

# PARSHAS SHLACH

תשע"ט

Parshas Behaaloscha and Parshas Shlach are one continuum. Even though Shlach seems to be a brand new episode in the wanderings in the midbor, it is still deeply connected to the events of last week's parsha.

Klal Yisroel had undergone a remarkable transformation over the past two years. They started this process in Egypt at a point where they were thoroughly assimilated into Egyptian culture. Then the process of geuloh started with the ten makkos and all the theological lessons that the makkos were teaching them. They learned about Hashem's infinite power and intelligence, His hashgocho and reward and punishment. But they had to do something to earn the zechus of leaving Egypt and becoming Hashem's chosen nation. They were given opportunities, but not everyone was ready. 80% were unwilling and died, and 20% were willing to undergo the transformation. They performed bris miloh which was a painful and dangerous operation to show that they were committed to fulfilling the will of Hashem despite difficulty and pain. They brought a korban Pesach which entailed great risk of harm—taking the deity of the Egyptians and slaughtering it and painting its blood on one's doorpost was extremely provocative. But Klal Yisroel had to publically renounce their former identity as Egyptians and declare they were no longer a part of Egyptian society. This gave them the zechus to be redeemed from Egypt.

There was one level of gilui Shechinoh at Makkas Bechoros, and another level of gilui Shechinoh seven days later at Yam Suf and they achieved a high level of nevuoh. They were on the level of Yechezkel, and according to the Rambam they stayed on that higher level the entire forty years in the midbor. A few weeks later they reached an even higher level of nevuoh right under Moshe Rabbeinu at Maamad Har Sinai.

They crashed 40 days later with the cheit ho'eigel, and built themselves back up again on Yom Kippur with a full kapporo. They were given the second luchos and started construction of the Mishkon. They were now living with an ongoing presence of the Shechinoh in their midst for a year. They saw nissim daily. Now they prepared to move and travel towards Eretz Yisroel. Chazal described their leaving Har Sinai as a child running out of school. How did Chazal know this? There is a subtle difference of language between how they left Yam Suf—they had to be pulled away—and leaving Har Sinai. No such pulling was necessary. Hashem was trying to quickly bring them to Eretz Yisroel after this entire process of geuloh.

But then there is a break in the narrative. A solid separation between their existence up till this point with a deep connection to the world of spirituality and a life of being pushed higher and higher, and the next phase of their existence. It is as if Klal Yisroel were saying that they were not able to adjust to this elevated level and actively found ways to sabotage their trajectory of growth.

The problems first started with the Eirev Rav. They were the ones who wanted to jump on the bandwagon and ride piggy-back on Klal Yisroel's success. They wanted all the benefits of being the chosen nation without wanting to pay the price. And at this juncture, they convinced a certain percentage of Klal Yisroel to join them in their resistance to growth.

The posuk says that the problem was they wanted to have taivoh for its own sake. They generated a taivoh that they didn't have naturally. Chazal explain that they started hankering for a life without restrictions

of Torah and mitzvos. The mon was an incredible food—it did not have the properties of the foods that were not beneficial for them. But Klal Yisroel felt deprived. They wanted the freedom of not having these restrictions. They wanted watermelon. Chazal found a connection between Homon and the Eitz Hadaas. The common denominator is despite all the vast wealth and honor of Homon and despite all the fruit trees that Odom and Chava were allowed to eat from, the fact that they could not have everything ruined it all for them. Odom and Chava could eat from any fruit that they wanted but one. The entire 127 provinces bowed down to Homon with the exception of one Jew. If they couldn't have this one thing that was lacking, the rest meant nothing. People chafe at restrictions and limitations—they crave absolute freedom. The biggest yetzer horo in the world is called hefker.

At this point, Klal Yisroel had radically changed their entire orientation from growth to getting immersed in physicality and running away from more spirituality. At this point, the zekeinim who ate and drank at Maamad Har Sinai died. They didn't appreciate the level they were on and the result is that they lost that level. Hashem deals with us reflecting the level that we are on. This is the theme of Parshas Shlach as well.

Hashem wanted to bring Klal Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel and continue the close level of hashgocho and the high level of spirituality that they were living with in the midbor. He wanted them to build the beis hamikdosh and experience the Shechinoh on a permanent basis and live this elevated life. But Klal Yisroel balked. They didn't want to live on this level on a permanent basis. They missed the mundane pleasures and were chaffing at the restrictions such a lifestyle entailed. They continued on the downward spiral that started when they ran from Har Sinai and refused to enter Eretz Yisroel on the highest level they were currently on. They sent meraglim because they wanted to treat their entry into Eretz Yisroel as a pragmatic, strategic conquest.

They left Egypt without having to fight any armies. They walked through Yam Suf and the Egyptian army was decimated with no Jewish casualties. They fought Amoleik and only won when they recognized that Hashem fights their battles. But now, they are frightened by the strength of the nations in Canaan and lose heart. They forgot all about the fact that when they go out to battle with the aron and the luchos, Hashem makes them invincible. They think that the Canaanim are stronger than Hashem, kive'yochol. How could they forget all that they went through? The answer is that they saw the plan Hashem had for them to live their lives on a higher level and they spurred it. They don't want to work and sacrifice to stay on that level. It is too hard. They would rather live in the mundane, prosaic world where Hashem deals with us on a lower level.

People have to decide which level of life they want to be on. Are they running towards spiritual goals and accepting the limits on physical goals or would they rather live a life without restrictions?

Yehoshua and Calev show them—look how you are living! Completely above nature! We can walk into Eretz Yisroel with no problem! But Klal Yisroel don't want Hashem in their midst to deserve this higher level of hashgocho.

Chazal tell us the story about those who were threatened to be thrown in the furnace and claimed we don't deserve the same miracles as Chananya, Mishoel and Azarya because we are not on their level.

The same theme repeats itself in the next generation. Bnei Gad and

Bnei Reuvain get an enormous amount of sheep and cattle and want to settle in the second-best Eretz Yisroel. They don't want to take the opportunity to live on a higher level more than absolutely necessary. I compare it to people who can't wait to take a shower after havdolo on Motzei Shabbos. They don't want to remain with the elevated level of kedushas Shabbos one minute longer.

Shlach is a natural continuation to Parshas Behaaloscha and leaving Har Sinai like a child running away from school. It is an expression of Klal Yisroel's unwillingness to remain on the higher level that they were living on. So they all had to die in the midbor and Hashem had to wait for the next generation to be raised.

It is a story of the human condition. Hashem gives us opportunities to live our lives on a higher level and if we don't want them, they will be taken away from us.

No time in history did Klal Yisroel have the material resources to

support so many people in dedicating their lives to ruchniyus and avodas Hashem like we have today. For generations we haven't had the kind of opportunities like we have today. But what do we hear? People are hankering for watermelon. They don't want to compromise their material comfort to any degree—even if it means giving up on tremendous spiritual opportunities that are handed to us on a silver platter. They say “no thank you—we want to stay right here in our mediocrity in avodas Hashem.”

These parshiyos are the biggest critique against our community which squanders tremendous opportunities to live on a higher level, with just a little sacrifice—relative to previous generations. This was the nisayon in the midbor and it is the biggest nisayon today in our world. At a certain point Hashem is going to see we aren't interested and decide to take it away. We have to grab the opportunities we are given to upgrade our level of avodas Hashem, or else we will lose them.