

Our parasha records many repetitive pesukim (verses) that catalogue in detail each of the 42 way stations which served as temporary settlements during our 40-year desert travel. (33-1-49). It is noteworthy that each location is mentioned **twice**-as a destination and as a place of departure. *Vayichtov Moshe et מוצאיהם למסעיהם , (Motzei'hem Lemaseihem,)* “And Moshe recorded their starting points, as G-d commanded”, and then he concludes, “And these are Masei'hem Le'motzei'hem,( Their starting points of their travels). The Hebrew word *motza* (as in *motzei'hem*) means place of origin, starting point. The preface letter *lamed* connotes purpose: Moshe was commanded to record each place they started out from in order to reach their next destination. They traveled from “A” in order to arrive at “B”. What purpose and message was the Torah teaching us with these expressions?

Fundamental to our history as a nation is that we are constantly on a journey, on the road to the Promised Land, the journey towards *Ge'ulah Sheleima* our redemption, *U'maaseh Avot Siman Lebanim*. (What happened to our ancestors is a lesson of life for us) Our traveling is not aimless wandering; it is with a clear compass and a purposeful direction. Our destiny is to perfect the world through the teaching of ethics, morality and monotheism. We traveled from Babylonia to Persia, to Africa, Spain, Vilna, Europe, Germany, United States, just to name a few, and in each location we left our imprint. But at the same time in each location we added something to the experience and completion of our people, to the totality of the Jewish personality. We learned something from the people of the land about their culture, their values their goal and achievements. “*Yesh Chachma Bagoyim*” Our Chazal teach us, that there IS wisdom and knowledge amongst the non-Jewish world (but not Torah). We took the positive aspects from those nations and incorporated them into our customs and ways of life. These experiences enriched us and made us into the great nation that we are. We were driven from Babylonia but we developed there a Talmud Bavli, we were exiled from Spain but we were enriched with the writings of the RambaM, the Ramban, Rashba and others. From Poland we emerged with the legendary writings of the Rama and his contributions to the Shulchan Aruch. In each location we suffered and survived, we learned and we taught, we endured and we were ennobled. But our travels all focused in one direction-towards Eretz Yisrael. That's where our ancestors were going, and that's where we should be directing our attention. Wherever we live, be it in Turkey, France, Brooklyn, Monsey, New Jersey, these are all temporary way-stations. They are necessary, but they are not our ultimate goals. When Shai Agnon received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he was asked about his birthplace, and to the interviewers surprise, he answered that he was born in Jerusalem. The interviewer pointed out that everyone knows he was born in Galitzia. Agnon responded, “I was born in Jerusalem 3000 years ago.” This was his origin, Galitzia (Poland) was a way-station; Jerusalem the goal. So our parasha is telling us, look at the destination of each place, but don't overlook the origin of where you came from, or from where your (great) grandparents came from.