

## They journeyed from the Mountain of Hashem a three-day distance. (10:33)

In his commentary to *pasuk* 35, *Va'yehi binsoa haAron* "When the Ark would journey," *Ramban* cites a *Midrash* which takes a dim view of *Klal Yisrael's* first journey away from *Har Sinai*. The *Midrash* states that the nation left the mountain, *K'tinok ha'boreiach mi'bais ha'sefer*, "Like a child running away from school," happy to leave that holy place – in case Hashem had plans for giving them more *mitzvos* to perform. While they followed Hashem's instructions concerning their journey, their attitude in leaving apparently left something to be desired.

**Horav Aizik Sher, zl**, wonders what part of *Chazal's* statement underscores their actual failing: that they acted like children; or that they ran away from school? He posits that, in *Slabodka* (where he was *Rosh Yeshivah*), they claimed it was their childish behavior which was the reason for their later punishment. At *Har Sinai*, *Klal Yisrael* achieved unprecedented spiritual elevation. The Heavens opened up, and the nation was privy to an unparalleled Divine Revelation. The loftiness of the experience, the sublimity of the event, was without peer. They reached the level of *Adam HaRishon*, Primordial Man, prior to the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge. Yet, soon after, they were able to act as children; to complain about food; to be indignant concerning the morals imposed upon them. How does an adult fall to the level of a child? How does one scale the mountain, reach its apex – then fall into the dirt – and debase himself?

If they were able to act so, it is an indication that there had never been an "adult" relationship, their experience at *Sinai* had been impugned. We derive from here that one may be privy to the most earth-shattering experience, to a Revelation that stuns and boggles the mind, but if it does not transform him – it is a waste. One goes to *shul* – but leaves as soon as possible – not because he has to, but because he wants to. He simply has no interest in remaining in *shul* too long. One attends a lecture, but has one foot out the door before the lecturer concludes his last words, demonstrating that the lecture had done nothing for him. Attendance at a function is determined by the manner in which one leaves. Does he want more – or does he just want to escape?

*Rav Moshe Toledano* quotes a story he heard from the *Mashgiach* in the *yeshivah* in *Modiin Illit*. The custom in *yeshivos* in *Eretz Yisrael* is that, following the Festival of *Shavuos*, during which there is increased diligence in Torah study and prayer services which begin at sunrise, and includes thousands of Jews together supplicating Hashem as one, a weekend to return home for some rest and relaxation is granted. That year, *Shavuos* ended on Wednesday, so the students would normally leave on Thursday for a long weekend. This *yeshivah* asked the students not to leave before Friday. The extra day should be spent in *yeshivah*. Most students complied with the *Mashgiach's* request – except for one – who said that he was remaining for *Shabbos*.

The *Mashgiach* was understandably surprised – especially since the student had relatives from America who had come to visit. I think the young man's rationale for staying in the *yeshivah* is what

gives this story greater meaning. He said, "Today, when one attends a wedding, it is difficult to distinguish between the *chassan*, groom, and the guests (who are his age). Everybody wears a nice suit, a fancy shirt and tie, an impressive hat (some go more to be seen than to participate), and shiny new shoes. How does one distinguish who is the *chassan* and who are the guests? The answer is simple: The one who is around at the end of the wedding, the "last man standing": he is the *chassan*. The guests leave when they can. The *chassan* remains, because it is his *simchah*, celebration. I just experienced a *Shavuos* in which I celebrated and rejoiced with the Torah as a *chassan* with his *kallah*, bride. If I am the *chassan*, I want to remain in the *yeshivah* and continue the celebration."

Perhaps the next time we are about to leave *shul* in a rush, without waiting for the last *Kaddish*, this story will provide a deterrent.