

"And they journeyed from the Mountain of Hashem a three day distance." (10:33)

The *Midrash* views this journey from the Mountain of Hashem in an uncomplimentary manner. *Chazal* equate *Bnei Yisrael's* departure with a "child who is running away from school," happy to leave the holy place where he received *mitzvos*. Inasmuch as their venture away from the *Har Hashem* was in accordance with Hashem's will, *Bnei Yisrael's* attitude reflected a haste that was unbecoming and inappropriate. We must endeavor to understand the analogy to a child running from school. After all, *Klal Yisrael* was not delinquent in their departure.

Horav Elyakim Shlesinger, Shlita, gives the following insight into this analogy. Why does a child leave school prematurely? It is not because he regrets the lessons he has received; he simply feels that he has acquired sufficient knowledge, and he has no need to continue further. Regrettably, this was *Bnei Yisrael's* attitude when they departed the mountain. They had received the *Torah*, and they now felt they had it all. They no longer felt a need for further study.

Unfortunately, one who does not strive to attain further heights in *Torah* erudition, who does not exert himself in his quest for further *Torah* study, will stagnate and ultimately regress dismally. This sudden departure from *Torah* achievement was the precursor of the ensuing sins symbolized by their bitter complaints against Hashem. We must remember that the concept of "extra curricular" does not apply to *Torah* studies. *Torah* is the lifeblood of our existence -- a commodity of which we can never acquire too much.