

## The Traveler

Our portion begins with (-Numbers 33:1), "*These are the journeys of the children of Israel.*" However, the verse goes on to enumerate the places they camped, rather than their journeys?! More so, throughout the 40 years that they spent in the desert, most of their time was spent in camping, and not in journeying!

One might say that Rashi already answered this issue in Exodus (-40:38), on the words, "*In all their journeys': The place of their encampment is also called a journey... Since from the place of their encampment they resumed their journeys, they are all called 'journeys'.*" However, this itself needs understanding, since the encampment is the destiny, the goal, the *journey* should be included in being called *encampments*, rather than vice versa?! Additionally, even if we say that the *encampments* are inclusive within the *journeys*, however, the primary focus of the verses here is on the encampments, hinting what took place in them, and not the journeys! Hence, call them by their primary purpose: *Encampments*?!

On the other, one might suggest that in this case, being that ultimately the goal was to enter into the *Land of Israel*, thus, even though the verses are emphasizing the events of the encampments, nevertheless, the encampments are not an end unto their own, but to "*from the place of their encampment they resumed their journeys,*" therefore, we are calling them *journeys*. Nevertheless, this explanation as well isn't "*smooth*". The verse uses the plural, "*journeys,*" in which it is focusing not on the one commonality in which all are but one singular journey from Egypt to Israel, but rather, the intention of the verses is specifically on the individuality of each journey. As Rashi explains the intention of these verses, "*(It is analogous to a king whose son became sick, so he took him to a faraway place to have him healed. On the way back, the father began citing all the stages of their journey, saying to him,) 'This is where we sat, here we were cold, here you had a headache etc.'*" Now, being that the focus is on the individuality that took place in each encampment, the name "*Encampments*," should have been used?!

So too on the mystical level, the Baal Shem Tov (-[Link](#)) teaches (-Degel Machne Ephraim, Maasei) that the 42 Journeys to the *Land of Israel* enumerated in this portion are the 42 Journeys that each and every person must journey in their lifetime, from *birth* (exodus of Egypt) unto reaching the heights of the *Land of Supernal Life*. The Baal Shem Tov goes on to explain, one of the encampments was *Kivrot HaTaveh* -*Graves of Craving* (-Numbers 11:34), "*For there they buried the people who craved.*" Mystically this means, *Graves of Craving* represents the *Faculty of Wisdom*, meaning that whoever has journeyed and arrived at the *Emanation of Wisdom*, which is the emanation of total self-nullification, he has achieved to *bury all his cravings*, due to his overwhelming clinging to *He, blessed be He*. --In the realm of Kabbalah and Chassidus, everything exists in the realm of purity and holiness, even those encampments which are speaking of sin. Thus, *Graves of Craving* is speaking not of the death of those who complained about the *manna* and craved for meat, but rather, it speaks of a total nullification of any craving, to the point of *burying even the potential of having a craving*! Thus, in the mystical teachings as well, the focus is on the *encampments* and what happened there, leading again to the question of why not call them *Encampments*?!

*The Explanation:* The desirable path for a human is to always be "*journeying*," and not stationary. In the teachings of chassidus, stationary does not mean only a total lack of growth, but even a growth which is but relative to prior status, but still within its realm is called *stationary*. For example, a student who is continuously growing as a student, and remains yet in the realm of a student, is considered stationary. When the student grows to the point that he leaves completely from the arena of being a student, and enters into the arena of being a teacher<sup>1</sup>, this is called *journeying*. And this is why the Torah is stating, "*These are the journeys,*" teaching us that the *encampment* is to be in a fashion that brings one forward in having the upcoming *journey* be one of true *journeying*.

*Deeper Yet:* In true *journeying*, there are components: (i) Leaving the previous status, and (ii) Reaching the absolute higher status. With this we will understand the difference between the two Hebrew terms of *Halicha* (הליכה) -*Going*, and *Nesiah* (נסיעה) -*Traveling*. *Halicha* denotes a going forward to a higher plane, while *Nesiah* denotes the traveling away ("They traveled from...") from the present plane. So too, we find by Joseph, when asking about the whereabouts of his brother, the man told him (-Genesis 37:17, see Rashi there), "*They were nosah from this... and they nelcha to Dothon.*" --We find the term hesiah daat, meaning to distracting one's self, which legally, concerning the Laws of Tefillin, is defined only as when one completely removes his mind from the theme of Tefillin, (which is being subservient to G-d), by occupying himself with frivolity and lightheadedness the antithesis, but not just the mere absence of subservience. Thus, *nesia* means a complete *travelling away from*, to the point of being antithetical to from where you are travelling away from.

