**Part I. Praying and complaining by the seaside**

**Paragraph 1**

**Basic question: how could the תורה say these people were davening to ה' just as it tells us that they were rejecting His having saved them?**

- רמב"ן starts off by stating simply that it is illogical to assume that people who were davening to ה' would lash out at His having saved them, and say it would have been better had He not redeemed them.

**Answer #1: Different groups of people** (some were davening to ה', while others were denying Him)

- Therefore, רמב"ן explains that there were different groups of people amongst the בני ישראל:

- [This also makes sense regardless of the פסוקים; we are talking about millions of people here. It is important to remember that they obviously all wouldn’t be on the exact same level of righteousness].

 - Group A) – those that davened to ה' here, and who trusted in Him

 - Group B) – those that all along had been denying ה'’s salvation and His נביא

 - That’s why the פסוק reiterates again that the בני ישראל were crying out to ה'.

 - In accordance with this, the פסוקים (and חז"ל working off of them) refer to Group A) as “בני ישראל,” and Group B) as “העם.”

 - [From רמב"ן’s language, it seems clear that the “בני ישראל” were the individuals, while the “עם” was the majority of the people].

 - [This fits with רמב"ן’s general approach that the בני ישראל in מצרים were on a very low level].

**Paragraph 2**

- רמב"ן now turns to what they were really complaining about:

 - The major issue the people had was with the journeying into the dangerous, barren מדבר, and they were upset about this even before פרעה’s pursuit.

- [This will explain numerous other passages about the בני ישראל in the early stages of the מדבר in the רמב"ן’s perspective. For one example, see his explanation (versus that of רש"י’s, and also versus that of ראב"ע’s) about the complaint before the מן in טז:ב below].

 - In fact, they might have already been complaining about this beforehand, as soon as they turned towards the מדבר.

- Tying this back even earlier, רמב"ן says that this is what was going on in the beginning of the פרשה — they saw no good option before them: either death at the hands of the פלשתים, or else journeying into the dangerous, barren desert.

**Answer #2: Believed in ה', but not in משה רבינו** (thus, davened for protection, but complained to משה רבינו about his taking them out of מצרים)

- רמב"ן then suggests that the people may not have been denying ה' — no, they davened to Him; rather, they were denying משה רבינו’s role as His agent.

 - How could they deny משה רבינו’s divinely ordained status — they witnessed the amazing miracles he wrought!

 - a) they thought that perhaps he had worked these wonders through some sort of wisdom (such as magic)

- b) they thought that perhaps ה' had brought about the plagues as a punishment of the רשעים who had oppressed them [but leaving מצרים was never part of the agenda]

- Why would they possibly think this?

 - One they saw that פרעה was chasing after them, and they assumed that ה' wouldn’t have allowed this to happen if He really was directing them

 - [Note how this terrible misconception was all based on a mistaken assumption about how they supposed ה'’s plan would play out]

**Paragraph 3**

**Answer #3: They didn’t daven; rather, they complained** (redefining the words used here)

- רמב"ן then quotes אונקלוס’s translation, which provides a new answer:

 - אונקלוס – ויצעקו means that the בני ישראל complained to ה' and to משה רבינו, not that they davened

 - [At which point, it isn't strange at all that people who were “צועק” also then rejected ה'’s redemption]

**Answer #4: They davened at first; after they saw that prayer unfulfilled, they complained**

- רמב"ן finally quotes yet another explanation from the מכילתא:

 - מכילתא – at first, they davened; but then the יצר הרע got the better of them, and they began to complain.

 - רמב"ן explains: at first, they davened that פרעה and his army should turn around; when that תפילה went “unanswered,” they complained

- [Note how he throws in “כאשר בתחילה” — you see that regardless of whether he uses אונקלוס or the מכילתא or otherwise, he still might be sticking with his earlier assumptions]

**Paragraph 4**

- רמב"ן turns to a new point: ה'’s response to the outcry

- (It seems from the פסוק that ה' was responding angrily to משה רבינו’s outcry. When did משה רבינו cry out? And why was ה' upset?)

- רמב"ן quotes ראב"ע to address these issues:

- A) ראב"ע – (really, משה רבינו didn’t cry out, as the פסוקים sounded like, and) ה' was referring to the outcry of the בני ישראל; directed at משה רבינו, since he was considered opposite the entire nation

 - רמב"ן dislikes this, since why would ה' be upset if this were what the פסוק was referring to? The בני ישראל *should* daven!

- To defend, רמב"ן suggests that maybe it means that ה' was upset at משה רבינו for allowing them to sit there davening, when ה' had already told him that this was going to happen.

- Instead, רמב"ן turns to חז"ל and their interpretation in the מכילתא, which he thinks is correct:

 - B) מכילתא – משה רבינו was davening (and the פסוק didn’t bother to mention this)

 - רמב"ן clarifies: he was davening for guidance — he didn’t know what to do next, with the enemy in pursuit and the sea before them

 - [Note how one sees from here that it is appropriate to daven for guidance]

- And it was for this reason that ה' got upset — משה רבינו should have merely asked what to do next, not cry out, once ה' had already told him this was what He was going to do

- As for why the פסוקים did not record this תפילה of משה רבינו’s — that was because משה רבינו was already included in the rest of the בני ישראל

- [If so, again — we see רמב"ן is sticking with his first distinction between the two groups of Jews, since he thinks that some of the בני ישראל clearly were really davening, so that one could say משה רבינו was included in that group; משה רבינו certainly was in the group of people who truly trusted in ה' and davened to Him.