In loving memory of
Mrs. **Chaya Raizel** bas Reb **Dovid HaKohen** ע"ה **Kats**
Tarzana, California
On the occasion of her second yahrtzeit, 3 Menachem-Av, 5779
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*

Dedicated by her family שיחיו
* * *

In loving memory of
Mrs. **Raizel** bas Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה **Mayers**
On the occasion of her 12th yahrtzeit, 8 Menachem-Av, 5779
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
*

Dedicated by her loving children
Elka bas **Raizel** שתחי'
Yenta bas **Raizel** שתחי'
Chaim ben **Raizel** שיחי'
and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren שיחיו

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Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Matos-Masei, 5779

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ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי״ד
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

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Shagalov

Dedicated by
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו
Shagalov

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Passed away on 25 Mar-Cheshvan, 5771
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Based on the talks of the
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Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

לעילוי נשמת
אי"א נו"נ עוסק בצ"צ
איש אמת תם וישר מלאכתו מלאכת שמים
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' **מנחם אהרן**
ב"ר **יוסף הכהן** ע"ה
ראדאל
אהוב לבריות וחביב לכל אדם
קיבל את כולם בסבר פנים יפות
אוהב שלום ורודף שלום
זכה להיות שליח כ"ק אדמו"ר מה"מ
מסר נפשו לעניני חנוך עטה"ק
קירב משפחות רבות לתורה ומצוות
נטע הכרת הבורא ע"י גילוי נפלאות הבורא
לתלמידים הרבה באהבה
זכה לגדל ולראות בנים ובני בנים
דור ישרים יבורך
עוסקים בתורה ומצוות בדרכי החסידות
ומהם שלוחי המלך
נפטר ביום שני לסדר וטיהרו הכהן
כ"ח ניסן ה'תשע"ז
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.
(מנוסח המצבה)
*
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו

Matos

The War for Ahavas Yisroel

The Torah portion speaks of two wars, against Midian and against the seven nations of Canaan, which had two different motives: vengeance and conquest. Elsewhere, the Torah speaks of a third war, that against Amalek, whom the Jewish people are commanded to annihilate. The three wars, conquest, retribution and destruction, differ in how the enemy is treated and what is done with the property. Each represents a different aspect of our war against the forces opposed to G-dliness and delaying Moshiach. The seven nations of Canaan are the seven emotional traits. Amalek is arrogance and ego. Midian is baseless hatred. The uniqueness of the war against Midian is that all Jews must fight, and take vengeance, by acting with Ahavas Yisroel.

This week's Torah reading speaks about two wars, the war against Midian and the war against the seven nations of Canaan. Each war had a different purpose. The Jewish people were commanded to fight against the Canaanite nations in order to conquer the land of Israel. The Jews fought against Midian because G-d told Moses, "Take revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites." Thus the two wars, against Midian and against the seven nations of Canaan, had two different motives: vengeance and conquest.

This critical difference obviously affected the conduct of the war. The Canaanites were allowed to flee or make peace, while all male Midianites and all adult females were to be killed. The houses of the Canaanites were left intact, many of them to be occupied by the Jewish people. The houses, cities and dwellings of the Midianites were burned to the ground.

When the Torah records an event, with all its details, it does

Through the descent – and only through the descent – the Jewish people ascend to a level higher than otherwise possible. The journeys through the desert – each of the forty-two encampments – were a descent leading to the ascent into the land of Israel. Our descent into exile will lead to an ascent into Redemption.

Thus, when we momentarily stumble – when something obstructs our observance or doubts hinder our devotion or our complacency impedes Moshiach – we should not despair. In our darkest moments, we must increase light and joy, that is, Torah and mitzvos. Moshiach's delay is an "encampment" that should not discourage or depress us. Rather we should invest our anticipation, our joyful expectation with more enthusiasm and more vigor, knowing that we are in the final stage of our journeys toward Redemption.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 23, pp. 224-228)

foot outside the country. How many "journeys" does it take to leave? However, since the word for "Egypt" in Hebrew also means boundaries and limitations, the Torah is telling us something about our individual spiritual growth: in order to leave behind our limitations, the obstacles to our spirituality, we must take many steps, make many journeys. Each phase, each ascent, is a leave-taking, an uprooting and consequent elevation. And the encampments – our accomplishments in Torah, mitzvos and Divine service – are only temporary resting places, way stations on the journey. We must leave them behind and journey forth, go forward. We camp, as the Jewish people did, not to "stand still," but to gather strength and prepare for the next journey – the next transformation on the way to Moshiach, Redemption and the land of Israel.

What relevance does this examination of the opening verse of the Torah reading have for us today? It is well known that the forty-two journeys of the Jewish people in the wilderness allude not just to an individual's life, but also to the life of the Jewish people in exile. For we are currently journeying through the "wilderness of the nations." That being the case, our encampments – the sojourns of the children of Israel among the various nations – are a descent into greater exile. So long as we tarry, however friendly and supportive the country, we have interrupted and suspended our journey. Such a delay impedes and obstructs fulfillment of our true goal, reaching the land of Israel, that is, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness.

