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יב. **אִיכָה**. [מהו "איכה"? אלא נחלקו בדבר] רבי יודה ורבי נחמיה: רבי יודה אומר: אין לשון "איכה" אלא לשון תוכחה, ה"פ דתימר [כמו שנאמר]: "איכה תאמרו חכמים אנהנו" [ירמיה ח' ח'], רבי נחמיה אומר: אין לשון "איכה" אלא לשון קינה, ה"פ דתימר: "איכה ישבה כדר" [איכה א' א']. [מדרש הגדול]

טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם. [מה היו עושים לו. ישראל? אלא אם] הקדים משה לצאת [בבקר מאהל] אֶמְרוּ: [ראו] בן עמרם שהקדים לצאת ללקט [מן המן] את הנס [המשבח]. [ואם] אחר לצאת אֶמְרוּ: ראו בן עמרם שאכל ושתה וישן לו. הלך באמצע - אֶמְרוּ: ראו בן עמרם מהלך באמצע [שנצטרך לעמד בפניו]. הלך לצדין - אֶמְרוּ: ראו בן עמרם מהלך לצדין, כדי שלא נעמד מפניו, מצוה קלה שבידינו הוא מבקש לעקר ממנו, ואיזו? זו עמידת זקן, אֶמְרָה לָהֶם ["איכה אשא וגו' טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם"!]. עשיתי כך וכך ולא קבלתם עליכם [ולא הוטב בעיניכם], עשיתי כך וכך ולא קבלתם עליכם [ועוד ה"ה לקם טרוניות על הדבר] [עיי' רש"י]. [מדרש תנאים]

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ט. **בַּעַת הַחֹמָא**. באיזו עת? רבי יוחנן אומר: בעת [בזמנו של] יתרו, מניין? שכן כתיב: "כי כבר ממך

הדבר לא תוכל עשהו לבדך"
[שמות י"ח י"ח], רבי חייא אומר:
בעת מתאוננים, שנאמר: "לא
אוכל אנכי לבדי לשאת את כל
העם הזה כי כבר ממני" [במדבר
י"א י"ד]. [דברים רבה פרק א' י']

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וַיְהִי כִנְסַע הָאָרֶץ - So it was, when the ark set out. We are suddenly confronted with the *parashah* bracketed by the inverted nuns. The letters are inverted because what follows is a story which inverted our historical process. Alas, the *parashah* is really one sad tale which changes Jewish history completely. The *parashah* of וַיְהִי כִנְסַע הָאָרֶץ did not seem misplaced before the great reversal took place, before the Jews alienated God, before they fell from Him, before they had doubts and sent the spies. Indeed, it was the continuation of the great story of the final, triumphal messianic march into the Land of Israel, which was supposed to take place approximately 3,500 years ago. There would have been no need for an inverted nun at the beginning and an inverted nun at the end. The verse would have been the climax of the whole story, not an inversion. Jewish history would have taken a different course. Had Moses entered the Land of Israel, our history would never have been taken from us. The messianic era would have commenced with the conquest of the Land of Israel by Moses. (*Vision and Leadership*, pp. 166, 171)

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לָמָּה הִרְעֵתָ לְעַבְדְּךָ - Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Moses had gone through many crises, living through many distressful experiences and moments. Worst of all was the Golden Calf, which threatened to terminate the very relationship between God and Israel. Yet he never panicked, never complained, never acted out of black despair. Steadfastly and heroically he petitioned the Almighty for forgiveness, defending the people, arguing their case like an attorney in court. Our Rabbis describe this by way of a metaphor, emphasizing the element of strength and boldness. *Moses took hold of the Holy One, Blessed be He, like a man who seizes his fellow by his garment, and he said to Him: Sovereign of the Universe, I will not let You go until You forgive and pardon them (Berachos 32a).*

Yet in Beha'alo'secha, instead of defending the people, Moses began to complain, almost accusing them. *Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in Your eyes that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that You say to me, "Carry them in your bosom as the nurse carries the suckling," to the Land You promised their forefathers? (verses 11-12).*

Why did Moses now feel so discouraged? Why didn't he offer prayers for the people, as was his practice in earlier situations of this kind? The people had committed no murder, no sexual promiscuity, no robbery—they were simply overcome by desire and they wept. They did not yell or throw stones at Moses as they had in other situations. They were not threatening anyone. They simply desired, a fact enshrined in the name given to the place, Kivros Hata'avah.

Moses heard the people weeping with their families, each one at the entrance to his tent. The Lord became very angry, and Moses considered it evil (verse 10). For the first time, Moses sees the people's actions as evil. He is no longer their defense attorney. This brought the great march to an end. The vision of the Messiah, of the Land of Israel, of redemption, became distant, like a star on a mysterious horizon. It twinkled, but the road suddenly became almost endless.

Why does Moses now speak out of the depths of resignation and condemn the people? Why did he pray for them after the Golden Calf but not now?

Raw's Chumash Bamidbar
ps 84, 85

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כפויי טובה דכתיב (במדבר כא, ה) ונפשנו קצה

בלחם הקלוקל בני כפויי טובה דכתיב (בראשית ג, יב) האשה אשר נתתה עמדי היא נתנה לי מן העץ ואוכל

The Gemara explains that Moses calls the Jewish people ingrates, as it is written that the Jewish people spoke disparagingly of the manna: "And our soul loathes this light bread" (Numbers 21:5), despite the fact it was the highest-quality food. Moses further called them children of ingrates, as it is written that after sinning and eating from the tree of knowledge, Adam said: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). *Avoda Zara 5b*

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ויהי אמן את־הדסה היא אסתר בת־דוד

He was foster father to Hadassah—that is, Esther—his uncle's daughter *Esther 2:7*