

## In the third month from the exodus of Bnei Yisrael from the land of Egypt... they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. (19:1)

*Chazal (Midrash)* ask why Hashem did not give the Torah to the Jewish People immediately upon their departure from Egypt. Why was it necessary to wait seven weeks for this seminal event to take place? They cite a parable comparing the Jewish people to a young prince who had been ill and was weakened from his illness. Once he had recuperated, his father said, "I will allow him to rest for a while to recoup his strength, and then I will send him back to *cheder*." *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt flawed by the spiritual blemishes to which they had become victim during the over two centuries of slavery. Hashem said, "I will wait and allow them to recuperate from their spiritual ills and gather their strength before I give them the Torah."

A beautiful and meaningful *Midrash* addresses the requisite preparation one needs in order to accept the Torah into his life. The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, wonders why the Torah, which heals all spiritual ills, could not have initiated their cure. It works for everyone (who takes it sincerely). Why should it not have been a sufficient therapy for *Klal Yisrael*? The *Rebbe* offers a profound explanation which illuminates why, indeed, some begin their return to observance with Torah study and, alas, do not sufficiently change their ways to the point that they become bona-fide observant Jews. A sick person must be willing to acknowledge and accept his deficiencies. One who is ill, but does not realize it, will not be cured, because he will not take the medicine seriously. *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt with a heavy load of spiritual and moral baggage. Living for two hundred and ten years enslaved by cruel taskmasters, relegated to an environment that exemplified moral profligacy at its nadir, can tarnish a person's mind and emotions to the point that he begins to believe that this is the way one should live. He is so flawed that he does not even know that he is filled with blemishes. If one does not realize that he is sick, he will not be healed. The nascent Jewish People needed those seven weeks to get to know themselves, to see the contrast between the degree to which they had descended and the spiritual apex to which they should aspire. They were ready; the Torah could become their elixir for life.

Recognizing one's true motivations for spiritual growth makes a world of difference in terms of the success he achieves. Someone who is unable to admit to himself that he is acting out due to a deficiency in his self-esteem, a desire for recognition, a way to get attention, will be flawed – not only in his observance – but in everything that he does. Indeed, accepting one's shortcomings can be a catalyst for adopting an emotionally healthier lifestyle which will lead to successful spiritual growth.