

# BEHAALOS'CHA & SHLACH

תשפ"ב

Behaalos'cha and Shlach are moving in the same direction. The first half of Behaalos'cha is wonderful. Everything is in place to go to Eretz Yisroel. There is a mishkon, Shechinoh is among them and they are organizing how they will travel in formation with the amud onon and amud ho'aish. They are in a great situation. But just a few pesukim later we have two verses inserted between two brackets. Rashi says it is to divide between two sets of tragedies. This is strange because only after the brackets do things actually begin to unravel, and all the complaining and the punishments start then. What happened before the brackets?

The gemara in Shabbos tells us that when Klal Yisroel started their journey to Eretz Yisroel, the image of ma'amad Har Sinai was still fresh in their minds. Hashem had brought them up from level to level with miracle after miracle to show Klal Yisroel the falsehood of avodo zoro. He showed them Hashem is interested in them and that they can make a relationship with Him. They experienced higher and higher levels of gilui Shechinoh and nevuoh until ma'amad Har Sinai. But they couldn't hold on to that lofty level for very long, and they crashed with the sin of the golden calf. But then they recovered and built a mishkon. They got the Shechinoh back. The Ramban says that the mishkon was designed to take the level of Shechinoh they had at Har Sinai with them throughout their journey in the desert.

But when Klal Yisroel actually left Har Sinai, the posuk indicates that they were not interested in taking Hashem with them. They would prefer to leave Hashem behind at Har Sinai. Instead of the posuk saying they left Har Sinai or Har Chorev, it says they travelled away from the mountain of Hashem. The gemara in Shabbos explains that Klal Yisroel felt it is too intense for us to be living daily so close to the Shechinoh. They were eager to go back to "real life". People have a similar feeling about being in yeshiva. They are sometimes eager to leave in order to get back to "real life". But maybe living in yeshiva is real life?

Once they had that attitude that living with the Shechinoh is not "real life", everything else starts to unravel. So all of a sudden the Torah makes a brand new parsha here with Moshe davening to Hashem to take care of all our enemies for us – without us needing to fight them ourselves in a natural way. He is asking for a straight path to Eretz Yisroel – above nature. We need to keep this in mind when we get to Parshas Shlach.

Then Klal Yisroel started complaining. They didn't want to walk three days straight in the desert. But Hashem wanted Klal Yisroel to show that they wanted this – that they cared about going to Eretz Yisroel enough to make some minimum effort. He is not just going to deposit them into Eretz Yisroel from the sky. They have to make the journey – even if it is surrounded by open miracles.

Then problems began with the Eirev Rav. Most of Klal Yisroel went through 82 years of bitter slavery and back-breaking labor before they merited to have the geuloh. The verse describes this process as going through the smelting furnace which burns out all impurities from the metal. Klal Yisroel were uplifted and purified. The Eirev Rav never were enslaved, they never went through any purging process. They just saw all the incredible makkos happening for Klal Yisroel and that they were leaving with so much wealth and supernatural assistance. They simply wanted to jump on the bandwagon on the spot. They did not undergo any kind of development to make them ready to live a life of kedushoh and gilui Shechinoh in their midst.

So it is no wonder that we find that it is the Eirev Rav who are always instigating all the complaints and discontent throughout Klal Yisroel's journey through the midbor. They are unwilling to make any sacrifices to their comfort and physical enjoyment in return for advancing in their spiritual madreigoh.

Klal Yisroel had been getting mon. It tasted and had the properties of any food they wished. The Yerushalmi says the brocho they made on it was hamotzi lechem min hashomayim. Except there were five foods which were not healthy for them. These were the foods that they complained about. The posuk spells this food as 'ha'mon'. And when Hashem confronted Odom and Chava about eating from the tree of knowledge, Hashem said 'ha'min ho'etz...'. These are the same letters that spell the name 'Homon' in Megillas Esther. It is not a coincidence. The gemara says this is where Homon is found in the Torah.

What is the connection between all these stories?

Odom and Chava had everything in Gan Eden. They could eat so many fruits from all the other trees in the garden! But they couldn't help themselves. They just had to eat from that one – the one that was restricted from them. Because they could not accept this one single limitation, they were thrown out of Gan Eden altogether.

