

“Moshe heard the people weeping in their family groups, each one at the entrance of his tent.” (11:10)

Entire families vented their resentment publicly by gathering outside of their tents and weeping. *Chazal* say that the word “families” underscores the reason for their *animus* – frustration regarding the family laws that had been imposed upon them. To some of the people, the Torah’s restrictions regarding marriage were an unbearable burden. It seems strange that they would complain now. The laws were given at *Sinai*. Why did they not weep then? Why did they wait until now to express their acrimony?

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, z.l., derives from here the incredible impact that a holy place can have on a person. Being at *Har Sinai* and having the *Aron HaKodesh* in their midst compelled them to maintain an elevated level of sanctity and purity. When a person is surrounded by *kedushah*, holiness, he feels within himself a need to maintain purity. As they traveled away from *Har Sinai*, with the *Aron HaKodesh* traveling in front of them at a distance of three days – suddenly the overwhelming desire to eat meat, to gorge themselves in a manner not thought of before, became a reality. The temptations of the flesh engulfed them, and they began to weep for what had been imposed upon them earlier. Previously, they had appreciated the imposition because it had enhanced their *kedushah*. Now, they just wanted fun. Some things never change.