

These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael...and they journeyed...and they rested...(33:1)

"*And they journeyed...and they rested.*" These words are repeated forty-two times in this *parsha*. These words must be special if the *Torah* mentions them so many times. The *Torah* contains no redundancy, not even an extra letter. Why would the *Torah* dedicate so much space to the journeys of *Bnei Yisrael*? Is it pertinent for us to know where they stayed and where they went? *Chazal* address this question, explaining with an analogy to a king who had taken his sickly son to a distant place to be cured. On their return trip, the king pointed out to his son the various incidents that took place in each city. "Look, my son, at this spot we slept, at the other place you were overcome with fever, at this spot you were subdued with intense pains, etc." Likewise, Hashem points out to us the "stops" along our journey, so that we will learn from them. He notes the places where we erred, where we sinned and where our actions caused contention and strife.

People think that to correct life's mistakes we must live over again. This is not the *Torah* perspective. To paraphrase **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, "To make right the wrongs we have committed, we have only to look back." Our corrections can be made on the same journey; all we need to do is open our eyes and look back. Opportunities will arise when we will be confronted with the same challenges, the same problems, the same desires. Only this time we will be prepared, we will be armed with the lessons of the past so that we can confront the present. We can then be assured of a healthy future. "*Here we slept:*" We allowed an opportunity for growth, a chance for success, to escape. "*Here we were overcome with pain:*" We allowed periods of depression to overcome us. We deferred to the fear of rejection; we were afraid to chance success due to the risk of failure. "*Here we rested from the heat:*" We accepted the status quo, allowing ourselves to be spoiled by our prosperity and good fortune. As long as we learn from our past - "*va'yisu and va'yachnu,*" "*they journeyed and they rested,*" is not redundant. The importance of reflecting upon the past cannot be overemphasized. *Tisha B'Av*, our day of national mourning, commemorates the destruction of the two *Batei Mikdash*. If we remember the tragedy, but do not deliberate over the entire period - what preceded the destruction and our reaction -- we would denigrate the memory of this sad period. If we forget one stage in our history, we cannot make amends; the lesson will be lost. *Horav* Swift suggests that this is the reason that the special *Haftarah* of rebuke for the "Nine Days" -- from *Rosh Chodesh Av* until *Tisha B'Av* -- takes precedence over the *Haftarah* of *Rosh Chodesh*. *Shabbos Rosh Chodesh* will occur again: We will never retrieve the tragic loss and never rebuild the ruins, however, if for a single year we do not heed *Yirmiyah Ha'navi's* anguished cry. "*Listen to the word of Hashem, House of Yaakov, and all the families of Bais Yisrael.*" We must not ignore the mistakes of the past or forget to address our former errors, thereby silencing the cry of the Navi. "*Only he who mourns Yerushalayim will merit to behold her joy.*" The privilege of sharing in the consolation and joy is reserved for those who have mourned - who have reflected on their errors and who seek to rectify the faults that precipitated the tragedy. These people will merit to share in the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim*.