

These are the sojourns of Bnei Yisrael who went forth from the land of Egypt. (33:1)

Parashas Masei concludes *Klal Yisrael's* forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. Many of the individuals in the nation who now stood before Moshe *Rabbeinu*, poised to enter into the Promised Land, were but children when they left Egypt, while others of them had been born after the liberation. Their parents, who had slaved for Pharaoh and had been redeemed from Egypt, were no longer alive. They paid a heavy price for their insubordination. They had been raised in a culture that was morally deviant and spiritually bankrupt, yet, they merited being liberated from that country. Apparently, they did not have the spiritual mettle to survive in the wilderness. When circumstances seemingly did not go their way, they acted out of the character expected of them. Nonetheless, their own failings and shortcomings notwithstanding, they managed to educate and raise the next generation in the appropriate manner, so that their children could aspire to the appellation, *Mamleches kohanim v'goi kadosh*, "A kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, attributes the success of the children and grandchildren to the parents, who – despite their shortcomings – inculcated their progeny with the spirit of *Yiddishkeit*. The parents had committed sins and errors, for which they were punished. Despite all this, they implanted in their children, even in the filth of Egypt where they were overcome with prosecution and troubles, that there is a Higher Power, a Supreme Being, to which we must all answer and by whose edicts we must all live. The generation that traversed the wilderness – the *dor hamidbar* – is also acknowledged as the *dor deah*, the generation of knowledge, the generation that accepted the Torah with a resounding declaration of *Naase v'Nishmah*, "We will do and we will listen." They knew what was right and how a Jew should live. While they could not always rise to the occasion, they saw to it that their children would collectively develop into a *mamleches kohanim v'goi kadosh*.

How did they do it? How were they able to raise such an impressive generation, considering that they themselves did not merit the distinction of entering *Eretz Yisrael*? We must say that, while indeed the nation sinned, they were not sinners. They had experienced spiritual and moral lapses, which, given their own background and suffering, were not exactly out of character. After all they had gone through in their lives, they just could not handle the pressure. Furthermore, they had incredible merits. The mere fact that they had followed Hashem out of Egypt into a desolate wilderness speaks for itself.

Does not the *Navi Yirmiyahu* (11:2) quote Hashem as saying: *Zocharti lach chesed ne'urayich ahavas kelulosayich, lechteich Acharai ba'midbar, b'erez lo zeruah*, "I remember unto you the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals when you went after Me into a land that was not sown." The bride follows her groom without question concerning his destination or the hardship involved in reaching it. Later on, the going might become rough, but the groom does not ignore the bride's extreme early devotion. Likewise, *Klal Yisrael* had great moments – moments which laid the

foundation for their children's inculcation into the kingdom of priests. While the going was perhaps too rough for the parents, they saw to it that, at least, their children would take their designated places.