

"And Moshe made Yisrael journey from the Red Sea." (15:22)

Rashi explains that Moshe was obligated to force *Bnei Yisrael* to journey away from the Red Sea. One would imagine that once they had triumphed over the Egyptian enemy, *Bnei Yisrael* would anxiously proceed with all available speed to reach their desired destination. This was not the case, however. They stopped to collect the booty left over by their enemy. As *Chazal* state, the gold, silver, and precious stones which had adorned the Egyptian horses and chariots were now available to the victors. *Bnei Yisrael* became preoccupied with the collections of these material goods.

Unfortunately, throughout Jewish history, Jews who lack vision are distracted by the impulse to collect the booty, while their community, who needs their service, succumbs to destruction. In the end, history demonstrates that fortunes thus amassed were carelessly surrendered, as we redirect ourselves to the attainment of our ideological goals.

Jewish communal responsibility means that one must fulfill his responsibility as a Jew, collecting *tzedakah* for the Jewish needy and building *Torah* institutions. Communal involvement, however, does not mean to simply submit a check in support of a charitable organization, synagogue or school. It demands personal spiritual involvement. The traits which distinguish the Jew from his peers are his faith, his *Yiddishkeit*, his *Neshoma*. These holy attributes are the real possessions of our people. The material edifice is superficial and transient, but the spirit is inherently ours. No Jew is worthy of that noble epithet unless he brings a sense of Jewish consciousness to his daily endeavor.