

The Parshah in a Nutshell

Massei

Numbers 33:1--36:13

The forty-two journeys and encampments of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the Land of Canaan.



(c) Sarah Kranz

Also in Massei: The boundaries of the Promised Land are given, and cities of refuge are designated as havens and places of exile for inadvertent murderers. The daughters of Tzelafchad marry within their own tribe of Menasseh, so that the estate which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe.

Massei

Numbers 33:1--36:13

Summary & Commentary

Journeys and Encampments

"These are the journeys of the

children of Israel going out of the land of Egypt with their hosts, under the hand of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote their **goings out** according to their journeys by the

Commentary

Journeys and Encampments: *And they journeyed from... and they camped at... (33:1-49)*

Our chapter opens, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel." However, it then proceeds to recount not the journeys but the forty-two encampments at which they *stopped* during their sojourn in the Sinai Desert!

Yet these encampments were not ends unto themselves--only way-stations and stepping stones to advance the nation of Israel in their goal of attaining the Promised Land. So the stops themselves are referred to as "journeys".

The same is true of the journey of life. Pauses, interruptions and setbacks are an inadvertent part of a person's sojourn on earth. But when everything a person does is toward the goal of attaining the "Holy Land" -- the sanctification of the material world -- these, too, are "journeys". Ultimately, they are shown to have been the true motors of progression, each an impetus to the realization of one's mission and purpose in life.

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

goings out: *These are the journeys of the children of Israel going out of the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt)... (33:1)*

It would seem that there was only *one* journey which took the Jewish nation out of Egypt--their journey from Raamses to Sukkot. The other "journeys" listed in our Parshah were between points outside of the geographical borders of Egypt. Why, then, does the Torah speak of "the journeys" -- in the plural -- "of the children of Israel going out of the land of *Mitzrayim*"?

Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "borders" and "narrows." On the spiritual level, the journey from Egypt is a journey from the boundaries that limit us--an Exodus from the narrow straits of habit, convention and ego to the "good broad land" of the infinite potential of our G-dly soul.

And the journey from *Mitzrayim* is a perpetual one: what is expansive and uninhibited by yesterdays standards, is narrow and confining in light of the added wisdom and new possibilities of today's station. Thus, each of life's "journeys" is an Exodus from the land of *Mitzrayim*: having transcended yesterdays limitations, we must again journey from the *Mitzrayim* that our present norm represents relative to our newly-uncovered potential.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

commandment of G-d; and these are their journeys according to their goings out."

The Torah goes on to **recount** the 42 stations from the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land:

- 1) "And they journeyed from Raamses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover... and they camped in Sukkot";
- 2) "And they journeyed from Sukkot, and camped in Etam, which is in the edge of the wilderness";
- 3) "And they journeyed from Etam, and turned back to Pi-Hachiroth, which is before Baal-Tzefon; and they camped before Migdol";
- 4) "They passed through the midst of the sea into the desert, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etam and camped in Mara";
- 5) Elim ("in Elim were twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees");
- 6) The Red Sea; 7) the Sin Desert; 8) Dofkah; 9) Alush; 10) **Rephidim** (where they thirsted for water, had **doubts** about G-d's presence, and fought Amalek);

Commentary

recount: *And Moses wrote down their goings out to their journeys, by the command of G-d (33:2)*

This is comparable to a king whose child was ill, and he took him to another place to heal him. On their return journey, the father recounted all their stations: "Here we slept," "Here we caught cold," "Here your head hurt." By the same token, G-d said to Moses: Recount for them all the places where it was that they had angered Me (Midrash Tanchuma)

Rephidim: "Here we slept" -- at Mount Sinai, when Moses had to wake them to come receive the Torah. "Here we caught cold" -- at Rephidim, where the Amalekites "cooled (your faith in G-d) on the road." "Here your head hurt" -- when they doubted the return of their head and leader, Moses, and made the Golden Calf.

(Rabbi Abraham Mordechai of Gur)

doubts: The journey from Egypt to the Holy Land was a one-way journey: the Israelites did not physically revisit their encampments in the desert. What, then, is the significance of the "return journey"?

Commentary

made by the king and his child in the above-cited parable by the Midrash?

