

MASSEI OUR TRAVELS & BEYOND**THE ENCAMPMENTS ARE PART OF THE TRAVELS**

Parashas Masei records the 42 travels (*the masaos*) of the Jewish people throughout their sojourn in the desert, from the exodus of Egypt and all the way through Arvos Moav, until the people arrived in Eretz Yisrael.

Rashi in this week's *parshah* says that most of these travels were spent in encampments, where they rested, with only a few of them being active journeys. However, *Rashi* at the end of *Parashas Shemos* says that not only were their journeys part of the *masaos*\travels, but even their encampments were included in these *masaos*\travels.

ENCAMPMENTS ARE REGARDED AS PART OF THE TRAVELS

1) Simply speaking, this meant that they did not rest in these encampments for the sake of simply resting there, but for the sake of being able to continue on to Eretz Yisrael, and thus even these encampments are regarded as part of the travels.

2) Even more so, however, their encampments are considered as part of their travels because even when they camped, they were following Hashem's command of "*By the mouth of Hashem you will journey, and by the mouth of Hashem you will camp.*" Even when they camped, they were prepared for Hashem to tell them to move on and keep travelling, so the encampments were not a situation of complete rest, but part of their journeys.

3) There is also a deeper reason why their encampments are seen as part of their travels. It is because there is no such thing as complete rest, as long as we live on this world.

Hashem created the world with six days for work, and a seventh day of Shabbos, for rest. However, the Shabbos we have now is not a situation of complete rest. It is only a rest in relation to the six days of the week. Only in the future will

our Shabbos be on the level of complete rest. In whatever place a person is in, he can never completely rest there.

As long as a person lives, he is a creature of movement. Hashem has designed the world in a way that we are always in movement. Only a dead person is in complete rest. Those who are alive are always in movement; even when a person is immobile, the four cubits of his space can acquire things for him. Thus, even when man does rest, the rest is not complete. That is why when the people camped, it was not regarded as their place of rest, but as part of their travels.

To understand this matter in clearer terms, and in language that applies to our soul - it is because in whatever place a person is in, he has an *avodah* to ascend higher past the current level, and to aspire for a higher level. Therefore, man is always in movement. He can never be at rest, because if he is, he isn't trying to grow spiritually.

4) There is yet a deeper understanding of why the encampments were called their "travels": because none of these encampments could be regarded as their actual "place" to be in. Therefore, it is considered as if they were always on the go.

The Sages in Tractate Sanhedrin state that Hashem created our world to last for 6000 years, and then it will be desolate for another thousand years after that. Therefore, every situation on this world, without exception, is but a step of a larger process. Hashem has designed this Creation like one big ladder to ascend, with rung after rung, and a person's *avodah* is to keep ascending the ladder, rung after rung. Therefore, there is no situation where you can stay in forever, because you always have to see it as a step that leads to another step.

That is the way things will be until the future, when Hashem will renew the world and then the design will be changed. Until then, every situation we are in is but a step in the process, leading to another step after that.

SERENITY IN THE CURRENT LEVEL, AND ASPIRATION TO GO HIGHER

For every step of the way that we are in, there are always two angles to consider.

On one hand, a person needs to be serene in the place where he is. He needs some degree of *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity of the soul) and to be somewhat content where he is, because if he isn't he cannot be connected to the here and now, and then he will never get anywhere. On the other hand, a person also needs to have aspirations to get past the current level. He must want to get past where he is and rise higher spiritually. "Torah scholars have no serenity, not on this world and not on the Next World."¹

On one hand, we need *yishuv hadaas* (composure of mind) in our current state. If a person is always trying to think of how he will get to the next level, he is not connected to where he is now, and then he will not succeed in getting to the next level.

For example, when a person is learning a *daf Gemara*, if he keeps thinking about getting to the next page of Gemara, he will never succeed in the current *daf* he is learning. The Vilna Gaon said that when a person is learning Gemara, he must concentrate only on the current page of Gemara he is learning, as if there is no other page of Gemara that exists other than the page of Gemara in front of him.

On the other hand, we also need to aspire for a higher level than the current one. If a person has no aspirations to go higher in his Torah learning and he is simply content with what he's learning now, of this it is said, "Torah, what will be with it?"

So while a person must be fully concentrated on the page of Gemara he is learning, feeling serene where he is and not to think of anything else other than what he's involved with, at the same time, he also needs to have the general aspiration of knowing a lot more Torah, and to be aware that the page of Gemara in front of him is but a step in the process.

