” from Hashem to send spies. On the contrary, his deep belief in G-d’s promises made it a simple decision, and it proved to the entire nation that Hashem’s word stands true for all time. ■