

Moshe caused Bnei Yisrael to journey from the Yam Suf...they went for a three day period in the wilderness, but they did not find water. (15:22)

Moshe had to force the people to leave the *Yam Suf*. Had it been up to *Klal Yisrael*, they would have remained there gathering up the immense spoils of the Egyptian army. *Chazal* tell us that the Egyptians, assured of their impending victory over the Jews, bedecked their horses with every type of jewelry, gold and silver. After it was all over, the Jews had a "difficult" time coping with the enormous wealth that was now theirs for the taking. As a result, they refused to leave. Their behavior is mind-boggling! It is understandable that people seek wealth for a number of reasons. First, there is envy. It is difficult to tolerate your friends' wealth when you are just managing financially. Second, money gives one access to material pleasures that would otherwise be unattainable. No bills to pay, a beautiful home, a *new* car, expensive clothes and exotic trips, are but a few of the luxuries one can acquire with money. Certainly, this alone would be a reason for seeking wealth. While these reasons are not necessarily the *Torah* orientation, they at least give us some rationale for the behavior manifest by those that are driven towards material excess.

This brings us to *Klal Yisrael* at the shores of the *Yam Suf*. What provoked them to seek so much wealth? What drove them to resist leaving the area, to begin their ascent to *Eretz Yisrael*? Whom did they envy? All of them had come from the same place - with nothing. No individual was better off financially than the next one. Furthermore, what were they going to do with their money? Food came from Heaven, water from the well of Miriam; what would they have wanted to purchase in the desert? Their clothes remained the same for forty years. Why were they so obsessed with wealth?

Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita, addresses these questions. He believes that there is no rationale for the behavior exhibited by *Klal Yisrael*. A willingness to denigrate oneself for the sake of money, especially when that money could not help them, did not apply at *Krias Yam Suf*. We must, therefore, suggest that there really is no rationalization that validates their behavior. A *taavah*, desire, for money under such circumstances is a form of *machlas ha'nefesh*, quasi-spiritual deficiency, that plagues people. It is irrational. *Klal Yisrael's* desire to gather riches transcended the rational. They had nothing to gain but money - which under their present conditions was totally superfluous. The fact that Moshe had to force *Klal Yisrael* to leave the area of the *Yam Suf* indicates how far this sickness had progressed.

After all is said and done, we derive from here that *taavas ha'mamon*, an irrational desire for money, is a sickness. This can explain the behavior of those who hoard their wealth, although they either have no one with whom to share it with, or an excess that will go around many times over. They literally refuse to benefit others. Only one who understands that our worldly goods do not leave with us -- that it is our good deeds that are our real possessions -- shares his wealth with those not as fortunate as he. Hopefully, this realization will come before it is too late.