

"And Yehoshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting and he said to Moshe, 'The sound of battle is in the camp.' He said, 'Not a sound shouting strength, nor a sound shouting weakness; a sound of distress I do hear.'" (32:17,18)

In the *Yerushalmi, Taanis 4, Chazal* cite the dialogue that ensued between Moshe and Yehoshua. When Yehoshua came to Moshe and related the ambiguous sounds he was hearing from the camp, Moshe replied, "Is not he (Yehoshua) who will one day lead a nation of 600,000 Jews able to discern between the various sounds?" *Chazal* seem to imply that Moshe was impatient with Yehoshua's inability to perceive the source of these sounds. Was Moshe criticizing Yehoshua for not accurately distinguishing the "type" of sounds emanating from the camp? After all, the camp was far from the mountain.

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., offers a profound insight into this dialogue. Yehoshua, undoubtedly, knew the implications of the raucous sound which stemmed forth from the camp. He felt the sounds that accompanied their licentious behavior indicated a complete spiritual breakdown. *Bnei Yisrael* were apparently rebelling against Hashem. Moshe *Rabbeinu's* experience as a leader offered him a different perspective. He understood the source of this sound. He perceived that *Bnei Yisrael* were not drunk from joy; rather, they were drunk from sorrow. As a reflection of their fear of being abandoned by Moshe and rejected by Hashem, they lapsed into a depressive state. People respond to depression in various ways. Some retreat into seclusion and cry all day, while others go to the other extreme -- they negate all inhibitions, acting like complete animals.

Theirs was not a celebration of revolt against the Almighty. To the contrary, *Bnei Yisrael's* celebration was an indication of severe melancholia. Moshe *Rabbeinu* cautioned Yehoshua that a leader must be able to determine why his flock is acting in an unusual manner; what is the source of their objectionable behavior? Were they resisting authority, or were they reacting to a deep rooted feeling of rejection? If they were responding to internal pain and anguish, there was still hope that when they could think clearly, they would repent and return to Hashem.