As the people of Israel traveled through the desert, they experienced their forty-two encampments as interruptions, even setbacks, in their progress towards the Promised Land. But on the eve of their entry into the Holy Land, they were able to "return", to look back upon these encampments and re-experience them in a different light: not as a people venturing from slavery toward an unknowable goal through a fearful wilderness, but as a people who, having attained their goal, could now appreciate how each way-station in their journey had forged a particular part of their identity and had contributed to what and where they were today.

The great desert we each must cross in the journey of life is the product of what the Kabbalists call the *tzimtzum* ("constriction"): G-d's creation of a so-called vacuum within His all-pervading immanence, a bubble of darkness within His infinite light that allows man the choice between good and evil. For in order that our acts of goodness should be meaningful, there must also be the choice of evil.

Three conditions are necessary to create the possibility of free choice in the heart of man:

- a) There must be a withdrawal of the divine light and the creation of the "vacuum" that allows the existence of evil.
- b) It is not enough that evil exist; it must also be equipped with the illusion of worthiness and desirability. If evil were readily perceived for what it is -- the suppression of light and life -- there would be no true choice.
- c) On the other hand, an absolute vacuum would shut out all possibility for choosing life. Thus the *tzimtzum* must be mitigated with a glow, however faint, of the Divine light that empowers us to overcome darkness and death.

Therein lies the deeper significance of the three stations in the Midrashes metaphor -- "Here we slept," "Here we were cooled," "Here your head hurt."

"Here we slept" refers to the withdrawal of the Divine vitality in order to create the *tzimtzum*.

"Here we were cooled" refers to the mitigation of the *tzimtzum* with a faint glow of divine light.

And "Here your head hurt" is a reference to the many contortions that cloud our minds and confuse our priorities, leading to a distorted vision of reality and misguided decisions.

All these, however, serve a single purpose: to advance us along the journey of life and to imbue the journey with meaning and worth. Today we can only reiterate to ourselves our knowledge of this truth; on the "return journey," we shall revisit these stations and see and experience their true import.

11) The Sinai Desert (where they camped for eleven months and twenty days, received the Torah and built the Sanctuary);

12) Kivrot Hattaavah ("Graves of Lust"); 13) Hatzerot (where Miriam spoke against Moses); 14) Ritmah (the incident of the Spies); 15) Rimon Peretz; 16) Livnah; 17) Rissah; 18) Keheilatah; 19) Mount Shefer; 20) Charadah; 21) Makheilot; 22) Tachat; 23) Tarach; 24) Mitkah; 25) Chashmonah; 26) Moseirot; 27) Bnei Yaakan; 28) Chod Hagidgad; 29) Yotvatah; 30) Abronah; 31) Etzyon Gaver;

32) **Kadesh** (where Miriam died, and the incident of the "Waters of Strife" took place); 33) Hor HaHar (where Aaron died and the Israelites were attacked by the Canaanite king of Arad); 34) Tzalmonah; 35) Punon; 36) Ovot; 37) I'yei Haavarim ("Desolate Mounds") on the border of Moab; 38) Divon Gad; 39) Almon Divlatomah; 40) "the Avarim Mountains before Nebo";

41) "And they journeyed from the Avarim Mountains and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan River across from Jericho; they **camped** by the Jordan, from Bet-HaYeshimot to Avel-HaShittim in the plains of Moab."

Commentary

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Kadesh: *And they journeyed from Etzyon-Gaver, and camped in the wilderness of Tzin, which is Kadesh (33:36)*

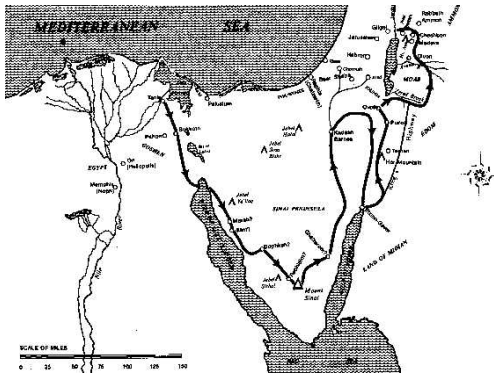
Hence "journeys" 1 through 11 were in the first year following the Exodus, journeys 32-42 in the fortieth year, meaning that there were nineteen journeys in the intervening thirty-eight years. According to the Midrash, 19 of these 38 years were spent in Kadesh, and the other 19 wandering through the desert.

camped: *And they camped by the Jordan, from Bet-HaYeshimot to Avel-HaShittim in the plains of Moab (33:49)*

(I.e., their camp extended from Bet-HaYeshimot to Avel-HaShittim in the plains of Moab.)

