

“Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem.” (33:2)

Is there any question that whatever Moshe Rabbeinu wrote was at the bidding of Hashem? Moshe wrote the entire Torah at the bidding of Hashem. Why does the Torah emphasize this regarding their journeys? Horav Nissan Alpert, z.l., offers a profound perspective which he derives from the Torah's focusing on Hashem's "part" in the recording of history. One must know that history – whether it is Jewish history or world history – is Hashem's handiwork. Every occurrence, every episode, is the direct product of Hashem's design. The churban Bais HaMikdash, the destruction of our Temple, is recorded in history. Through Ruach HaKodesh, Divine inspiration, Chazal determined that the original catalyst for this destruction was the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. They were two individuals whose dispute was the precursor for events leading up to the siege and ultimate destruction of the Temple. Moshe recorded the occurrences and their cause. He indicated the Hand of G-d in directing their journeys.

The study of history, regrettably, does not play a pivotal role in the curriculum of Jewish students the world over. While some may describe the study of history as boring, this is primarily because the focus is placed on the events and facts, rather than on the lessons that they impart. It is specifically this narrow sweep of the facts that gives rise to revisionist historians, who pick apart the facts and transform the lessons and purpose of history to their own benefit. The secular historian, whose bias against traditional Judaism and its spiritual leadership, spawned a school of Jewish history that totally ignores Hashem's "involvement." To paraphrase Rabbi Berel Wein, "They may have known what color shirt Rashi wore, but they ignored what Rashi really stood for and his immortal contribution to Jewish survival and destiny."

Many lessons may be gleaned from the study of Jewish history. First, we develop a sense of pride at being able to connect to the glorious culture that preceded us. Conversely, our inability to relate to history, to place people and events in their correct time-frame perspective, creates a naïveté that is counterproductive to the cause of Torah. It is necessary that we know who we truly are, recognize our historical rights to Eretz Yisrael and to our lives as Jews, so that the false accusations of our enemies will not sway us, as they have distorted the identity and self-esteem of our secular co-religionists.

History follows a pattern. We learn from that pattern as we see Hashem's guiding Hand directing the course of events. We learn from history which strategies to implement in dealing with the outside world and which ones have proven ineffective over time. Jewish history demonstrates the strength of the creative spirit, the drive for renewal and rejuvenation within the Jewish psyche. Let us look back a little over a century to note how Chassidus revitalized and probably saved Jewish life in Eastern Europe. We observe that the Mussar Movement and the Yeshivah gedolah, advanced Talmudical Academy, saved the traditional method of Torah learning and infused the European Jewish community with the study of ethics and the refinement of one's personal

behavior.

Jewish history teaches us that the traditional way of life has had its opponents, antagonists who would stop at nothing to undermine, reject and ultimately destroy the Torah lifestyle that has been transmitted from Sinai throughout the millennia. It also teaches us that the Torah, which is timeless, has prevailed and thrived. New ideas and modern approaches succeed, if they emanate from a holy source and are sincere, l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. These innovations have preserved the sanctity of tradition as it faces the challenges of modernity.

As we look to the future with fear and trepidation, we should also look back to the past, to our glorious and holy history of triumphing over challenge, adversity, apathy and indifference. This will spark a new sense of purpose and enthusiasm, granting us the courage to persevere, as well as inspiration to continue our mission as a holy nation. This will ensure that tomorrow will be a better day.