

REPRINTED FROM  
**RABBI WEIN'S  
WEEKLY  
BLOG**

Revisiting the story of the spies that Moshe sent to the Land of Israel is always a very discouraging moment. How could everything have gone so wrong and so fast? All of the reasons advanced over the ages by the great commentators to the Torah - personal ambition, fear of the unknown, disregard for tradition, lack of faith in God, etc. - are undoubtedly true and correct. But to a certain extent they all only beg the question.

They perhaps answer the why part of the issue but the how to part of the story still remains pretty much a mystery. It is obvious that a climate of fear must have pervaded the entire Jewish nation as they stood at the cusp of entry into the Holy Land. The leaders of Israel who were the spies, were, in the main, representative of the people and the tribes that they headed. Jewish tradition teaches us that there is no king without a people.

So the general prevailing climate and belief of the people have enormous influence on the views and behavior of those leaders that Moshe sent on this fateful journey. The ready acceptance by the people of the negative report of the ten spies indicates clearly their precon-

ceived notion of the land and its inhabitants. The Jewish people of that generation simply were not willing to embark on the great adventure that is always associated with living and populating the Land of Israel. Moshe had chosen the best people he could find for this mission. But he misread the mood of the people that they represented. Hence this tragedy became an almost unavoidable one.

From the beginning of the Jewish story with our father Avraham, the Land of Israel has always posed a great challenge. To Avraham it would be a land of wars, famine and wandering. And yet, it is also to be the ultimate land of promise. The Lord had entered into a binding covenant between him and his descendants, that this land would be their eventual homeland and would represent spiritual and physical redemption for the Jewish people.

Our forefather Yitzchak encountered strife, discrimination and famine while living in the land. Nevertheless, he never left Israel and saw in it the eternal home for his later generations. Some of the names that he gave to the locations of the wells of water still speak to us today, thousands of years later.

Our father Yaakov tasted the bitterness of exile when he fled to find refuge in the house of Lavan. He therefore treasured his return to the

Land of Israel even though he found it fraught with danger and violence. His dying wish was that he should be transported back to the Land of Israel to be buried in its holy earth.

In this respect, the Jewish people did not quite follow the example of their forefathers but rather adopted a preconceived negative view of the land and its possibilities. This was transmitted directly or indirectly to the leadership of their tribes, resulting in a lost generation. 🙏