

These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who went forth from the land of Egypt... Moshe wrote their goings for the according to their journeys, according to the bidding of Hashem, and these were the journeys according to their goings forth. (33:1,2)

The Torah attributes much significance to *Klal Yisrael's* forty-year journey throughout the wilderness – to the point that it details each one of its forty-two encampments. Apparently, we can derive much from this journey and each one of the stops *Bnei Yisrael* made. *Horav Zakai*, a student of *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*, *zl*, was a deeply righteous Jew, who had a profound understanding of all areas of Torah – both revealed and unrevealed. Every year, when he would recite the forty-two encampments listed at the beginning of *Parashas Masei*, he would break down in bitter weeping. When asked for an explanation for this sudden display of emotion, he replied, “*Parashas Masei* (the forty-two encampments) alludes to the many exiles and displacements our nation will endure. I weep, because I see that we have a number of unfinished “stops” which we must endure prior to the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*.”

Horav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitz, *zl* (*Meil Shmuel*) applies this idea to explain the redundancy of the text: First, *Motza'eihem l'maaseihem*; “Their goings forth according to their journeys.” This is followed by a recap, *V'eileh maaseihem l'motza'eihem*, “And these are their journeys according to their goings forth.” He explained that the first part refers to the journeys of *Klal Yisrael* in the *Midbar*, with their “goings forth” denoting their leaving Egypt, and their “journeys” being their destination – *Eretz Yisrael*. They left Egypt for a purpose. Moshe *Rabbeinu* recorded this. The second part of the *pasuk* refers to the unfinished journeys which we must complete until that glorious day when *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* will herald the culmination of our journeys. From the time that we were exiled from the Holy Land, we have wandered from exile to exile – looking, hoping, praying for an end to our *tzaros*, troubles. We have one *nechamah*, consolation: These *maasei'hem*, journeys, have a goal, a destination, for which we are all waiting, *l'motza'eihem* – to take them out of the bitter *galus*, to bring them home to where we belong.

We followed Hashem throughout the forty-year trek in the wilderness. Hashem lauds this remarkable loyalty. *Koh amar Hashem, Zacharti lach chesed ne'urayich ahavas kelulosayich, lechteich Acharai ba'midbar b'erez lo zeruah*; “This said Hashem: I recall for you the kindness of your youth, your following Me into the wilderness, into an unknown land.” (*Yirmiyah* 2:2) *Klal Yisrael's* greatest virtue was their total deference to Hashem's guidance. They did not question: Why? What? When? They simply followed whenever and wherever Hashem dictated. In the immortal words of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, *L'lameid shivchan shel Yisrael she'hayu chafeitzim ba'asher yachpotz Hashem*, “To teach the praise of *Yisrael* that they wanted what Hashem wanted.” They wanted whatever the Almighty wanted. This is how we are to live. We do not disagree with Hashem. What He wants is what we want – end of story.

In his *hesped*, eulogy, for his revered *Rebbe*, *Horav Chaim Brisker, zl*, *Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl*, said, "It is daunting to characterize the *middos*, character traits, of my *Rebbe*. Was he relaxed? Was he quick to anger? Was he modest, or did he have a presumptuous side to him? Was he demanding or tolerant? The truth is that everything *Rav Chaim* did, every expression, every activity, was dictated by *halachah*. As such, he did not have his own will – it was always the *ratzon Hashem*, will of Hashem, that engineered his every move."

We all have our difficult moments when the going becomes rough, and following the prescribed course (as indicated by Heaven) is physically and emotionally challenging. We maintain our commitment to Hashem, because that is who we are. *Horav Eliezer Turk, Shlita*, relates an insightful analogy which would serve us well. Imagine a fellow who was supposed to attend an auspicious event: the engagement celebration of his youngest brother-in-law. It was to be held in a new hall, and rumor had it that it would be a lavish affair. That afternoon, however, out of the blue he became ill, to the point that he told his wife, "I just cannot attend the event. I do not have the strength. You know," he said to his wife. "there will be another *simchah*, joyous occasion, in that hall tomorrow, I will attend that one." Anyone with a modicum of intelligence understands the foolishness of such a statement. Tomorrow's event is completely unrelated to the present event.

Likewise, when a person is confronted with a challenge, he should not say, "Today is lost. I will attempt again tomorrow." He is scheduled to attend a *shiur*. He suddenly has a headache, or another challenge surfaces; he just has to overcome the challenge and go. Tomorrow is not today.

The *Alter, zl, m'Novoradok*, teaches a powerful principle concerning our *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty. Let us imagine a man is lost and wandering in the wilderness. It is pitch dark and dreary, and, as a result, he has no way of returning to the road which leads to civilization. Hours pass, and he trudges along aimlessly, becoming more and more depressed with every moment, knowing that, unless he becomes the beneficiary of a miracle, he will be lost forever. Suddenly, a large burst of lightning illuminates the forest. Now, if he is smart, he will use the moment of light to set his bearings straight and possibly find the road. If he is a fool, he will say, "Why should I bother with a moment of illumination if it will be pitch dark once again?"

We all have moments of darkness, challenges that overwhelm and situations from which we might never emerge. It is so easy to throw in the towel and give up. Suddenly, Hashem throws us a lifeline, a burst of light, which, if we take advantage of it, might allow us to extricate ourselves from our present morass. Do we take advantage of the moment, or do we say, "It is not worth it, because it is only a temporary solution?" That is the difference between a resourceful person and a fool. I think we can determine who will make the correct decision.