In the example of learning Torah, a person needs to be connected to the current moment of his Torah learning, and to be content there, but simultaneously, he also needs to aspire for more, to know that the current page of Gemara is but a part of the Torah. But this idea is also true with all situations of life in general. On one hand, one needs to be

connected to where he is now, and on the other hand, he also needs to know that his current place is just a step in the process.

SERENITY – THROUGH HAPPINESS WITH YOUR SHARE, AND FEELING HASHEM'S PRESENCE

To have a clearer understanding of this, to have serenity (*menuchah*) in your current situation includes two parts to it.

The first part of it is to be *someiach b'chelko*, "happy with one's share". Being happy with your share doesn't just mean to be happy with whatever you have accomplished so far (which is also true), but even more so, to be happy with your current situation. The second part of it, which is deeper, is that after a person has merited to penetrate into his soul and to reveal more of his *neshamah*, he merits "In any place in which My Name is mentioned, I will come to you" – that wherever a person is, at any level he is at, he merits the revelation of Hashem's Presence with him. From there, he derives the deep, complete level of serenity.

When a person only has a superficial perspective, this is far from him. He will think of the revelation of Hashem's Presence as something that is far away from him, something which comes only at the end of all the levels. But if the light of truth has become opened in his soul, in the depths of his *neshamah*, he will be able to recognize that Hashem is really found with a person in every situation.

Of course, the degree of this revelation and how much a person will feel Hashem's presence will depend on the level of a person's soul, so it will be experienced on a different level with each person. But in any case, a person can reveal Hashem's presence in his situation, no matter what level he is at.

Hashem doesn't only become revealed to the "perfected man" that the Ramchal describes in *Mesillas Yesarim*, which comes all the way at the end of the ladder of growth. Hashem can be revealed to a person at any level he is at, and the higher of a level a person reaches, the more clarity of His Presence there will be. But His Presence can always be felt, on some level. There are 36 *tzaddikim* in every generation who merit "revelation of the *Shechinah*", but the *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that there are many levels of "revelation of *Shechinah*", so it is not experienced on the same level by

¹ Berachos 64a

each person. But at any level a person is at, there can be a degree of “revelation of *Shechinah*” – of feeling Hashem’s Presence.

When this awareness becomes revealed in the soul, a person becomes serene. This is the serenity we mention in the *Shabbos Minchah* prayer, **כִּי מֵאֲתֶךָ הֵיא מְנוּחָתָם** – “*For from You, comes their serenity.*” It is a serenity that comes from Hashem, so to speak. The more a person recognizes Hashem’s Presence in his situation, the more *menuchah*\serenity he will have, in turn.

This is also the secret behind *Shabbos Kodesh*, and specifically, the *menuchah* of *Shabbos* – it is because on *Shabbos*, Hashem’s Presence is more revealed. A person derives the true, deepest *menuchah* (serenity) comes from this higher source. Hashem Himself is the absolute *menuchah*, so to speak.

IN SUMMARY

Thus, *menuchah* (serenity, namely in your current situation) contains two parts:

(1) *Someiach B’Chelko*, “happy with your share” – not just to be happy with what you have reached until now, but namely, to be happy with what you’re dealing with now, for that is where your effort is, that is where your share is, and that is where you will be happy and serene.

(2) Through meriting a revelation of the light of the *neshamah*, a person reaches greater recognition of the Creator, and then in any situation where he is in, he feels how Hashem is near him and with him. The greater one feels His Presence, the more serenity he will derive from it.

EVERY SITUATION IS A STEP OF A LARGER PROCESS

So far, we have spoken about one side of the coin – the serenity you can have in your current situation. The other side of the coin, we mentioned, is to be aware that every situation you are in is but a step in a process. There is always another step afterwards to reach.

EXAMPLE: CONTEMPLATING THE THIRD BEIS HAMIKDASH

For example, in the days of mourning we are in, where we mourn the *Beis HaMikdash*, you can reflect about the following. In the times of the second *Beis HaMikdash*, when

the *Beis HaMikdash* was rebuilt from its ruins, can we say that they were totally serene in that situation, just because they got back the *Beis HaMikdash* again? The Sages said that their happiness wasn’t complete, because five things were missing since the first *Beis HaMikdash*.² There was still a lot left to be desired.

Even by the first *Beis HaMikdash*, which was built by Shlomo HaMelech, who was called the “*ish menuchah*” (man of serenity), it wasn’t like the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will descend from a fire in Heaven and which will never be destroyed. Therefore, both the first and second *Beis HaMikdash* were each a step of a greater process, and they were each an incomplete situation.

And in fact, even the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which Chazal guarantee will never be destroyed, is also but a step of a larger process, so it will not be a completed situation.

