

Bnei Yisrael shall encamp, each man by his banner, according to the insignias of their fathers' household. (2:2)

Klal Yisrael was to travel as a collective group in formation, three tribes, each with a distinctively colored banner/flag representative of its individual characteristic. Each triumvirate group was led by a designated tribe. Each tribal banner was the same color as its corresponding stone on the Breastplate, *Choshen*, of the *Kohen Gadol*. Their positions around the *Mishkan* were to be the same as those designated by Yaakov *Avinu* for his sons when they were to escort his coffin for burial. This is what is meant by *ossos I'bais avosam*, "According to the insignias of their fathers' household." This idea is quoted by *Rashi* from the *Midrash Tanchuma*, which elaborates upon this theme. What is the connection between the Patriarch's funeral and the nation's journey through the wilderness? There must be some overriding significance if Yaakov's original formation had become the blueprint for the Jewish nation's forty-year trek to *Eretz Yisrael*. It is almost as if Yaakov had specifically desired that his moment of parting from his sons should be indelibly engraved on the nation's psyche.

Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, explains this with an episode which took place concerning **Horav Meir Premishlaner, zl**. A *chasid* once approached him as he was about to take leave of the venerable sage and asked, "*Rebbe*, how can I possibly retain throughout the year the same inspiration which imbues me during my stay in Premishlan? I feel so spiritually uplifted during the weeks that I spend learning here in the presence of the *Rebbe*. How do I 'bottle' this emotion, so that it inspires me throughout my mundane endeavors?" It is a powerful question which applies across the board to so many of us who: spend a weekend of inspiration; go to the *yeshivah* for the *Yamim Noraim*, High Holy Days; take a spiritual journey to the Holy Land, visiting its holy sites – people – both past and present. We are all inspired, moved to great spiritual heights. How do we get it to last?

The *Rebbe* replied that, when a student parts from his *rebbe*, there wells up within him a sense of longing, a craving for more, a sense of yearning not to leave, to remain in the shadow of his mentor always. After time, this aspiration begins to wane, the passions slowly starting to abate. How does one succeed in keeping the passion alive? In his mind, he should visualize their parting moment, the mood of their farewell, and keep this experience ingrained in his mind. This will keep the feeling alive. The inextricable bond between *rebbe* and *talmid*, student, endures through the reinforcement of this sense of virtual imagery.

A parting moment becomes a lasting memory, an enduring experience retained in the heart and mind of one who is privy to the occurrence, when it is taken seriously. At one point or another, we are all conscious of such a moment. What we do with it impacts its lasting impression on us. Yaakov *Avinu* was taking leave of his family. It was an emotionally laden experience which could be transformed into a lifelong inspiration to be transmitted to each ensuing generation. This was to be facilitated through the vehicle of the *Degalim*, whereby the deathbed/funeral scenario would be

relived through the *Degalim* formation, with each tribe traveling in the same formation as did its progenitor when *Klal Yisrael* escorted the Patriarch to his eternal rest.

Seeking to reassure his father, Yaakov, that their separation did not leave him spiritually impaired, Yosef sent a message concerning the last subject that they had studied together: The laws of *Eglah Arufah*, the Axed Heifer. His father had inculcated in him the notion never to forget the *rega ha'preidah*, parting moment. Yaakov now understood that, although Yosef had been separated from him all of these years, he had kept the "light on" in his heart by remembering their parting moment.