

These are the travels of Bnei Yisrael (33:1) – Why do we mention the travels of Bnei Yisrael here? **Ramban** cites **the Rambam** who notes that the mentioning of the travels is as an antidote to future denials of the authenticity of Jewish history. For if someone should rise in the future and deny the major steps that the Jews took in the Midbar, these stops will serve as a reminder of the major miracles that sustained the nation during the 40 years in the desert. Recalling the Derech is identified as a mitzvah in the book of Devarim (V'Zacharta Es Kol HaDerech). **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** noted that there are different aspects to the Mitzva of Zechirah – knowing the Hashgacha in the miracles that happened, knowing that in keeping the Mitzvos there is Sachar, the value of emunah etc. He adds that this also shows the dual importance of analyzing our lives as well – not only to do Teshuvah but also to appreciate the hand of Hashem in our daily lives – why certain episodes happen to each of us – how we came to where we came, what we can do with these experiences etc. If we can appreciate the Hashgacha, we won't only appreciate the destination but the journey as well.

And they left Refidim and they came to Midbar Sinai (33:15) – How could it be that every negative implication of their sojourn receives notation in the parsha and no reference to Maamad Har Sinai appears? Wasn't that the MOST important part of the trip? **Rav Dov Elieizorov ztl.** explains that the purpose of the list was to remind the future generations of things that happened on the trip that needed to be underscored. Maamad Har Sinai is a seminal event that will never be denied and thus, never needed to be mentioned.

And they travelled from Sinai and they camped in Kivrot HaTavah (33:16) – **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank ztl.** explains that one who moves away from the Torah that was received at Sinai will find himself in the burial ground of Taava – desire. The Talmud (Bava Metzia 85) notes that Hashem answered the question “Why was the land destroyed?” with the answer that it was due to the fact that the people left the study of Torah. Now, elsewhere, other Avairos are utilized as the reason for the destruction and the exile. Why does Hashem say it was because they left my Torah? Rav Frank ztl. answers that it was the leaving of the Torah that allowed us to find the other activities “acceptable” within society.

This is the land that shall fall to you (34:1) – Why does the Torah use the word “Fall” in describing the boundaries of the land of Israel? **Rashi** notes that either it is the result of Lottery where the concept of Nefila – falling out – is relevant or because 7 kings had to fall in order for us to receive the land. The **Sfas Emes** adds a third possibility: He explains that the connection between Eretz Yisrael (which is LEE) and Bnei Yisrael (Lee Bnei Yisrael Avadim) highlights the Keshar between 2 things that Hashem considers uniquely his. He shares his uniqueness from Eretz Yisrael Shel Maaleh when the jackpot of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael is achieved. Thus, the word Tipol – to fall from Eretz Yisrael Shel Maaleh is relevant and correct.

This is the land that shall be given to you as inheritance (34:1) – Why does the Torah spend so much time identifying the specifics of the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael? **Maran Harav Schachter Shlita** explains that Eretz Yisrael has an effect on the people and the people, on the land. The knowledge of where is Eretz Yisrael and the awareness of what is ours, is critical to establishing our bond with the land. Rav Schachter adds that when we are not in the land, our enemies can and never will be satisfied with it.

For the tribe of Yehuda (34:19) – In all the other cases, the Nesiim were for “Bnei” except Yehuda and Binyamin. **Rav Shlomo Zalman Zelasnick ztl** explains that the reason for the difference is due to the fact

that the other Nesiim got their jobs simply because there was an opening due to job turnover. This was different than for Yehudah (where Kalev remained Nasi) and Binyamin (Where Eldad remained Nasi). There the turnover was not because of the passage of time but rather the Nesiim earned their title and retained it.

And you shall prepare (V'Hikreesem) these cities of refuge for yourselves (35:11) – The word V'Hikreesem utilized here as a synonym for preparation is out of place. **Rav Gifter ztl.** explains that in truth, the word V'Hikreesem implies a happenstance (Mikreh) – to tell us that this is not supposed to be a common situation in regard to the Bnei Yisrael. **Rav Pam ztl.** would often cite the fact that to a Jew, every life must be considered sacred --- and even accidental death needs to be shocking which will further keep the occurrence rate of these types of death to a minimum. As Rav Gifter explains here --- one needs to see accidental death as an aberration but the governmental system needs to be prepared to know what to do when it happens by having the Arei Miklat.

And you shall not defile the land that you are in (35:34) – **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl.** would often cite the midrash (Sifrei Bamidbar 1) that Hashem dwells among Bnei Yisrael even when they are Tamai. He adds that the same is true for the land – even when it looks like the land does not have kedusha to it, Hashem's Kedusha is there. It is not always pretty and not always pretty apparent but Hashem does not leave his people or his land. This statement alone provides us with a tremendous opportunity to declare Chazak Chazak and derive strength from it.

Haftorah- The Priests did not say “Where is Hashem?” – Yirmiyahu rebukes the generally lax attitude toward Avairah allowed by the Jewish leadership. He begins with the Kohanim because, **as Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** explains, the education responsibility for the people begins with them. In the end of the Bayis Rishon period, the Kohanim merely focused on their roles as Ovdim in the Beis HaMikdash. Allow me to suggest that this is a follow up to the story of Ir Miklat in the parsha wherein the freedom of the Rotzeiach is dependent upon the death of the Kohein Gadol who never turns his back on any of the members of Am Yisrael.