

# **Torah's Residence**

Parshas Trumah

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The ark containing the tables of the covenant was probably the most important item in the Tabernacle, for it was the point of contact, at which the Al-mighty communicated with the Israelites. "And I will meet thee THERE,"- i.e. above the ark cover between the cherubim, "and speak with you" (Shemos 25:22). Every detail of the ark is thus fraught with significance for Torah and Yidishkeit, which it symbolizes.

One intriguing law of the ark concerns the staves with which the ark was carried from place to place. The Torah states: "The staves shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it" (ibid. 25:15). There were forty two movements in all in the course of the forty years in the desert. In some places the Israelites dwelt for short durations, in others for longer periods. What was the purpose of keeping the staves attached even when the ark was stationary? The Talmud states, furthermore, (Yuma 72a) that the staves were made thick at the edges, so that it is not pulled out, but thin and loose in the middle. Now if the staves were steady features of the ark, why were they not fastened tightly?

Both from a historical and contemporary perspective Torah is found to be in a state of motion. The Torah has moved, along with its students and observers, from country to country and from city to city. History records viable Torah communities in many countries where Torah scholarship and Yidishkeit has flourished for centuries, to have been ultimately uprooted, and to find reception elsewhere.

In our own days, we witness the Torah, following the holocaust, having found anchorage in America. Yet in the midst of general Torah absorption in this country, a quality of instability reduces its vigor, as major communities are displaced by suburban life.

During the years in the desert each move of the ark and the Israelites was strewn with danger, requiring Moshe to supplicate "...may Thy enemies be scattered" (Bamidbor 10:35). Here, too, the dangers abound of being swallowed up by the "enemy", i.e. the foreign ideologies of the new neighborhoods. To conquer an environment and inculcate it with spirit takes decades of sacrifice.

This is the broader implication, in the portion of SHEMA, and especially in VEHOYO IM SHOMOAH which is generally in the plural, of teaching Torah not only when "thou sittest in thy house", but also "when thou (the whole community) walkest by the way" (Devorim 6:7, 11:19). (The advantageous exception: a Torah community expanding into a new area, the contact remaining intact.)

Thorough permanence for Klal Yisroel is achievable only in Eretz Yisroel. So is indicated in the "uvlechtecho vaderech" requirement in the second chapter of SHEMA, which concludes with "in order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the Land that Hashem has sworn..."

The encampments outside of Eretz Yisroel, no matter how many decades, or even centuries, are of a temporary nature.

"Vayehi binsoah ... When the ark would begin the journey...." (Bamidbor 10:35), comments the Seforno "on the way to get to Eretz Yisroel". That is the final destination.

Yet, building Torah throughout the Jewish world, as well as the Holy Land before the geulah, must be with all enthusiasm, with all energy and all resources. The forty-two places mentioned in Parshas Masei, says the Tzeror Hamor, alludes to the mystical Forty-two Letter Name of Hashem.

[Torah Shelaimo (Rav Mendel Kasher) quotes a Midrash, Midrash Habiur, supporting the above connection of the forty-two encampments and the name of Hashem. The Mogen Avrohom, 428:8, quoting the Tzeror Hamor, suggest reading the forty-two sojourns in one Aliya, without an interruption].

Surely, though on the journey, on the way to a destiny, then on the forty-two sojourns, as well as today, Torah development contains magnificent power. Thus we build with hope and courage.

This, then, may be the meaning of restricting the staves to be constantly attached to the ark, yet held there only loosely. The staves for moving shall not be removed. The Torah, herein, prepares us for the possibility of impermanence, impressing us with its peripatetic second nature. It strives to imbue us with the basic concept that the Torah transcends space.

By the same token, the staves for moving are not to be tightly built-in features. The zeal of everlastingness and elon of endurance must penetrate the builders of Torah in every community.

A very promising note is added for American builders of Torah. Reb Jeruchom zt"l, Mirer Mashgiach, was quoted many years ago in Dos Yiddish Vort, saying in the name of Reb Chaim of Voloszin, (disciple of the Vilner Gaon) that the last galus of the Torah will be in America.