Rabbah bar Chana said: I have seen this place, it is three parasangs (approx. 12 miles) in extension.

(Talmud, Yoma 75b; Rashi)



The Journeys of the Children of Israel from the Exodus to the Promised Land (from *The Living Torah*, published by Moznim)

A Warning

"Speak to the children of Israel," says G-d to Moses, "and say to them:"

When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you; and you shall destroy all their figured pavements, and destroy all their molten images, and devastate all their high places.

*And you shall **dispossess** the inhabitants of the land, and dwell in it; for I have given you the land to possess it...*

But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass, that those whom you allow to remain of them shall be as thorns in your eyes, and stings in your sides, and shall harass you in the land wherein you dwell.

Commentary

dispossess: *And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell in it; for I have given you the land to possess it (33:53)*

The Torah should have begun with the verse "This month shall be to you the head of months..." (Exodus 12:2) which is the first mitzvah commanded to the Jewish people. Why does it begin with "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth"?

So that if the nations of the world will say to the people of Israel, "You are thieves, for you have conquered the lands of seven nations," they will reply to them: "The entire world is G-d's; He created it and He gives it to whomever he desires. It was His desire to first give it to them, and by His desire it was taken from them and given to us."
(Rashi, Genesis 1:10)

The Boundaries of the Land

This is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan with its borders:

Your south border shall be the outmost coast of the Dead Sea eastward... to Ma'aleh-Akrabbim... to Kadesh-Barnea, and shall go on to Hazar-Addar, and pass on to Atzmon; the border shall turn about from Atzmon to the wadi of Egypt, and its limits shall be at the Sea.

And as for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this shall be your west border.

And this shall be your north border: from the Great Sea you shall mark out your frontier at Hor HaHar... to the entrance of Hamat... to Zedad... to Zifron, and its limits shall be at Hatzar Einan...

And you shall point out your east border from Hatzar Eienan to Shefam... to Rivlah... and shall reach the eastward projection of the Sea of Kinneret... down to the Jordan, and its limits shall be at the Dead Sea.

This shall be your land with its borders round about.

The tribe of Levi, who will not be allotted a portion of the land, should be given 48 cities in which to dwell.

Cities of Refuge

Six cities--three on each side of the Jordan--should be set aside as havens for "**one who slays a soul unawares.**"

Commentary

Six cities: *Six cities of refuge shall they be for you (35:13)*

The Torah includes six hundred and thirteen mitzvot (commandments).... Of these, the mitzvot that can be observed today [following the destruction of the Holy Temple and our exile from the Holy Land] number, altogether, three hundred and thirty-nine. Among these are mitzvot for which a person becomes obligated only under certain circumstances, so that it is possible that never in his lifetime will these circumstances come about and he will never have the opportunity to do them--e.g., the mitzvah to pay an employee on time... The number of mitzvot that every Jew is obligated in is two hundred and seventy... Many of these, however, are binding only on certain days of the year or certain times of the day.

There are six mitzvot whose obligation is constant, and does not depart from the person for a single moment throughout his lifetime. These are: to believe in G-d, to avow His oneness, to renounce idolatry, to love G-d, to fear Him, and to avoid temptation to sin.

Anyone who causes the death of a fellow--intentionally or not--must **find his way** immediately to one of the Cities of Refuge, "so that the killer shall not die before he stand before the congregation in judgment." Only there is he safe from the "redeemer of the blood"--the relative of the slain person who comes to avenge the death. For if the avenging relative kills the killer outside of a city of refuge, "he shall not be guilty of blood."

The killer is then brought before the court. If he is convicted of intentional murder, he is executed. "The redeemer of the blood himself shall slay the murderer; where he meets him, he shall slay him."

If he is found guilty only of causing a death through his negligence, but without intent to kill,

*The congregation [of judges] shall save the slayer from the hand of the redeemer of the blood; and the congregation shall send him back to the city of his refuge... and he shall dwell in it **until the death of the High Priest**, who was anointed with the holy oil.*

Commentary

They are symbolized by the verse, "Six cities of refuge shall they be for you." (Sefer HaChinuch)

Commentary

of judges: And the congregation shall judge... and the congregation shall save... (35:24-25)

one who slays a soul unawares: *To flee there anyone who slays a soul unawares (35:15)*

Every transgression of the Divine will is a subtle form of "inadvertent murder": "Murder" because it disrupts the flow of vitality from the Source of Life to the soul of the transgressor; "inadvertent" because a sinful deed is always contrary to the true will of the transgressor, who has been misled by the distortions imposed by his animal self.

