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**RABBI WEIN'S
WEEKLY
BLOG**



In many respects this is the saddest chapter that appears in the Torah. The Jewish people having successfully traveling from Egyptian slavery and arriving at Mount Sinai and their accepting the sacredness of God's Torah, then embarked on the building of the Mishkan. They were able to successfully complete that project as well, and now were ready to undertake the final mission that they were charged with in the desert of Sinai – entry into the land of Israel, its conquest and settlement. And here on the threshold of victory and fulfillment, the whole project begins to unravel. Moshe's father-in-law, Yitro, deserts them for certain reasons, which the text of the Torah does not expand upon. Then do people complain about the food – miraculous, as it was – that they eat in the desert and they complain about God and naturally about Moshe as well. When people are in a bad mood, there is no way that one can satisfy them, no matter what. We all know that if we come home after a bad day at the office and a terrible commute, and enter our homes in such a mood, than whatever delicious dinner may have been prepared for us, it taste like ashes in our mouth. We are always prisoners of our psyche. The Jewish people were afraid of having to enter the land of

Israel and somehow building their nation state on their own, even though they are promised – and in fact guaranteed – divine aid in so doing. They are in a bad mood, so the food is no good and Moshe appears to them to be the wrong man for the wrong job.

The mood eventually spreads even to the brother and sister of Moshe. Inexplicably, his beloved sister Miriam who saved him from the ravages of the Nile River when he was an infant and who rallied the women of Israel to his leadership after the miracle of the splitting of the sea at Yam Suf, now speaks critically about him and his personal and intimate life. His brother Aharon who came out of Egypt to greet and strengthen him at the beginning of his mission to free the Jewish people from the bondage of Egypt, now also joins Miriam in criticism. They are reflective of the mood of the people, and when such a mood exists nothing is good and no one is above criticism no matter how unjustified that criticism may be. And this mood will eventually result in the debacle of the spies that will dissuade the Jewish people from even attempting to fulfill their God-given mission of settling in the Land of Israel. There really is no accounting for human moods. In fact, the great struggle of life in many respects is simply to overcome the mood that is thrust upon us. Most times these moods are caused by external frustrations and not really by things of importance. The great men of

the Chasidic and Mussar movements attempted to create mechanisms by which the followers would be able to overcome such moodiness, depression and frustration. Judaism demands, therefore, the spirit of optimism and of inner tranquility, satisfaction and true happiness with one's situation and circumstances. This is no easy task, but all of us know that life demands it of us. 🍷