

A Tale of Two Spies

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Rabbi Steven Saks

Yehoshua (Joshua) has a book of the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) named after him. But what about the other good spy, Calev (Caleb), who also encouraged *B'nei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) to go up to the Promised Land? Though Yehoshua became the leader of the nation after Moshe's (Moses) death, we should not overlook the vital contribution that Calev made.

When the other 10 spies returned from Canaan with their negative report dissuading the people from attempting to continue to the Promised Land, Yehoshua remained silent. It is only Calev who attempts to mitigate the damage done by the 10 spies' negative evaluation of the Promised Land. Why does Yehoshua, who was being groomed to be the next leader, remain silent, initially leaving the heavy lifting to Calev? Yehoshua's role as Moshe's protégé explains his silence. As Moshe's protégé, Yehoshua may have believed that it would be improper for him to take control of the situation in the presence of his teacher. Yehoshua's intervention could have been seen as an act of usurpation.

On the other hand, because he was not as close to Moshe, Calev had the luxury of being able to view the situation from a more clinically detached vantage point. He realized that Moshe was becoming burned out. Earlier on when G-d had threatened to destroy the people because they built the Golden Calf, Moshe rushed to their defense. But in the recent debacle of the manna, Moshe did not rush to their defense; rather, he whined to G-d that leading the people was a heavy burden. Therefore, it must have been no surprise to Calev that Moshe fell on his face in utter despair after witnessing the people's mutinous response to the spies' report. Moshe appeared to be like a teacher whose unruly students had reduced him to tears.

Because Calev had the luxury of viewing the unfolding situation from a detached vantage point, he was able to quickly fill the void left by Moshe and Yehoshua's silence and speak up in defense of the Promised Land. Not only did he inspire Yehoshua also to speak up in defense of the Promised Land, but he also reinvigorated Moshe, who again saved *B'nei Yisrael* from destruction by convincing G-d not to destroy his wayward people.

This story is a tale of two spies. As Rabbi Alex Israel puts it, Yehoshua is the consummate insider and Calev is the consummate outsider. Yehoshua provides the nation stability by serving as a worthy successor to Moshe. As the

outsider, Calev is able to analyze the situation with detached clarity and save the day.

Yehoshua reminds us of the importance of stable communities. Hillel cautions us that one should not separate himself from the community (Avot 2:5). Calev reminds us that outsiders can benefit the community by bringing new perspective.

Rav (Sota 34b) teaches an important lesson based on the discrepancy in the use of pronouns in Num. 13:22 “**They** [the spies] went up via the Negev, and **he** came to Hebron.” Rav points out that it should read “they” came to Hebron, not “he” [came to Hebron]. He explains that Calev alone went to Hebron to pray at the grave of our forefathers. Our first forefather Avraham (Abraham) was also a consummate outsider. Many of you are familiar with the *Midrash* (rabbinic lore) which famously portrays him as an iconoclast smashing his father’s idols. But, more importantly, he is willing to abandon the advantages of living in the cosmopolitan Babylonian Empire for the backwaters of Canaan, in order to partner with G-d in building a society which was to be morally superior to that of the one he had just abandoned.

In light of Rav’s insight, it should not be surprising that the kingship in Israel hails from Calev’s Hebron. This connection teaches us that, though the king is the consummate insider, he should not behave like other kings who amass power. Rather, the king must remind the nation and the world of the value of Avraham’s fresh and humane outsider perspective. Now is your Calev moment. Please come forward!