
True leadership...

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

*A New Page of Talmud –
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Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."— **Bamidbar 13:30**¹ he silenced them that they should hear what he was going to say about Moses. He cried aloud saying: "Is this the only thing the son of Amram has done to us?!" — One who heard him thus speaking believed that he was about to speak to his disparagement, and because they had something in their mind against Moses through the spies' statements, all of them kept silent to hear his disparagement. He, however, said: "Did he not divide the Red Sea for us, and bring down the Manna for us, and collect the quails for us?!" — **Rashi on Bamidbar 13:30**² "They "Caleb silenced the people toward Moses;" From this line you can glean what must have been left out here, i.e. that Moses was trying unsuccessfully to interrupt the report of the spies, until Caleb succeeded to silence them, even if only briefly. 38 years later in Deuteronomy 1,29, Moses reminds the people that he had tried to give them encouragement to proceed with carrying out G-d's command to mount an attack against the inhabitants of that land. — **Chizkuni on Bamidbar 13:30**³ Seeing that an ordinary individual is not capable of silencing a people numbering hundreds of thousands, the Torah adds the words אל משה, to tell us that he silenced them in order to make them listen to Moses, not to himself. We know from Deut. 33,5 that Moses' rank was equivalent to the rank of a king. Caleb invoked the awe and respect due to a king in order to silence the people. Having invoked Moses' authority, he said: "we most certainly are able to go up and take possession of the land." He meant that in spite of the other spies' having said: "we cannot overcome this people," he felt that the Israelites would be able to prevail.— **Or HaChaim on Bamidbar 13:30**⁴ And yet, although Caleb silenced the people, as the text reports, he did not deny any aspect of the

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Bamidbar 13:30

report. He neither addressed the fears of his fellow spies nor the people's response to those fears that clearly ripped into the fiber of their once-optimistic cause. By shutting them down instead of gently persuading them, Caleb may inadvertently have caused more damage than good. He berated them instead of strengthening them. Leaders do not always acknowledge the abyss that exists between them and followers when it comes to information, commitment, and the cost of loyalty. If this is a text about the subjectivity of reality, then leaders must recognize the elasticity of subjectivity among followers. Leaders shape perception. They do it best when they understand and can openly

address resistance. — **Dr Erica Brown, Leadership in the Wilderness**⁵ There are all kinds of courage," said Dumbledore, smiling. "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to

stand up to our friends. — **J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**⁶ Caleb for bearing witness before the congregation received the heritage of the land.— **The Book of Maccabees I 2:58**⁷

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