Jewish Tribune – Shelach

**Stepping Up**

“We need a front cover for our school magazine,” said the teacher. “Any offers to draw something?”

There were two boys in the class who were impressive artists. One raised a hand and offered his services but the other felt it would be arrogant to do so. And anyway, he thought to himself, was his artwork that good?

The possuk in this week’s parsha says:

וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים, וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם

In our eyes, we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes.

How could the meraglim possibly know that they looked like grasshoppers in the eyes of giants? Were they mind readers?

The answer often given is that the meraglim did not believe in themselves. They lacked confidence and a proper sense of their own self-worth. They felt like grasshoppers in the presence of the Canaanites, and therefore, the Canaanites viewed them as grasshoppers as well.

We often confuse humility with false humility. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ztl, detested honour. When the famous Yerushalmi, Yossele the Mohel, officiated at a bris where Rav Shlomo Zalman was honoured to be the sandek, he called him up with many honorifics. “Mechubed with sandekous is Moreinu HaRav, Posek Doreinu, Maran HaRosh Yeshiva, HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach shlita.”

One evening after being so called up, Yossele the Mohel received a call. “Good evening. It’s Shlomo Zalman here.”

”Shlomo Zalman who?” asked Yossele. “Shlomo Zalman Auerbach” came the reply.

The great Posek continued, “My dear Yossele, I know you mean well, but please do not call me up like you did this morning. I don’t like or need these titles. And if you continue to do so, I will refuse to serve as a sandek at a bris where you are officiating.”

On another occasion, the parents of a boy with special needs were desperate for him to join a certain school that would cater excellently for his needs. But the young man refused to go. The parents were unsure how to progress and shared their problem with Rav Shlomo Zalman, who asked to meet the young man.

“Permit me to introduce myself” said the great Rosh Yeshiva and Posek to the star struck boy. “My name is Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. I am the Rosh Yeshiva of one of the largest Yeshivos in the world and am also a renowned Posek, which means when other Rabbis are stuck, they ask me their questions.”

“And I want to give you semicha – so that you can become a Rabbi too!”

The boy’s eyes were now like saucers and opened wide in amazement.

“Because” continued Rav Shlomo Zalman, “I have a special job for you. I need you to become my mashgiach in a nearby school and for you to move in to the school and update me in person every month with how things are there.”

It worked a treat and the boy enrolled, succeeded in his new school and did meet up with the wise Rosh Yeshiva every month.

Rav Shlomo Zalman genuinely detested honour but he knew exactly who he was. And perhaps that was part of his success.

Feeling like grasshoppers and lacking confidence also led the meraglim to slander the land. They saw the major hurdles that had to be overcome, and they felt intimidated and overwhelmed. And they chose to slander the land in order to deflect the Jewish people from their plans of conquest and to persuade them to remain in the relative safety of the Desert.

It starts with strong self-awareness and a healthy dose of self-esteem. If HKBH has blessed us with talents and abilities, we need to utilise them and not deny them. We need to raise our hands to offer to draw the front cover for the school magazine, or whatever else the call of the hour may be, if that is the talent which Hashem has blessed us with.

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