The Great Sanhedrin (which served as the supreme court of Torah law) consisted of seventy-one members; a Minor Sanhedrin (authorized to try capital crimes), of twenty-three... From where do we know that a Minor Sanhedrin is of twenty-three? It is written, "And the congregation shall judge... and the congregation shall save." One congregation condemns and the other congregation defends, hence we have twenty, as a "congregation" (*eidah*) consists of not less than ten... And from where do we derive the additional three? By the implications of the text (Exodus 23:2)... which says that to acquit, a majority of one suffices, whereas to convict, a majority of two is required. (Thus if ten judges vote to acquit, it would require a tribunal of 22 to convict). And since a court cannot be of an even number, we need twenty-three.

For the one who spiritually "slays a soul unawares" there have been set aside six spiritual "cities of refuge." These are (as per the Sefer HaChinuch cited above) the "six constant mitzvot" that apply to every Jew, at all times, and in all circumstances, so that they are readily accessible to one who seeks refuge from his faults and failings, whomever he might be and wherever the desire to rectify his life might strike him.

(Talmud, Sanhedrin 2a)

But a haven is of little use if it is inaccessible or its location is unknown. As is the case with the physical cities of refuge, it is the community's responsibility to "straighten the roads... to repair them and broaden them... remove all impediments and obstacles" and post signs at all crossroads and pointing the way to the haven of Torah. (From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

***until the death of the High Priest:** And he shall remain there until the death of the High Priest (35:25)*

find his way: *And you shall appoint for you cities, to be cities of refuge for you (35:11)*

Therefore, mothers of high priests were wont to provide food and raiment for them, that they should not pray for their son's death.

The court is obligated to straighten the roads to the cities of refuge, to repair them and broaden them. They must remove all impediments and obstacles... bridges should be built [over all natural barriers] so as not to delay one who is fleeing to [the city of refuge]. The width of a road to a city of refuge should not be less than thirty-two cubits.

Why is the High Priest to blame? --As they say here [in Babylon], "Toby did the jobbing and Ziggad got the slogging?" or as they say there [in the Land of Israel]: "Shechem got him a wife and Mabgai caught the knife?" Said a venerable old scholar: I heard an explanation at one of the sessional lectures of Raba, that they should have implored Divine grace for their generation, which they failed to do.

"Refuge", "Refuge", was written at all crossroads so that the murderers should recognize the way and turn there.

As was the case of that fellow who was devoured by a lion some three parasangs from the town where Rabbi Joshua ben Levi lived, and Elijah the Prophet would not commune with Rabbi Joshua on that account for three days. (Talmud, Makot 11a)

(Mishneh Torah, Laws Regarding Murder and the Preservation of Life, 8:5)

Again, only there does the law protect him from the vengeance of the slain man's relatives.

And these laws shall be for a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings:

Whoever kills any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the testimony of [two] witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

You shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death... For blood pollutes the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

And you shall not defile the land which you shall inhabit, in which I dwell; for I, G-d, dwell among the children of Israel.

Marriage Restrictions

Commentary

I, G-d: For blood pollutes the land... in which I dwell; for I, G-d, dwell among the children of Israel (35:33-34)

How were the Ten Commandments given? Five on one tablet and five on a second tablet. This means that "Do not murder" corresponds to "I am G-d your G-d." The Torah is telling us that one who sheds blood it is as if he has reduced the image of the King.

What is this analogous to? To a king of flesh and blood who entered a country and put up portraits of himself, and made statues of himself, and minted coins with his image. After a while, the people of the country overturned his portraits, broke his statues and invalidated his coins, thereby reducing the image of the kind. So, too, one who sheds blood reduces the image of the King, as it is written (Genesis 9:6): "One who spills a man's blood... for in the image of G-d He made man."
(Mechilta)

Restrictions: *To one of the family of her father's tribe shall she be a wife (36:8)*

Said Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel: "There never were in Israel greater days of joy than the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur.