With this we now understand the teaching (-Likkutei Torah d"h *Eilei Masei*, 88c) of the *Alter Rebbe*, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (-[Link](#)): *How can the verse use the plural of 'journeys' when saying, "who left the land of Egypt," when it was only the first journey, from Ramses (inside Egypt) to Sukkos (outside of Egypt) in which they, "Left the land of Egypt"?! To explain this the Alter Rebbe defines for us the word *Mitzrayim* (Egypt in Hebrew) means *Metzorum* - *Constraints; Limitations*. And being that true *Maasei* means to totally leave the origin, to the point of being in the antithesis of the origin, hence, as long as they did not reach *Yarden Yericho*, the border of Israel, each and every *journey* --while being a journey forward and out of previous spiritual *Limitations*--, was a journey of, "*Left Egypt,*" nevertheless, it was not yet an absolute, "*Journeying away from Egypt.*" Therefore, every spiritual *Encampment*, whilst being a new level of service to G-d, nevertheless, ultimately, the encampment was just for the purpose of, "*from the place of their encampment they resumed their journeys,*" of the, "*Journeys of the children of Israel who left the land of Egypt.*"*

*Yet Another Concept:* We are taught (-Likkutei Torah d"h *Eilei Masei*, and the *Explanations*) that the 42 Journeys in the Desert represent the era of exile, when Israel are among (-Ezekiel 20:35), "*Wilderness* (Hebrew: *Midbar*; *Desert*) of the peoples."

This means that each *encampment*, which was a *delay* in the, "*Wilderness of the peoples*," was a *descent* within exile! And how much more so those encampments that were (-Tanchuma, Maasie, Portion 3), "*The places where they provoked Me*," were definitely a *descent*. Nevertheless, "*The place of their encampment is also called a journey*," part of the, "*Left Egypt*"!

The explanation therein is, "*Descent for the sake of ascent*<sup>2</sup>!" Every descent in exile is only to make possible the redemption that follows: "*The place of their encampment is also called a journey*." It is *only* through the *descent* that the greater *ascent* is possible (-Ecclesiastics 2:13), "*As the advantage of light over darkness*<sup>3</sup>."

*The Lesson*: Even when a Jew fails the will of G-d, G-d spare us, *he should not despair*, G-d spare us! Rather, he is to reach the, "*Advantage of light from the darkness*," hidden within this failure. That there be a "*journey*" and elevation, namely the "*advantage*" of *Teshuvah: Returning; Repentance*. And this is why even the *descent* (*encampment*) is called *Journey*, for the very failure is but the beginning of the upcoming *Ascent* (*journey*)!

*In Closing*: This will also explain the connection between this Torah-portion and the time of year in which we read it, --the *Three Weeks* (-[Link](#)), and in proximity to *Rosh Chodesh Av* (-[Link](#)), which is but to arouse Israel.

When we enter into the days of, "*Between the Straits*<sup>4</sup>," and specifically the days of the *Nine Days*, the days of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple, which remind us of this grave descent of this last exile, we read the portion of *Journeys* that the Jew not fall into despair, but for him to know that all of this is but for the Jew to transform this --thus bringing about the (-Jeremiah 31:12), "*And I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow*"--, to become *Journeys* and elevations.

*Therefore*: We must specifically, in these days, add in enthusiasm and light, "*and 'light' is not but Torah*," and specifically in the laws of the Holy Temple, and this *Light* will illuminate the "*Between Straits*," and usher in the revelation of the *journeys* and elevations, transforming these days to delight, joy, and days of festivity speedily in our days, really!

1. In the teachings of chassidus, the difference between a *student* and a *teacher* is a quantum-leap in one's paradigm. For example, the world of *Atzilut*, where *Divinity* is a pragmatic absolute, while *creations* is an abstract theory that needs to be concentrated upon and meditated upon, is called *Teacher*, while the world of *Breiah*, where *creations* are a pragmatic absolute, while *Divinity* is an abstract theory, that needs to be concentrated upon and meditated upon, is called *Student*.
2. The explanation found in chassidus is that of a lion's crouching before it leaps, in which it is the *crouching* -Descent, that makes possible a greater *Leap* -Ascent.
3. The simple meaning speaks of the advantage that light has over darkness. However, the literal words of the verse read, "*As the advantage of light from amidst darkness*," which chassidus explains as the "*advantage of Light*," meaning the *greatest* light, comes, "*from amidst darkness*," meaning a darkness that was *converted* into light. Here too, it is the descent in exile, when transformed into redemption, that brings about the unprecedented new level of redemption.
4. Refers to the days of affliction between the seventeenth of Tammuz, the day of year in which the Babylonians put a siege on Jerusalem, and the ninth of Av, the day of year in which the Babylonians set the *Holy Temple* on fire.