

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

The Degel Mateh Efraim cites his rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, who interprets the forty-two journeys that Klal Yisrael traveled as analogous to a human being's life span. Birth, leaving the womb, is like yetzias Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt, the beginning of the Jewish nation's travels. The ensuing journeys lead onward to the ultimate destination, Eretz Yisrael, or – for the individual Jew – the eternal world of Olam Haba. The Papa Rav, z.l., develops this further. As a person journeys from place to place, even within a city, he is confronted with challenges to his spiritual well-being. Some communities stimulate a challenge in parnassah, earning a livelihood. In others, the spiritual environment presents a challenge. This challenge can be a product of interaction with the non-Jewish population. Alternatively, it can be catalyzed by the Jewish population, if he has no friends with whom he can socialize, either as a result of their level of observance or other social issues that play a role in one's assimilation into a community. In every situation, one needs Siyata D'Shmaya, Divine assistance, to overcome the trials and adversities.

The Jewish nation went through forty-two journeys, forty-two ordeals, forty-two challenges. Hashem sustained them throughout the vicissitudes of their travels: He provided them with bread when they were hungry; He gave them water when they were thirsty; meat was accessible when they needed it; they also had therapy for their snake bites. Hashem dealt with Amalek, the non-Jewish anti-Semite, and He dealt with Dasan and Aviram, the Jewish enemy from within. When Bilaam enticed them with pagan women, Hashem protected them, just as He did when He dealt with the erev rav, mixed multitude, who caused the sin of the Golden Calf.

From the journeys that Klal Yisrael experienced we can derive encouragement and inspiration for our own encounters. The Kedushas Levi teaches us that the yeshuos, salvations, that Hashem provided for Klal Yisrael became a wellspring of hope for the future generations. Every generation that will be in need can draw from the source of salvation that was created during Klal Yisrael's journeys. This is referred to as the “maaynei ha'yeshua,” wellsprings of salvation. One who walks in a desert and digs a hole and discovers a wellspring of water quenches his own immediate thirst. The well remains forever a source of sustenance for the future: “U'sh'avtem mayim b'sasson mimaaynei ha'yeshua; “You can draw water in joy from the springs of salvation” (Yeshaya 12:3).

During our lifetime, when the moment of need arises, we may draw inspiration and hope from the wellsprings that were created for Klal Yisrael as they traveled through the wilderness on the way to their promised land.