

He proceeded on his journeys. (13:3)

L'masaav, on his journeys, implies that Avraham *Avinu* took a specific, planned itinerary. It was not a haphazard trip. *Chazal* teach that our Patriarch lodged in the same places that hosted him on his original trip to Egypt. Our sages derive a lesson in *mentchlichkeit*, human decency, proper etiquette, from this idea. One should stick to his usual lodgings. There is no reason, --nor is it appropriate - to switch from one's customary lodgings unless he has suffered harassment and anguish there. Otherwise, he inadvertently gives the impression that he was displeased with his lodgings, which could cause a financial loss to his host, or he discredits himself by having people think he is a difficult guest to please. Alternatively, *Rashi* suggests that Avraham incurred charges during his original trip, relying on the good graces of the inn owners to extend credit to him. He now returned to pay his bills. The *Baalei Mussar*, Ethical Masters, add that, when he left Charan, Avraham was not yet wealthy. Thus, he chose the simple, economically correct, motels as a place of lodging. On his return trip, he was a wealthy man who could have stayed in a five star hotel. He did not waste his money on luxury. What was good for him earlier would suffice now. His bankbook might have grown, but he did not change. He found it necessary neither to compete with others nor to publicize his good fortune.

Rashi's pshat, exposition, suggesting that Avraham returned to pay his credit bills, begs erudition. When Avraham left Charan, he was far from wealthy. He had not established himself in the world. For all intents and purposes, his financial portfolio was non-existent. Who would extend credit to him? True, he was a respectable, dignified person – in the Torah's barometer. In the pagan world that prevailed at the time, Avraham was a rabble-rouser, who claimed that idol worship was false worship, who stood up to the country's leadership and mocked them. Why would anybody trust him?

Horav Aharon Walkin, zl, explains that the credit Avraham owed to people was not financial– it was ideological. They demanded an explanation, which he owed them and was now delivering, so that he could validate his earlier predicament. Avraham *Avinu* had proclaimed Hashem's Name throughout the world. He decried the fallaciousness of the idols, claiming that the only true G-d was Hashem. Great! So why was he compelled to leave as a result of the hunger? If G-d was so great, why was He not sustaining Avraham? Our Patriarch had listened to Hashem and reached out to the pagans. He took everything that he had and supported those in need. He did all this so that he could speak with them about Hashem. People listen more intently on a full stomach, especially if they did not pay for the food. Yet, despite all of Avraham's constant *chesed*, kindness, he was forced to leave due to the hunger. He was poor, without a morsel of food for himself. Is this the manner that a benevolent G-d treats His most loyal devotee? These were good questions – powerful questions, which demanded answers, which Avraham was not prepared to give – at this time. The people were not committed enough to understand. They would only scoff.

On his return trip, Avraham was powerful. He had amassed great wealth. He was now an important, well-known and dignified person. After all, he had money. To these people, that is all

that counted. With his return, he was intimating that we are all part of Hashem's Divine plan. Everything that He does is for our benefit. At times, we are afflicted; we are down; we have economic woes, but it is all part of a scenario that must play itself out. We must trust in Him and be patient. Our turn for success will evolve and be realized when we least expect it. We must trust and maintain our faith, not permitting setbacks to define or sully our life's perspective. In the eyes of the weak people of that generation, Avraham's plight represented a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name. He now returned to correct it and show them the true glory of the Almighty. Patience and trust – and more patience.

Horav Eliezer Sorotzkin, zl, offers a practical explanation about why Avraham returned to his original hosts. Let us face it, when Avraham left Charan, he had no money and less fame. Very few people were interested in extending themselves to him. Money talks and people listen. Only individuals with very acute hearing are able to apprehend the cries of the less fortunate. It was these kind-hearted, decent people who opened their homes to Avraham. They knew he had no money, but they did not care. He was a human being who needed a place to rest his head, to have a warm meal. They were more than happy to accommodate him and offer their hospitality. Now, as Avraham, who had achieved great wealth and dignity, was returning, he did not ignore those who had cared for him when he had nothing. Unlike common practice, Avraham remembered those who had opened up their hearts to him when he had nothing. He did not forget the little *shteibel, shul*, that had welcomed him when he was but a poor refugee. He did not ignore the simple, well-meaning people who had reached out to him when he had nothing. He did not forget – and neither should we.