

## These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who went forth from the land of Egypt according to their legions. (33:1)

The *Torah* makes a synopsis of *Bnei Yisrael's* forty-year journey through the desert. The forty-two encampments from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael* are enumerated. Obviously, some places left stronger impressions than others. The summary alludes to the forty year history with its ups and downs. Is it really necessary to detail all forty-two places? Is it important to open up old wounds, to recall moments in our history that we would most seek to forget? **Horav Nissan Alpert, zl**, claims that one can and should make every effort to learn from his mistakes. Thus, he will be able to perceive his shortcomings, what provokes him to sin, what intimidates him and what inspires him. People are regrettably inclined to white wash their past faults. They seek to forget the moments in their lives when they "slipped" and erred. They choose to remember only the positive moments, the times when they demonstrated courage and resolve, when their conviction held the central role in their lives.

This may represent human nature. Nonetheless, by relegating our negative experiences and actions to the side, we are tossing away the opportunity for self-improvement. This is one time that emphasizing the positive is not constructive. Thus, Hashem commanded Moshe to detail every one of their encampments. The names of the places allude to the experiences and occurrences associated with each place. They were admonished not to forget what had happened. Learn from the experiences of the past in order to enhance your present and future.

*Horav Alpert* adds that the lessons learned in the wilderness comprise an exceptional educational experience since they occurred in a place devoid of anything that might detract from the students' "concentration." There were no alien cultures with which to contend and no strange philosophies to turn their minds away from their spiritual experience. They were alone with Hashem. The *Torah* emphasizes the wilderness "classroom" that *Klal Yisrael* was privileged to attend. This type of *Torah chinuch* molded the perspective of our ancestors.

Finally, it is important to note that our sojourn in the wilderness is to be viewed as a portent for our present exile. We are also on a journey. We sojourn among the nations of the world - literally traveling through a spiritual exile. We must realize that as our ancestors journeyed through the desert as travelers on the way to their ultimate destination, their home in *Eretz Yisrael*, so, too, should we remember that we are also on the way to our journey's end, *Eretz Yisrael*. Our problem is that many of us have settled in the exile - physically and spiritually. We must keep the concept alive in our hearts and minds that we are in *galus* until the advent of *Moshiach*.