

Bnei Yisrael were armed when they went up from Egypt. (13:18)

Rashi defines *chamushim* as armed. Taking a journey through the wilderness is not like a walk in the park. One can encounter pernicious challenges at almost every step of the way. Additionally, the pagan nations inhabiting *Eretz Yisrael* would certainly not take kindly to the idea of being displaced by the Jewish People. The fact that G-d promised the Land to the Jews had very little bearing on the pagan mindset. On the other hand, the Jews were not a warrior nation. For the past 210 years, their primary vocation had been slavery. Thus, the people took along weapons as preparation for any contingency.

Having said this, we wonder why, when the people were being pursued by the Egyptians, Hashem resorted to the overt miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea. Why did He not just simply have them pick up their weapons and fight? True, they were not soldiers, but the miracle of their vanquishing the Egyptians using conventional warfare was definitely less overt than splitting the sea. Why did Hashem have to call such attention to the nation?

The **Chasam Sofer** derives an important principle concerning our moral behavior. *Mi'derech ha'mussar*, from the point of ethical correctness, it was inappropriate for the Jewish people who had established residence in Egypt for 210 years to personally raise up their weapons and fight their "benefactors." This is the reason that the Torah instructs us not to hate an Egyptian, for "a well from which one drinks water, he should not throw stones." When one derives benefits from another fellow – regardless of its nature and the benefactor's motivation – he still owes him.

This is truly a powerful statement. One would think that after 210 years of slavery, the Jews had repaid the Egyptians a thousand fold for being their host country. Apparently, we view *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, from a different vantage point. We separate the good from the bad. True, the Egyptians were a cruel, abominable and morally bankrupt nation, who treated us in the most reprehensible manner. This allows us even more reason to despise them and to want absolutely nothing to do with them. Jews, however, answer to a different calling. We understand that if someone benefits us, we owe him. Hashem will deal with the rest – his attitude, motivation and ill-treatment. We have to be grateful for their hospitality. Leave the punishment to Hashem. Otherwise, we are no different than the pagans and despots who have cruelly mistreated us throughout the millennia.