



REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

Lofty Levels

As we read the *parashah*, it is striking to note the pace at which *Am Yisrael* descends from their exalted level of the Har Sinai experience, to crying out and expressing such a base desire for meat. How are we to understand this abrupt shift? As we explore the answer, we will discover a fundamental perspective in learning Chumash, as well as a key mindset for positive spiritual growth.

Rav Bloch *zt"l* in *Shiurei Da'at* shares a story that, although not found in a written source, is known to be of reliable origin. Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt"l* was asked if he thought that had his rebbe, the Vilna Gaon, would have been an Amora had he lived in the times of the Amoraim. Rav Chaim responded, "Had the Gra lived a thousand more years he would not have even reached the heels of an Amora, perhaps, he would have reached the level of the *Ramban*." If the Gra, a spiritual Torah giant, would not have been on the level of an Amora, we cannot even comprehend the lofty level

of the generation that stood at Har Sinai!

Rav Broide *zt"l* in *San Derech* remarks that Hashem treats the actions of biblical personalities as if with a magnifying glass, enlarging each behavior and thought to the highest proportions. Hashem holds righteous people to a higher standard and enacts consequences swiftly. Thus, chapter 11 begins, "*Vayehi ha'am ke'mitonenim ra be'aznei Hashem* - The nation was as complainers and it was evil in the ears of Hashem." (*Bamidbar 11:1*) Rashi understands "the nation" as the wicked ones among the people. The Midrash in the *Yalkut* adds that these people did not even sin a complete sin; the verse tells us they were "like complainers"! Rav Broide explains that this group was only a small segment of the population, yet they were being judged by an exacting standard.

Rav Yehudah Leib Chasman *zt"l* in *Ohr Yahel* addresses the continuation of the story, where we see not only the "nation" (i.e. the wicked among them) crying out to Hashem, but also Bnei Yisrael, who were considered the righteous ones among the people. Learning from the juxtaposition between the laws of the Sotah woman and the Nazirite, Chazal teach that one who sees a person in a degraded state, must enact precautions to prevent their own downfall. Even the most righteous person may experience a spiritual decline and can be drawn to the baser parts of this world.

This section teaches us that if people who were on such an exalted level can cry out for mortal pleasures, we too must be careful to protect ourselves from unholy influences. ■

Unique opportunity to buy/rent property in Neve Daniel

After years without a real estate market, K.Yabne Ltd offers unique and exclusive properties in the closest yishuv to Jerusalem in Gush Etzion.

Contact Keren 0544 874 122