I can understand Yom Kippur, because it is a day of forgiveness and pardon and on it the second Tablets of the Law were given; but what happened on the fifteenth of Av? Rav Judah said in the name of Shmuel: It is the day on which permission was granted to the tribes to intermarry. For it is written: "This is the thing which G-d has commanded concerning the daughters of Tzelafchad...."--meaning this ordinance shall remain in effect for this generation only.

(Talmud, Taanit 30b)

The five daughters of Tzelafchad, whose father had died without sons, had petitioned for a share in the Land (as recounted above in the Parshah of Pinchas). Now, the leaders of their tribe, Menasseh, approached Moses with a petition of their own. If any of these women will marry someone from another tribe, they argued, this would mean that their sons, who will inherit their land, will likewise be of another tribe. The result would be that, "their portion... and shall be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they are joined, and the lot of our inheritance will be diminished."

The following law is therefore decreed by Moses, in the name of G-d:

Any daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall marry a man of the family of the tribe of her father... So that the inheritance shall not remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

"These are the commandments and the judgments," concludes the Parshah of Massei and the Book of Numbers, "which G-d commanded by the hand of Moses to the children of Israel, in the plains of Moab by the Jordan near Jericho."

Commentary

Narrow Escape

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

"These are the journeys of the children of Israel, going out of the land of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt)." So opens the Torah section of *Massei* ("Journeys"---Numbers 33-36), which goes on to chronicle their travels from Egypt to the Holy Land, listing their forty-two encampments from Ramases in Egypt to the Plains of Moab on the eastern bank of the Jordan River.

It would seem, however, that there was only *one* journey which took the Jewish nation out of Egypt: their journey from Ramases to Sukkot. The other forty journeys were between points outside of the geographical borders of Egypt. Why, then, does the Torah speak of the journeys, in the plural, of "the children of Israel going out of the land of *Mitzrayim*"?

Daily Exodus

Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "boundaries" and "narrow straits." On the spiritual level, the journey from Egypt is a journey from the boundaries that limit us---an exodus from the narrow straits of habit, convention and ego to the "good broad land"¹ of infinite potential implicit in the divine essence of the human soul.

And the journey from *Mitzrayim* is a perpetual one: what is expansive and uninhibited by yesterday's standards, is narrow and confining in light of the added wisdom and new possibilities of today's station. Thus, each of life's journeys is an exodus "from the land of *Mitzrayim*": having transcended yesterday's limitations, a person must again journey from the *Mitzrayim* that his present norm represents relative to his newly-uncovered potential. In the words of our sages, "in every generation, and every day, a person is obligated to see himself as having today exited Egypt."²

The endeavor to exit *Mitzrayim* takes on a special significance in the stretch of calendar known as *Bein HaMetzarim* ("between the narrow straits")³--the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av. *Bein HaMetzarim* is our annual re-experience of the tragedy of

galut--our banishment from the "good broad land" and the diminution of G-d's manifest presence on physical earth with the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. It is no accident that the Torah section of *Massei* is read and studied⁴ in this time of narrowing horizons and constriction of the spirit, imparting its eternal message that wherever one may stand in the forty-two-rung ladder from utter slavery to divine expanse, there is always the need, and capacity, to achieve an exodus from all that constrains us, from without and from within.⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. Exodus 3:8, *et al.*
2. Talmud, Pesachim 116b, as quoted in Tanya, ch. 47 (the Tanya adds the words "and every day" and "today").
3. Lamentations 1:3, as per Midrash Rabbah on verse.
4. In the annual Torah-reading cycle, the section of *Massei* is always read during this three-week period.
5. Based on Likkutei Sichot, vol. II pp. 348-354.

A Slumber and a Headache

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

These are the journeys of the children of Israel who went out of the land of Egypt... And Moses recorded their travels and encampments, in accordance with the command of G-d

Numbers 33:1-2

This is comparable to a king whose child was ill, and he took him to another place to heal him. On their return journey, the father recounted all their stations: "Here we slept," "Here we were cooled," "Here your head hurt." By the same token, G-d said to Moses: Recount for them all the places where it was that they had angered Me

Midrash Tanchuma, Massei 3

The Exodus marked our birth as a nation; our entry into the Land of Israel, the attainment of our national and spiritual maturity. In between, we had to undergo a 40-year journey through "the great and fearsome desert, [a place of] venomous snakes and scorpions and thirst for lack of water."1

This journey had forty-two stations. Some, like the year-long stay at Mount Sinai, included moments of sublime revelation. Most, however, were accompanied by doubt, strife, betrayal, and the perpetual contest between man and G-d. In the end, however, they resulted in the attainment of "the good and broad land"2 that was the objective of the journey.