Homon had everything a person could want in life – power, wealth, sons – everyone in the empire was bound by law to bow down to him! But there was just one Jew who refused to bow to him and it ruined everything for Homon. He couldn't rest until he obtained permission to hang Mordechai on the tallest gallows. His inability to accept Mordechai not giving him honor drove him to destroy himself and lose everything he had. In the end, it was he who was hanged on that pole.

The basic principle in life is that you don't get everything you want in this world. The mon could taste like almost everything you wished! But since they couldn't taste those five foods in the mon, they drummed up the taivoh to want the very things they couldn't have.

They complained that they missed the fish they ate in Egypt for free. Rashi explains that they meant being free from mitzvos – free from restrictions. They missed the life of hefkeirus that they had as slaves. They were chaffing against the fact that everything now comes with limitations. The verse says they cried to their families. Rashi explains they are complaining about the restrictions of arayos. The complaining begins with Eirev Rav and it spreads to Klal Yisroel.

The parsha says Moshe now had to pick a new Sanhedrin of 70 elders. What happened to the 70 elders who were living before? They died at this point, because at Har Sinai, they suffered from the same lack of understanding that Klal Yisroel were lacking with the mon. They received a tremendous gilui Shechinoh at ma'amad Har Sinai. But at the same time, they were eating and drinking. They didn't appreciate that being in close contact with the Shechinoh demands that one conduct one's self on a higher level and that physical enjoyment sometimes has to be restricted.

Klal Yisroel didn't appreciate the high level of existence that Hashem is offering them – a supernatural existence with mon and water from a rock and ananei kovod. But they want watermelon! They are missing the point.

This is the introduction to Parshas Shlach.

We see that Klal Yisroel felt too boxed in – living with the Shechinoh, living with restrictions on arayos, and living with the mon. Now they are approaching Eretz Yisroel and they want to plan a whole strategy of how to conquer it. But why? Did they have to plan any strategy about how they would leave Egypt? How they would cross the Yam Suf? How they fought Amoleik? They just had to march after the onon hakovod and Hashem took care of everything! But now Klal Yisroel feel it is too hard to march through the desert into the land and have Hashem fight for them. Either they are dropped into Eretz Yisroel immediately without having to travel, or they have to conquer these armies themselves through natural warfare. We want to be a regular people. We don't want that exalted existence we had at Har Sinai. We left Har Sinai behind us.

So now that they want to be regular people, they are frightened of what they see – all these giants and powerful armies. But at the same time, they didn't want Hashem fighting for them because then Hashem will demand that we earn it by living on that elevated level.

Calev tried to convince them that they should appreciate all the advantages they had if they let Hashem conquer their enemies for them. But they refused to listen. Hashem gave up on them and condemned the entire generation to die in the desert. Hashem is not giving them the option to live life as a normal people.

The Mechiltoh says Hashem realized Klal Yisroel needed to be kept another 38 years in the desert until they reach the level where Torah

becomes completely integrated into their being. All they do for all these years is hear the shiurim from Moshe Rabbeinu! Every day it's just learning – there is nothing else to do. Why was this necessary? Because if they are allowed to enter Eretz Yisroel with this attitude – to be a regular nation, they would forsake the Torah after they are comfortably settled in their territory and just pursue their parnossoh. If they sat and learned for so long, their Torah would be in their blood and they would continue learning their whole lives.

In Parshas Bechukosai the verses describe an unbelievable level of connection with Hashem – and it comes when you toil in Torah. Everyone focuses on this part of the parsha, but people usually overlook the inverse. If you don't listen – to toil in Torah – then everything will spin out of control. It is not that tragedies will happen for just violating the Torah. The tragedies come because you were given an opportunity to toil in Torah and you turned it down. The same thing is happening here in the desert. It started when they wanted to move away from the Har Hashem – not a physical location but a spiritual existence of closeness to the Shechinoh. When Klal Yisroel is given an opportunity to live an elevated life with the Shechinoh and they refuse it, it triggers a downward spiral that ends in tragedy. They are condemned to die in the desert and will never arrive in Eretz Yisroel.

Their children will arrive. Why will they succeed? Because I will teach them Torah and that is all they will be doing day and night from Moshe Rabbeinu for forty years. That is how they can make it through the desert and settle in Eretz Yisroel.