

They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped in Kivros Hataavah. They journeyed from Kivros Hataavah and encamped in Chatzeiros. They journeyed from Chatzeiros and encamped in Rismah. They journeyed from Rismah and encamped in Rimmon-Peretz. They journeyed from Rimmon-Peretz and encamped in Livnah. (33:16-20)

The commentators, each in his own inimitable manner, suggest that the names of the various encampments are allusions to the various shortcomings, or consequences to inappropriate behavior, manifest by the Jewish nation during their trek through the Wilderness. *Rashi* interprets these places as referring to specific sins committed by the people. The *Chasam Sofer* indicates that the above names are consequences, resulting from distancing oneself from Torah study.

The *Talmud Succah* 52b makes a formidable statement: *Yitzro shel adam misgaber alav b'chol yom u'mevakeish l'ha'miso*, "A man's evil inclination threatens every day to overpower him, and seeks to kill him: and, if not for Hashem, Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it." Man's evil inclination is very powerful. Hashem knows this. He, therefore, gave us the antidote to the *yetzer hara's* poison. *Im paga bach menuval zeh, mosh'cheihu l'bais ha'medrash*, "If this revolting one (the evil inclination) engages you and attempts to entice you to sin, draw him into the study hall." The Torah is the antidote that protects us from the *yetzer hara's* wiles.

One who removes himself from the Torah, who abandons it, has no protection from the cunning of the evil inclination. "They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sinai..." The nation moved away from the source of Torah; they left Sinai, not only geographically, but also from a spiritual vantage point. Sinai, the Revelation and the Torah were no longer crucial parts of their lives. They would learn when they had "time." Regrettably, they had no time. Such an attitude spurs disdain for Torah. The individual will end up "encamping" in *Kivros HaTaavah*, Graves of Lust. Desires, passions, lusting for that which is inappropriate and downright immoral is just the beginning. It starts with one's desires, but he does not act upon his passions at first. They remain in his heart and mind, but not for long. Soon, one moves on to *Chatzeiros*. A *chatzeir* is an unguarded field/courtyard, symbolizing a place where one no longer has inhibitions. All systems are "go," and the earlier desires now become wanton, immoral actions.

Unfortunately, it does not stop in *chatzeiros*. Unbridled sinful behavior requires justification. It must be legitimated. How does one validate activities which the Torah prohibits? How does one undermine the authority of the Torah and its interpreters, our saintly, spiritual leaders? One first impugns the integrity of the rabbis, and, ultimately, he denies the validity of the Torah. He is now encamped in Rismah – as in *gachalei resamim*, coals of juniper, which refers to slandering the rabbis and disputing the Torah, vilifying those who support it. This is Rismah.

Once the floodgates have been breached, sin flows as *Rimmon Peretz*, the seeds of a pomegranate. Countless infractions, a multitude of sins, are to be expected from one who has no respect for authority. He is at the mercy of his passions, and we all know where this will lead him. Yes, to Livnah, the fires of *Gehinnom*, Purgatory, will be *melaben*, purge him of his transgressions. He has gone too far. He has reached the end of the line. He must now suffer the consequences of a life of promise that had gone sour when he abandoned the Torah.