The human story is likewise the story of a journey through a great and fearsome desert, fraught with physical and spiritual dangers and direfully lacking the waters that quench the thirsting soul of man. In the end, however, in spite of all the strife and tribulation, we will achieve our objective of a promised land blessed with the goodness and boundlessness of the Divine.

And when we do, we will look back at all the stations of our journey and see them for what they truly were: challenges and opportunities that paved, rather than impeded, our

advance through the desert. Rather than the pitfalls and obstacles as which we first experienced them, we will recognize them as rungs in the ladder that have raised us to this elevated perspective.

The Return Journey

This is the deeper significance of the "return journey" made by the king and his child in the above-cited parable by the Midrash. The Midrash compares G-d's instruction to Moses to record all the stations in the nation's journey through the desert to the story of a king traveling with his child to seek a cure for the child's illness. On their return journey, as they passed through the stations at which they had originally stopped, the king reminded his child: here we slept, here we were cooled, here your head hurt.

The journey from Egypt to the Holy Land was a one-way journey: the Jews did not return to Egypt, nor did they physically revisit their encampments in the desert. But on the eve of their entry into the Holy Land, they were able to look back upon their forty-two encampments and re-experience them in a different light: not as a people venturing from Egyptian slavery toward an unknowable goal through a fearful wilderness, but as a people who, having attained their goal, could now appreciate how each way-station in their journey had forged a particular part of their identity and had contributed to what and where they were today.

The Three Stations

The great and fearsome desert we each must cross is the product of what the Kabbalists call the *tzimtzum* ("constriction"): G-d's creation of a so-called vacuum within His all-pervading immanence, a bubble of darkness within His infinite light that allows man the choice between good and evil.

"Behold," says the Torah, "I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil... Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. Choose life."3

In order that our choice of life should be meaningful, there must also be the choice of death; in order that the good we do

should have value and significance, we must be made susceptible to evil and its enticements.

Three conditions are necessary to create the possibility of free choice in the heart of man:

- a) There must be a withdrawal of the divine light and the creation of the "vacuum" that allows the existence of evil.
- b) It is not enough that evil exist--it must also be equipped with the illusion of worthiness and desirability. If evil were readily perceived for what it is--the suppression of light and life--there would be no true choice.
- c) On the other hand, an absolute vacuum would shut out all possibility for choosing life. Thus the *tzimtzum* must be mitigated with a glow, however faint, of the divine light that empowers us to overcome darkness and death.

Therein lies the deeper significance of the three stations in the Midrash's metaphor, "Here we slept," "Here we were cooled," "Here your head hurt."

--"Here we slept" refers to the withdrawal of the divine vitality in order to create the *tzimtzum*.⁴

--"Here we were cooled" refers to the mitigation of the *tzimtzum* with a faint glow of divine light.⁵

--And "Here your head hurt" is a reference to the many contortions that cloud our minds and confuse our priorities, leading to a distorted vision of reality and misguided decisions.

All these, however, serve a single purpose: to advance us along the journey of life and to imbue the journey with meaning and worth. Today we can only reiterate to ourselves our knowledge of this truth; on the return journey, we shall revisit these stations and see and experience their true import.⁶

FOOTNOTES

¹. Deuteronomy 8: 15.

². Exodus 3: 8.

³. Deuteronomy 30: 15-19.

⁴. Cf. Talmud, Berachot 57b: "Sleep is a one-sixtieth part of death."

⁵. Cf. Midrash Rabbah, Bereishit 12: 15: "A king had empty glasses. Said he: 'If I fill them with hot water, they will burst; if I fill them with freezing water, they will crack.' What did the king do? He mixed hot and cold and poured it into them, and they stood. In the same way, G-d said: 'If I create the world with the attribute of mercy, there will be much sin; [if I create it] with the attribute of judgment, how will the world survive? So I shall create it with both mercy and judgment, and hopefully it will survive.'"

⁶. Based on Likkutei Sichot, vol. XVIII, pp. 390-398.

Based on the teachings of the [Lubavitcher Rebbe](#); adapted by [Yanki Tauber](#). Originally published in "Week in Review."

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