

Moshe addresses Bnei Yisroel on the bank of the Yardein.

**אַחַד עָשָׂר יוֹם מִחֶרֶב דֶּרֶךְ הַר־שֵׁעִיר עַד קַדְשׁ בַּרְנֵעַ:**

“It is eleven days from Chorev, the pathway of Mount Seir, until Kadesh-Barnea.” (Devarim 1:2).

Chorev refers to Har Sinai. Why does the Torah or Moshe use “Chorev” and not “Har Sinai?” This pasuk is pointed out by the Torah as clear reproof to the Bnei Yisroel that it would have taken just eleven days from when leaving Har Sinai to reach the southern border of the Land. As this was the new generation, not guilty of the spying incident, why did the Torah point this out? Also, why did the Torah or Moshe point out the eleven days?

Gemara Manachos 65a says, *Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai argued with the Boethusians (and other non-Perushim) about Shavuos. They argued Shavuos is always Sunday because Moshe loved Bnei Yisroel and he wanted there to be a two-day holiday. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai argued it falls out on the 50<sup>th</sup> day from the second day of Pesach and said: “Fool! You think because Moshe loved the Bnei Yisroel he can change the Torah? How come it can take eleven days to travel to the Land but it actually took forty-years? He, obviously, cannot go against the Torah even if he loved the Bnei Yisroel.”*

Midrash interprets, *for the forty days that Moshe was on Har Sinai, Bnei Yisroel, in the last eleven days, already descended into quarreling, worry, and rebellion to start traveling.*

Onkelos interprets as follows: *These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Yisroel on the other side of the Yardein [...] “it is eleven days...” Then Moshe addressed them again about their journeys (Bamidbar 1:6).*

Rashi, Ibin Ezra, Rabbeinu Bachya, and Chizkuni all say, *these words are part of the Moshe’s reproof.*

Rash also says, *Moshe was giving Bnei Yisroel tochacha. ‘See what you brought out that it takes eleven days but you made it an extra 38 years?’ To such an extent did the Shechina exert itself to bring the nation to the Land but because of the sins it delayed the travels.*

Ibin Ezra also learns that *the spies came up through Kadesh-Barnea. When Hashem banished them to wander, no new mitzvoos were given until the fortieth year.*

Chizkuni says, *some of these speeches were said during the eleven-day march [less the month spent in Kovros Hataavah] from Har Sinai to Kadesh where the spies were dispatched. No new mitzvoos were given until the last of the previous generation died out. Further, it actually took only four days to travel the distance, because the nation waited seven of those days for Miriam.*

Ramban points out, *the eleven days was just to reach Kadesh. From there they would have gone through Sichon and Og and Amor, just as they did. However, before they sinned, they turned south "back to travel by way of the Yam Suf." (Devarim 1:40).*

Rabbeinu Bachya says, *while it takes eleven days, the people actually did it in three. Therefore, so much of their delays were because of their own sins.*

"It is eleven days." This is the Torah giving the context before Moshe speaks. The Torah, grammatically, should have used the wording *בְּאַחַד עָשָׂר* "in eleven days." Instead, it says "eleven days" stating it is an absolute. Foremost, even though thirty-eight years passed—it is a mere eleven days from Har Sinai. Even though much has happened, the instruction Moshe is about to give is right near Har Sinai. It is not a new Torah given thirty-eight years later, with thirty-eight years of retrospective, revision, and thought. This is the same Torah as given on Har Sinai.

The Torah gives this five pasuk preamble. Moshe does not speak until pasuk 6. "These are the words that Moshe spoke (Ibid 1:1) .... saying (Ibid 1:5)." The words of Moshe then follow. Here, the Torah is giving the context and mussar. The journey is only eleven days. It could have taken Bnei Yisroel even less, three days, with Hashem swiftening their pace. The remaining years and days were all for other purposes; delays caused by their own conduct. The time spent from leaving Mitzrayim to Har Sinai and the encampment by Har Sinai were all necessary. This was part of the travel plans. Afterwards, it should have taken eleven days. As to the encampment times and wars—for example, there were delays when Amalek attacked, the wars with Sichon, Og, and Amor—consideration is given. Amalek attacked before Har Sinai. The other wars may never have occurred if not for the delay in years. A nation just fourteen months from the

wonders of leaving the Land of Mitzrayim would likely not have been challenged. Further, they perhaps were challenged because of their complaining and sins. The forty days waiting for the spies was also unnecessary. Therefore, after breaking camp from Har Sinai, it should have been eleven days to reach Kadesh-Barnea. Then the conquering would begin with the city-states on the eastern bank of the Yardein or directly in the Land itself.

The eleven days is also given for another context. This also proves where the Yam Suf crossing site was. It takes eleven days from Har Sinai to Kadesh, by way of Mount Seir. That is calculated at 222 miles. A nation traveling at a normal pace, while carrying the Mishkan, and stopping for one or two Shabbasos (at least one, possibly two), is a pace of 25 miles a day. Therefore, when a nation “hurries,” it would not take them seven days (at that time there was no Laws of Shabbos) to only travel 86 miles to the near Yam Suf fork. Instead, it is much more logical that they traveled 230 miles, or 32 miles a day when hurrying, to the farther Yam Suf fork. (See Maamarei Mordechai on Parshas Beshalach – Bonus Shtikel – 5782 for further discussion).

“From Chorev.” Chorev is Har Sinai. “Hashem, our Lord, spoke to us in Chorev, saying, ‘You have stayed long enough at this mountain.’” (Ibid 1:6). Hashem said this when Yisroel was camping by Har Sinai. Chorev is the proper name for the desert area where Har Sinai stands. “The way of Har Seir.” Bnei Yisroel was to pass Esav on Har Seir and see Esav’s inheritance. Then they were to pass it and enter into the Land, for their own inheritance.

“Until Kadesh-Barnea.” The traveling would be *until* Kadesh. After that, time would be spent conquering the Land. “Kadesh-Barnea.” The place was called “Kadesh” in one view because of the sanctification of Hashem’s name from the miracle of the water coming from the rock. Hashem gave the Bnei Yisroel the lesson of Kadesh of having water come from a rock by use of simple speech. The kiddush Hashem still occurred through Moshe hitting the rock. If not for the sins of Bnei Yisroel, and the excess wandering, it could be that Miriam would not have died and there would be water. It could also be that if not for their sins, Miriam would still be alive regardless of recaching it in eleven days

or forty years. It would also be the original generation that arrived at Kadesh—as they would not have died out in the desert and they did not need a renewed kiddush Hashem demonstration as they remembered the Yam Suf crossing. That is why it is Kadesh-Barnea. Potential here was for either Banea—reaching this place in eleven days as scheduled. Or Kadesh—needing the kiddush Hashem after forty years of wandering.

The Torah is giving the context that one's path through life has a set course. It is only the traveler's conduct that can alter that timeline and direction—one way or the other.