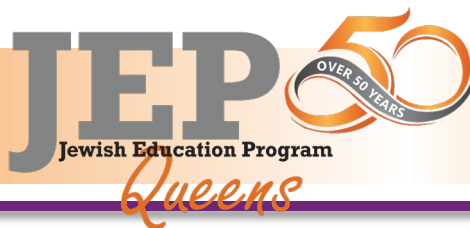


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## DON'T RUN OUT OF SCHOOL SO QUICKLY!

### PARSHAS BEHA'ALOSCHA

The Torah writes two psukim in the middle of the narrative of the parsha. Those two psukim are totally out of place. "Whenever the Ark departed Moshe would say: "Rise, Hashem, and may Your enemies disperse, and those who hate You flee before You..." (Bamidbar 10:35-36) The two psukim are delineated in the Torah by the letter nun, written upside down. The Talmud (Shabbos 115A-B) quotes Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel who says that in the future, those two psukim will be removed and will be rewritten in the appropriate place. If so, why wasn't it written in the proper place initially? He answers that it was to make a separation between the two sins of the Jewish people. Rashi says that the second sin was when the wicked people complained to Hashem for the sole purpose of angering Hashem. Those people were looking for a pretext to complain. They said, "Woe unto us! How weary we have become on this journey." Rabbeinu Bachya (Bamidbar 11:1) adds that instead of marching joyfully towards their destiny and the Holy Land, the people marched only begrudgingly. What was their first sin? Ramban and others say that they left Mount Sinai with joy, just like a child who runs away from school. They were concerned lest Hashem give them more commandments.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l, the Alter of Slabodka, (sefer Ohr Hatzafon pages 34-36) asks a profound question. When the Jews travelled through the desert they stopped numerous times. How did they determine when to travel and when to rest? They were guided by Hashem (Bamidbar 9:18). The miraculous Cloud that surrounded them would stand up like a beam. Then they blew two silver trumpets. At this point, the Jews realized that it was time to travel. When the Jews left Mount Sinai, they did so only after Hashem signaled them with the Cloud. They did not leave on their own. Furthermore, they were leaving to do a mitzvah, to enter Eretz Yisroel to live.

If the Jews were following Hashem's directive to quickly bring them into Eretz Yisroel, what did they do wrong? Why are they compared to children running away from school? Why was this such a terrible punishment that required Hashem to

*"Whenever the Ark departed Moshe would say: "Rise, Hashem, and may Your enemies disperse, and those who hate You flee before You..." (Bamidbar 10:35, 36).*

remove psukim that were elsewhere in the Torah, and put them here, out of place?

The Alter says that obviously there was NOTHING wrong with the Jews physically leaving Har Sinai. However, in the depths of their

hearts they did not feel the pain of separation, of having to leave the place where they had learned the holy Torah. Even though they were leaving for the purpose of a mitzvah, to go to live in Eretz Yisroel, they still should have felt twinges of pain that they had to leave such a special place, Mt. Sinai, where they learned Torah.

Interestingly, the Jews behaved in the opposite manner after they crossed the Red Sea. Moshe had to tell the Jews, against their will, that they had to move on. (Rashi Shmos 15). The Egyptians had adorned their horses with ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones. The wealth at the sea was greater than the wealth that the Jews had received

from the Egyptians in Egypt. The Jews were on an intensely high spiritual level, perceiving Hashem's holiness more so than the great prophet Yechezkel. They were not interested in wealth for wealth's sake. Rather, they wanted to fulfill Hashem's promise to our forefather Avraham that the Jews would leave with great wealth. When it was time to leave Moshe had to stop them, against their will, from performing this mitzvah. The Jews should have felt the same way after receiving the Torah. They should have felt a stronger connection to this special place. Even though they were going to do the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisroel, they should have demurred, necessitating Moshe to have to force them to leave.

This sin does not seem to have been so serious. They simply were not on the high level of feeling the attachment to Sinai. Yet, our rabbis say that this was considered as serious as was the next sin, which was very serious and for which they received a harsh punishment.

When one must leave a place where one has learned Torah, he should feel a strong connection to it. He should feel that difficulty of the separation.

Ben Yehoyada has a different approach. He wonders why it would have been so bad if both sins were written with one following the other, without a separation in between. Furthermore, there was a 3rd sin which occurred right after the Jews complained to Hashem. The mixed multitude of nations that joined the Jewish People when they left Egypt sinned and caused the rest of the Jewish People to follow suit. Ramban says that they lacked nothing in the wilderness, for they had plenty of manna which could have tasted like different kinds of delicacies. Furthermore, they had many animals. Yet they complained to Hashem to give them meat! This complaint was a serious sin. Yet, why were no psukim written to separate these last two sins. Ben Yehoyada answers that the two sins that had occurred later, resulted from their first sin. Had the Jewish People maintained their close connection to the Torah, the two other sins would not have occurred. The Torah would have protected them from sin. Because they turned away from it, they lost that protection.

**This is an important message to all, especially to students upon the advent of the summer vacation. It is important to feel the strong connection to Torah. Even if our bodies are not in school or in the beis medrash, where we had learned Torah during the year, our minds should always feel the close connection to Torah. That will afford us protection from sins.**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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