

It's All About the Journey

One of my favorite classic rock bands is Journey. At our Dueling Pianos event, I requested their song which Shake Rattle and Roll said was the 3rd most popular request: *Don't Stop Believing*. Parshat Masei, the second of our double portion, is all about the journey taken. The forty-two stops undertaken by the Israelites over the course of their journey from Egypt to Israel are all enumerated. Why are these steps mentioned? To indicate that the goal is not where one is at any particular moment but rather how one got there.

Rashi asks, "Why were these journeys recorded?" He answers (quoting from Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan's commentary), "To make G-d's benevolence known. For, although He decreed to move them about and cause them to wander in the wilderness, do not say that they wandered and were moved about from journey to journey all forty years and had no rest-for there are only forty-two journeys here. Subtract fourteen, which took place in the first year, before the punishment (to wander for forty years) their journey from Raamses until they reached Ritmah,

where the spies were dispatched...exclude from there further eight journeys which took place after Aaron's death, from Mount Hor to the plains of Moav during the fortieth year, and it is found that throughout the thirty eight years they took only twenty journeys.¹

Twenty journeys in thirty-eight years-that's not so many. At the same time, one can assert that the journeys were so long that they accompanied the entirety of the thirty-eight years. Gur Aryeh, a supercommentary on Rashi, wrote that the Torah enumerates the journeys, since as the places were well-known it became obvious that the route was easily traveled in a short time.² Whereas the places are not well-known any more (I don't know if anyone knows where Tahat or Almon Divlateimah are) they apparently were in biblical times which is why enumerating them demonstrates the journey's route.

In addition, it is helpful to have all the stops detailed because it shows one looking back all that Israel accomplished. Today we end the Book of Numbers and thus the journeys of our people before reaching

¹ Rashi on Numbers 33:1 ד"ה אלה מסעי

² Gur Aryeh on Numbers 33:1 ד"ה אלה מסעי

the Promised Land. Deuteronomy is called *Mishneh Torah*, Moses' discourse in repeating Israel's journeys, often putting his own spin on them. In looking back on Israel's stops, we can see how far our ancestors came and how they grew as a nation-though often with "growing pains." Similarly, a married couple "reminiscing through the years" reencounters specific landmark moments in their lives. Some were times of intense challenge, others points of exuberance. By having those stops in our journey through life documented, as our ancestors' stops through the desert were, a couple can reflect on how much they've grown and how far they've come, just as Israel could do so by seeing a listing of all their stops. These stops, just place names or words, might not have any significance for us, but they certainly did for our ancestors.

Rob and Mar-you are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime (literally)-marriage. Getting married is a half hour ceremony; being married takes constant work each and every day. There will be highs and lows in your relationship. Always remember that you are on a journey together as a team. If you make a mistake, learn from it and

move on. If one of you is faltering, let the other step up as support.

When you look back after forty-two years of blissful marriage full of adventures, twists and turns and stops along the way, just like the forty-two stops made by our ancestors, you'll not only see where you are at that moment but how you got there, and I hope the process will make you smile. Mazal Tov on reaching this joyous day! So that we can celebrate together, let us turn to Page 838 and read responsively.