Nevertheless, the encampments, all of them, are also part of the journey. Even when we stop in undesirable places, where we "anger G-d" by our behavior – our assimilation or imitation of the nations – we are still on the journey, still traveling toward the land of Israel.

The descent into exile is part of the process of Redemption.

so because even the details teach us about our Divine service. The word "Torah" means instruction; the Torah instructs us, by direct command or analogy, how to fulfill our Divinely ordained mission to make the physical world a dwelling place for G-dliness. The events of the Torah are a paradigm for the events of the final Redemption. Ideally, the Jewish people are to observe the mitzvos in the land of Israel. Just as the war against Midian was a prelude to settling the land of Israel, so too the battle against the present day Midian – our internal Midian – serves as a prelude to the coming of Moshiach.

The Torah juxtaposes the two wars, placing the instructions for the war against the seven nations immediately after telling us about the war against Midian. By doing so, the Torah invites a comparison. The contrast in the goal and conduct of the two wars reflects the purpose and methods of our spiritual battles. We have two types of struggles, against "Midian" and against the "seven nations of Canaan." We must struggle against Midian and Canaan personally, fighting our evil inclinations, negative character traits and the desires that obstruct G-dliness. We must also do so nationally, destroying the nature of "Midian" and conquering the "seven Canaanite nation-like" behavior of the world through our Torah and mitzvos.

On a personal level, both wars are part of the preparation for Redemption. We can readily understand the analogy with the war against the seven nations. As long as other nations lived in the land of Israel, had authority over it, the Jewish people could not truly settle the land. They had to establish a dwelling place for themselves in order to establish a dwelling place for G-d's Presence. Hence, we must battle the "seven nations" within us to bring the Redemption.

What of the war against Midian? How does taking vengeance bring Moshiach? To answer this, we must note a third type of war.

This is the war against Amalek, a war of utter destruction. The three wars, conquest, retribution and destruction, differ in how the enemy is treated and what is done with the property. In a war of conquest, the purpose is to take over the land; the inhabitants are allowed to flee. In a war of destruction, the purpose is annihilation; the inhabitants are allowed no escape. In a war of retribution, vengeance is taken against those involved, the instigators. Some inhabitants are killed, and others saved.

From this we see that the war against Midian fits in the middle: it has characteristics of the war against Amalek, a war of total destruction. It also has characteristics of the war against the seven nations of Canaan, a war of conquest.

This distinction also applies to the disposition of the property, the spoils of war. The property of the Amalekites was utterly destroyed, not even used for sacrifices. The property of the seven nations of Canaan was divided among those who fought. This excluded the tribe of Levi. From the property of the Midianites, however, a portion was given to the Levites.

The Levites were given part of the Midianite property because in this case, the tribe of Levi went to battle. When it came to conquering the land of Israel, the Levites were exempt from fighting the seven nations. They were separated to serve G-d, teaching Torah to the masses and maintaining the Sanctuary. They were G-d's forces, detached from worldly matters.

But since Midian opposed G-d, the Levites fought. The purpose of the war was to take revenge for **G-d**. Hence the Levites, dedicated to the service of G-d, participated in the war. And having participated, they were entitled to part of the spoils.

Since the participation of the Levites in the war against Midian was unique, it teaches us a unique aspect of our battle to bring Moshiach. In a general sense, every Jew can reach the level of the

Of course, at the actual encampment of "*kivros ha'ta'avah*," the Jewish people angered G-d with their demand for meat. Before they buried their desire, it pushed them to challenge Moses and test G-d. From this we see that even negative things, acts that violate G-d's Will, are still part of the journey. They, too, contain holiness and lead to the ultimate goal, entrance to the land of Israel.

In general, we can distinguish between "going" – the journeys – and "standing" – the encampments. "Standing" means remaining in the same place. Even when there is advancement, if we are still connected to where we were, we haven't really moved forward. For example, one may be a beginning, intermediate or advanced student. Clearly, an "advanced" student is at a higher level than a "beginning" student. But he is still a student; going from "beginner" to "advanced" isn't really moving forward. But when the student becomes a rabbi or teacher, he is in a completely new state. He has "journeyed forth," going into a status unrelated to his previous situation. This is why the Torah says, "these are the journeys," plural, because a Jew must constantly be moving forward. A Jew must always be going higher, and not just from one level to another in the same place; a Jew must always be on a journey to a totally new stage, one without resemblance or comparison to the previous position.

Of course, there is a deeper implication, one relevant for our current situation and efforts to bring Moshiach. The statement "These are the journeys" means both going forth and leaving behind. That is, the journey to a new stage of existence, a transformed state, a more elevated level, requires that we uproot ourselves from where we were. We must leave behind completely our former circumstances and situation.

The Torah says, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel when they left Egypt." As the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, points out, the Jewish people left Egypt as soon as they stepped

to every individual. Especially in our own day, as we stand on the threshold of the final Redemption, the events of that time will be relived.

