



# Let Us Not Be Grasshoppers

Six words in this week's Torah portion, Shelach, reveal a great secret.

Ten of the twelve spies sent to the Land of Israel return to the people in the desert filled with despair. According to them, there is no point in continuing the journey to Israel. As they describe their encounter with the inhabitants of the land, they say:

**“We were in our own eyes like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes.”**

In other words: We saw ourselves as grasshoppers, and therefore that is how we appeared to the people living there as well. We lacked self-confidence. We thought we were small and weak, with no chance of success, and that is how the people we met in the Land perceived us too.

Our self-perception is the foundation. It radiates outward. If we see ourselves as people of worth and meaning, if we go out into the world with optimism, vision, and faith, that is how others will look back at us as well.

This is true with our children. It is true in the workplace, in society, and also on the national level, as a people and as a state.

It is worth asking ourselves: Where, and in what ways, do we see ourselves as grasshoppers? Can we see ourselves differently, and by doing so cause the world to look at us differently too?

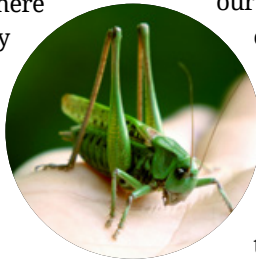
## Who Is Telling You the Story?

Our Sages ask us to note that most of the time during our journey through the desert, the problem was not an external enemy but our internal state: our unity, our faith, our motivation. When these are absent, it is impossible to keep moving forward.

Last week, I saw a video featuring the Greek Minister of Health being interviewed on Greek television. In case you didn't see it,

this is what he said: “Really, is there a nation like the Jews? These people took a strip of desert land, smaller than half of our Peloponnese Peninsula, and they have a GDP of 500 billion. If you go there, you see that they produce abundance out of nothing. They are at war with Lebanon, with Iran, with Yemen, with Hamas, with Syria, and they have 3% GDP growth! And when they ask who the happiest people in the world are, they are in the top five. And here, in our Greece, the weather is perfect, everything is beautiful, and whoever you ask how he is responds: ‘Misery, sadness.’ Stop for a moment: he has rockets on his right, rockets on his left, and he says, ‘How happy I am to live in Israel.’ And by us? Here, everything is black. Do you have an explanation?” The minister concludes: “There is no explanation!”

In another incident, Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, was supposed to visit Israel



for the Ministry of Transportation's Innovation Conference. In the end, he traveled with Trump to China, but he still made the effort to join from there by video call for half an hour. This is what he said: "I am a big fan of Israel. I think, objectively, you are number one in the world." Applause was heard in the hall, and he continued: "You achieve incredible results relative to the size of your population. I take my hat off to Israel for its innovation and for everything it does."

There's more: Mathias Döpfner is an important German publisher and the CEO of a media group that owns *Bild* and *Politico*, among other outlets. Just two weeks ago, he said in a speech: "Zionism is racism? No. Anti-Zionism is racism! Zionism is a natural response to thousands of years of persecution, expulsion, and genocide. What seems illogical to me is that Zionism is an idea embraced only by Jews. I am a gentile, and I am a Zionist. Wholeheartedly. With conviction and passion. Israel is our values."

When I told friends about these incidents, they were surprised. They hadn't heard these stories and are under the impression that the world is against us. Who makes them think that way? Who makes us focus only on negativity, on the criticism directed at us, and not on the deep and widespread appreciation that exists as well? Just like in the parashah: who is telling us the story, and who is providing the interpretation of those events? ■

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