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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
BEHALOSCHA

# בְּחֻלּוֹתַי

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
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## CHERISHED OR CHEAP?

The time had come for *Bnei Yisroel* to leave *Har Sinai*. Uncharacteristically, the *Passuk*<sup>1</sup> refers to the mountain they left as *Har Hashem*, “the Mount of G-d,” and not by its more commonly known name, *Har Sinai*. Ramban<sup>2</sup> quotes the *Medrash* that explains that when *Klal Yisroel* left *Har Sinai*, they left, “Like a child running away from study.” They left because the mountain was the mountain of G-d and they did not want any more Torah and *Mitzvos*!

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz<sup>3</sup> (1873-1936) asks that the *Bnei Yisroel* did not leave of their own volition - whenever the Jewish nation travelled in the desert, they travelled by the word of Hashem. Hashem told them when to go, and Hashem told then when to stop. Why, then, are they being blamed for leaving *Har Sinai*? He explains that while it may be true they were told to leave, but they were happy to oblige. Their pace was slightly quicker than typical and reflected their feelings of relief and joy that they can finally leave *Har Hashem*. While, to an observer, there may have been an insignificant difference in their pace, but their attitude toward Hashem and the *Mitzvos* spoke volumes. That is why they were classified as ‘a child running from school.’ This wasn’t just an epithet - the Ramban suggests that perhaps their glee in leaving *Har Sinai* was the catalyst for them not immediately entering Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Yeruchem points out that these were the same people who had willingly asked for the Torah, “We will do, and we will hear!” they exclaimed, which is understood to mean that they were willing to do whatever Hashem asks, knowing that Hashem had their best interests in mind.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, they didn’t fully appreciate the importance of the *Mitzvos*. Though the feeling must have been subtle, nevertheless, it had repercussions.

Whatever *Mitzvah* it may be, our attitude towards *Mitzvos* is a big deal. Our patience or impatience regarding specific *Mitzvos* is a good barometer that shows our true feelings towards that particular *Mitzvah*. Am I taking off my *Tefillin* before the last *Kaddish* in *Shacharis*? Do I sigh when someone asks me for *Tzedakah*? Am I apathetic to all of the *Mitzvah* opportunities that are around me? While, to the onlooker, it may appear to be an insignificant difference, to Hashem it speaks volumes.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The first step in understanding the importance of *Mitzvos* is understanding ourselves. In order to develop sensitivity to the value of a *Mitzvah*, we first have to determine how we truly feel about following Hashem’s commandments.

We may tend to think, “Of course I value *Mitzvos*! I live a religious lifestyle, I don’t indulge in so many things, isn’t my entire life centered around *Mitzvos*? This is not an area that I need to work on.”

However, there is a good test to see whether or not we truly value the *Mitzvos* that we do, or if we have unfortunately fallen into habit when it comes to serving Hashem.

Take a moment to recall a standard day - were there any moments that we looked forward to doing a *Mitzvah*? If we viewed *Mitzvos* as priceless opportunities, one would expect many such moments in one’s life.

When we did a *Mitzvah*, was it done with excitement? Boredom? Not even thinking about it?

By truly understanding where we are in relationship to *Mitzvos*, we give ourselves the opportunity to honestly grow.

1 *Bamidbar* 10:33

2 *Bamidbar* 10:35. s.v. ויהי בנסוע

3 *Daas Torah Bamidbar* 10:33 s.v. ויסעו מהר

4 *Shabbos* 88a-88b, Rashi *ibid.* s.v. דסיגין בשלימותא

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# ONE SMALL MISSTEP

Many years ago, two students came to the yeshiva of the Chasam Sofer, Rav Moshe Sofer (1762-1839) in Pressburg, Hungary to take the entrance exam given by the Chasam Sofer himself.

It was right after *Sukkos*, just a few days before yeshiva was about to begin. Both boys had been preparing for this event, as joining the yeshiva would mean the ability to learn from the Chasam Sofer, one of the greatest lights of the generation. This was an undertaking that was not taken lightly, and though nervous, the boys felt that they had adequately prepared for the coming test.

One after the other, the boys sat with the Chasam Sofer, and discussed many different areas in the Gemara. After spending much time with the boys, the Chasam Sofer informed one boy that he was welcome in yeshiva, the other one, sadly, had not made it through the exam. Those who were near enough to overhear were confused. To their ears it did not appear that one boy excelled any more than the other. Why then, didn't the Chasam Sofer accept both of them?

The Chasam Sofer replied, "I will explain, because there is a lesson to be learned here. I noticed the two boys as they made their way into the building. There was some *Schach* on the ground from one of the *Sukkahs* that had just been taken down. One of the young men assiduously avoided stepping on the *Schach* while the other stepped on the *Schach* as if he were walking on the sidewalk.

"I maintain," continued the Chasam Sofer, "that one who can step on *Schach* just two days after *Sukkos* does not have the proper sensitivity to the special and unique place that *Mitzvos* have. Unfortunately, I cannot have a person like that in this yeshiva!"

*\*Adapted from "The Footsteps of the Maggid" by Rabbi Krohn*

**One who can step on *Schach* just two days after *Sukkos* does not have the proper sensitivity to the special and unique place that *Mitzvos* have.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- A single *Mitzvah* is so amazing, that it is worthwhile for Hashem to give a person many opportunities for failure, just for the possibility of doing a *Mitzvah Lishmah*.<sup>1</sup>
- Because of the great value of *Mitzvos*, the earlier generations would do what they can to obligate themselves in additional *Mitzvos*!<sup>2</sup>
- One's negative attitude towards *Mitzvos* will grow and grow, unless a person recognizes it, and works to remove that feeling.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rambam on Makkos 3:17*

<sup>2</sup> *Gittin 81a*

<sup>3</sup> *Chiddushei HaLev Devarim 29:17-19*