So, a more logical phrasing would have been, "These are the encampments of the children of Israel," especially since most of the time they weren't traveling anyway. So when the Torah tells us, "These are the journeys," it indicates something about the whole process. What was the purpose of both the travels and encampments in the wilderness? What was the entire process intended to accomplish? Clearly the intent was to reach the land of Israel. But an encampment is a resting place, the end of a journey, or a particular phase of a journey. We might think that when the Jewish people stopped, they had reached their goal, or if they traveled again afterwards, at least one of their goals. When the Torah says, "These are the journeys," it tells us that each stage – the encampments and the traveling – are part of a greater whole. In and of itself, coming to a particular resting place accomplishes nothing, and might even be a hindrance. Only as part of the ultimate goal, reaching the land of Israel, does a particular encampment or journey have significance.

But if this is the case, the Torah should have said, "This is the journey," not "These are the journeys." If it's all one process, why does the Torah talk about "journeys," in the plural?

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the forty-two "journeys" of the Jewish people correspond to stages in the life of the individual Jew. The names of the stages indicate aspects or levels of personal growth. For example, for a while the Jewish people encamped at "*kivros ha'ta'avah*," literally, the burial of desire. True wisdom leads to a great attachment to G-d. When wisdom overrules the emotions, the individual deeply and fully attaches himself to G-d. As a result, he has in effect buried his desire for material gain or pleasure. For this reason, the Jewish people camped at "*kivros ha'ta'avah*."

tribe of Levi. As Maimonides puts it, "Not just the tribe of Levi, but **every Jew** whose heart moves him and sets his mind to separate himself, can stand before G-d and serve Him." In other words, every Jew has the ability to become holy, distanced from worldly matters. This attitude can even extend to involvement in the needs of others. It's possible to reason that, since I have dedicated myself to the service of G-d, my primary concern, indeed my only concern, is my own spiritual welfare and that of my family, my fellow "Levites."

The Torah tells us that when it comes to conquering the land of Israel, overcoming the seven nations – the seven emotional character traits – one may indeed be able to separate himself from the struggle. But when it comes to fighting against Midian, then just the opposite applies. This is a war in which the Levites not only may participate, but they must participate. In fact, the Levites have a particular obligation to fight against and nullify Midian, since Midian, by definition, opposes Oneness.

Spiritually speaking, each of the three types of wars represents a different stage in self-purification, and thus the rectification of the world. Each is a stage in the preparation for Moshiach. The seven nations of Canaan represent the seven emotional character traits, our animalistic desires. These need to be conquered and transformed. Amalek represents arrogance, egotism and selfishness. It must be destroyed.

Midian, however, represents baseless hatred. The very word means strife and contention, division and disunity. The way to battle dissension, is to take vengeance against it. Midian wants disharmony. It thrives on antipathy, animosity and malice. Vengeance demands we foster the opposite, promoting harmony, respect and devotion. No one is exempt from the battle against hostility. One cannot be a "Levite" and stand aloof when animosity threatens the unity of the Jewish people. Rather, every Jew must

zealously engage in *Ahavas Yisroel*, fighting against the causeless hatred that led to the destruction of the Temple and exile.

The Midianites – the Midian within each of us – seeks strife, discord and dissension. To achieve this goal, Midian tries to deceive us with the argument that only Jews like us, only "Levites," deserve *Ahavas Yisroel*. But *Ahavas Yisroel*, an unconditional love for a fellow Jew, applies to every Jew. The war against Midian must be fought together, with and by all Jews, regardless to which "tribe" they belong. This unites us with the One G-d, and this is the retribution of G-d against Midian.

By taking revenge on Midian, we negate the cause of exile, baseless hatred. Our revenge, the vengeance of G-d, is but *Ahavas Yisroel*, unconditional love for a fellow Jew. This battle we must all fight. This battle we must win, for our victory in it hastens the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 23, pp. 206-213)

Masai

Delays In The Journey

Why is the Torah portion called "journeys" when most of the time in the desert they didn't move? We learn that even "encampments," interruptions or obstacles, are part of the journey. The forty-two "journeys" in the wilderness parallel those of the Jewish people. One can advance, reach a higher level, without going forth. To journey, or go forth, means to travel to a completely new state of existence. Similarly, the encampments – the sojourns of the children of Israel among the various nations – are a descent into greater exile. Delays, even in friendly countries, impede the fulfillment of our true goal, transforming the world into a dwelling place for G-dliness. Nevertheless, the "encampments" are also part of the journey. Our descent into exile will lead to an ascent into Redemption. Therefore, in our darkest moments, we must increase light and joy, that is, Torah and mitzvos. Moshiach's delay is an "encampment" that should not discourage or depress us.

This week's Torah reading, the last in the book of *Bamidbar* (Numbers), begins with the verse: "These are the journeys of the children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt." The Torah then enumerates all the encampments of the Jewish people throughout their travels in the wilderness. This raises an important question about the Torah's choice of words. Since it enumerates the encampments, it should have said, "These are the encampments of the children of Israel." Why does it say, "These are the journeys"? We are given a list of the Jewish people's campsites, not told about their travels.

The question is more than semantics. The narrative of the Torah is the paradigm for all Jewish history. What happened to that generation – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, the forty years in the desert, and the entrance to Israel – happens in all ages and