

Keep On Truckin' – We're Goin' Home

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“Moshe wrote their goings out for their journeying at the word of God” (Numbers 33:2).

Trick question: What is the opposite of *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred)? If you said *ahavat chinam* (baseless love), you're wrong. There is no such thing. If there were, it would mean loving even the most vile, violent, cruel and deadly human animals that ever disgraced the planet and mankind. There is no such mitzvah. What is the opposite of *sinat chinam*? *Shalom* (peace).

In *Likutey Moharan* I, 40, Rebbe Nachman writes that “*This* is the travelogue of the Children of Israel” (Numbers 33:1) is the *tikkun* (rectification) for “Israel, *this* [golden calf] is

your god" (Exodus 32:4). What was the underlying flaw that led to such a heretical pronouncement? A lack of faith in Moshe Rabbeinu.

When some had thought that Moshe was never coming back from Mount Sinai, they felt no need to continue following the path that he had outlined. Nor did they feel any need to consult Moshe's closest disciples about what should be done. They were smart enough, they thought, to know how to be Jewish on their own. Oy! They ended up with a golden calf for which we are still suffering (*Sanhedrin* 102a).

That's also why we Jews have been wandering in exile, privately and collectively, for a few thousand years. As always, God's intention is for our benefit. Anytime and anywhere we travel—on land, sea or air; by foot, horseback, car, train, jet or boat—He wants each of us to remember to become at least a little bit stronger in *emunat chakhamim* (faith in genuine tzaddikim). What does a walk around the block or commuting to work have to do with *emunat chakhamim*?

Wherever you go, wherever you step, stand or sit, you can elevate that place to God. But you can't do it on your own. We both know that even standing at the Kotel on a Friday night, our minds can wander to the foreign and bizarre. Certainly if, God forbid, we were to find ourselves in a bar, we would be hard-pressed to focus on anything sacred. The only way we can maintain a sacred focus is to have faith in the teachings of genuine tzaddikim. Believing and bearing in mind that they are the ones who are fit to lead us, gives us the ability to follow their lead.

Because another reason we are in exile is to "complete" the Torah. Many think that the Torah ends with the Written Torah, or the Talmud, Kabbalah, etc. Not so. The Torah is incomplete. As history evolves and humankind moves closer to Utopia—the coming of Mashiach—we Jews need more and more Torah—advice and suggestions on how to live with genuine Jewish values, even as

the world around us becomes more fractured and insane. When we believe that there exist authentic *chakhamim* who are worthy and capable of guiding us, their words have meaning and become Torah.

There is an unexpected benefit from following their lead wherever we go. Because such *chakhamim* increase *shalom* in the world (*Berakhot* 64a), the world becomes more unified. *When* we have faith in such *chakhamim*, people become less jealous about possessions and territory, less insistent on the differences between themselves and “others,” and more aware of the sameness that unites us. *When* we have such faith.

Moshe Rabbeinu was so able to re-instill *emunat chakhamim* in us that he included our desert travels in the Torah. He brought us to believe that God’s will for mankind is contained in the Torah. So as we traveled, we focused our minds on the Ark and its contents, the Ten Commandments, ready to live by God’s will wherever we would go and wherever we would stop. When we’ll travel like that, with *emunat chakhamim* and focused on the Torah, we’ll bring *shalom* to the world and make it into one big Eretz Yisrael. Amen.

a gutn Shabbos!