

“These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who went forth from the land of Egypt.” (33:1)

We must keep on going forward – not lingering in the past. While we must never forget the past, it is incumbent upon us to look forward to the future. We have left Egypt; the pain, persecution and travail are behind us. We should go forward towards new horizons. When we live in the past, we become depressed and stagnant. The *Lomza Rosh HaYeshivah*, *Horav Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, z.l.*, would walk through the streets of *Petach Tikvah* with an air of nobility and dignity which bespoke a person who seemed not to have a care in the world. He spoke and acted with serenity and refinement. There were only a few very close *talmidim*, students, and friends who knew how deeply troubled and anguished *Rav Yechiel Mordechai* really was. He had lost two wives, and two of his sons had been killed. Thousands of his students had perished in the fires of the Holocaust, and his precious *yeshivah* was destroyed by the Nazis. His face never evinced his pain; his mouth never uttered a depressed word. He consoled others, giving them hope amid their pain. He always kept on going forward. He left “Egypt”/the decimation of European Jewry. He was rebuilding a Torah renaissance in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Once, he gave into his emotions. It was a slip of the tongue – a painful reference to his overwhelming losses. It happened that a survivor, an ember spared from the fires of the Holocaust, came to bemoan his fate and seek a blessing from the *Rosh HaYeshivah*. He had a son who was of marriageable age, but for a number of years already he was unsuccessful in finding his *bashairt*, designated mate. The father wept over the past, bemoaned the present, and feared what the future would bring. How does one console such a brokenhearted Jew? *Rav Yechiel Mordechai* shared his personal grief with him. He told him about his losses, the wonderful sons, the brilliant and precious students that he no longer had. Together, they wept – for one another and for themselves.

Another time, as he attended the funeral of a brilliant, budding Torah scholar, a student of *Slabodka Yeshivah* who had drowned in a lake near Tel Aviv, *Rav Yechiel Mordechai* also expressed his pent-up grief. As the funeral cortège proceeded from the *Lomza Yeshivah*, the *Rosh HaYeshivah* suddenly began to cry uncontrollably with bitter sobs. They could not stop him. A *rav* who was with him asked, “What is wrong?” *Rav Yechiel Mordechai* answered, “It is a terrible tragedy for a young person to be taken so suddenly in the prime of his life. Yet, there is some form of consolation in the fact that he merits a funeral and burial in *kever Yisrael*, Jewish cemetery. I, regrettably, did not merit to accompany my sons to their burial.”

How did the *Rosh HaYeshivah* do it? How was he able to suppress his emotions and control his feelings of pain and grief? What gave him the strength and fortitude to maintain his composure despite his overwhelming grief? He did not look back. He looked toward tomorrow and the hope of the *geulah*, redemption, that accompanies it.