During these days of mourning, when we pray for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we should realize that the third *Beis HaMikdash* is just another step in the process. The Sages said that the world will last for 6000 years and then destroyed for the next thousand years.³ So even the third *Beis HaMikdash* will not be here forever! Chazal said that it will not be destroyed, but this means that it cannot be destroyed due to any sins of the Jewish people; but Hashem will destroy the world after 6000 years, so the third *Beis HaMikdash* will be included in this as well. The entire Creation will be destroyed [and Hashem will renew the Creation]; we will go from “*And they journeyed*” to “*And they camped.*” So even the third *Beis HaMikdash* is not the final state – it is but a step of a larger process.

Thus, when our souls yearn and hope for the redemption, it should not be entirely about the building of third *Beis HaMikdash*. If that is a person’s entire yearning for the future, it is a form of *katnus* (small-mindedness).

Taking this further, the *Ramchal* (in *sefer Daas Tuvnos*) explains that after This World ceases at the end of the sixth millennium, there will then be a seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth millennium, which will be the situation of the World To Come. So even the World To Come is not the end goal. Also, the Gemara says that Torah scholars do not have any serenity, not on this world and not on the

² Yoma 9b

³ Sanhedrin 97a

next world.⁴ So even in the World To Come, they have no serenity. Whatever stage a person is at, there can never be complete serenity, because there is always another stage to rise to after that – whether a person is in This World, or in the next world.

When a person is content in his current situation, he enjoys it there, and he won't want to leave it. This is true both about physical pleasure as well as spiritual pleasure. When a person has deep, spiritual pleasure and serenity in his situation, he will not want to leave it.

This is the deep reason of why there is sadness of the soul on *Motzei Shabbos*, when it is sad that Shabbos has gone. When the soul enjoyed the serenity of Shabbos, it finds such pleasure there that it doesn't want to leave it. Yet, there is an even deeper level than this: a person can understand on *Motzei Shabbos* that the past Shabbos was but a step that leads to the next Shabbos. [When that is the perspective, his soul will find true solace on *Motzei Shabbos*].

NO SITUATION IS FOREVER

If a person has serenity in his situation, he wants to remain there, and even if he also has aspirations to rise above it and go to a higher level, deep down, he still wants to remain there, because he is enjoying it so much. But a person must understand that he can never remain forever connected to any given situation, even a spiritual one.

For example, on *Succos*, there are seven days of sitting in the *succah*, and after that, we leave the *succah*. If a person sits in the *succah* for another day, he transgresses the sin of *bal tosif* ("do not add").

Whether on this world or on the next world, a person must have the attitude of "I am a stranger to this land". Not only must we feel like a stranger towards This World, but even when it comes to the spiritual, we must also recognize that we are ultimately a "stranger" that dwells in it temporarily. Therefore, we need to understand that someday, we will take leave of it all, where we will go to the next "step" of the process.

There is the Creator, and there are His creations. If a person cannot part from a certain situation because he is serene there, it is like *bal tosif*, because at a certain point, one must be able to take leave of the situation and go to the

next one – even in the spiritual realm [thus enabling one to achieve integration with the Creator].

THE ONLY LASTING CONNECTION – TO HASHEM, TORAH, AND THE SOULS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

If a person is not connected to any one situation, what is he *is* connected to, then?

He can only be connected to Hashem, His Torah, and the souls of the Jewish people. There is no "situation" to be forever connected to. One cannot remain forever with his spouse, or his children, or his various acquisitions. In order for a person to be fully connected to Hashem, Torah, and the souls of the Jewish people, he cannot remain forever in any one situation – whether in this world, or in the next world. A person must not become dependent on any given place or time.

The more that a person is *someiach b'chelko* (*happy with his current situation*), together with a connection to Hashem, Torah, and the souls of the Jewish people – recognizing well that each situation we are in is always a step in the process, leading us to another step – this enables a person to feel "*I am a stranger in the land*", both in this world and in the next.

Of course, if a person has a misunderstanding about this concept, he will only become melancholy when he hears of these concepts, feeling that the future of his existence is uncertain and hanging in the balance, like the *beinonim* whose fate hangs in the balance in the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. But if a person has absorbed this concept well, he has come to recognize the depth behind the ultimate purpose of creation.

IN CONCLUSION

In these days of mourning, on one hand, one needs to hope and pray that the third *Beis HaMikdash* be rebuilt, speedily in our days; and, along with this, in the depths of the soul, one needs to await the greater purpose of it all, which is the revelation of Hashem that will come to the world, which will be experienced in the heart of each individual.

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FROM THE SEFER BILVAVI ON THE PARSHA