

## **Devarim 5780, Rabbi James Proops**

Throughout our lives we embark on many new stages and each one presents unique challenges, excitement, fear and anticipation. We can imagine that for the generation of *Bnei Yisrael* who had been traversing the midbar for forty years, the prospect of leaving the desert and entering *Eretz Yisrael*, the long awaited Promised Land, with its untold number of obstacles to overcome would have been extremely daunting. Moshe, as their leader, teacher and mentor, seeks to calm their fears and instill confidence in them before they begin the final stage of their journey. Moshe reminds them with the encouraging statement,

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בֵּרַכְךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ יָדַע לְכַתֹּךְ אֶת־הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדֹל  
הַזֶּה זֶה | אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ עִמָּךְ לֹא חָסַרְתָּ דָבָר

Hashem has blessed you in all your undertakings. He has watched over your wanderings through this great wilderness; Hashem, your G-d, has been with you these past forty years—you have lacked nothing.

(Devarim 2:6).

The medrash teaches us that with these words Moshe sought to encourage them, that just as *Hakadosh Baruch* took care of their every physical need in the *midbar*, so too he will look after them in *Eretz Yisrael*. While the means would certainly be different, in that they would no longer benefit from the open miracles of the *Ma'an*, the *Anan haKavod* or the *Be'er Miriam*, Hashem would certainly provide for them food, shelter, water and protection.

In his popular work the *Netivot Shalom*, the Slonimer Rebbe, points out another deeply important lesson that Moshe is imparting to his People. While the medrash is certainly true in a literal reading of the *pasuk*, the underlying message for each individual is that they have never been nor ever will be alone. With every step, every stop and every encampment Hashem and His Divine Presence accompanied them throughout their travails in the *midbar* and will continue to accompany them as they venture forward. This is particularly poignant in light of the fact that Moshe himself would not be there to support Bnei Yisrael, so he imparts a message

of support and reassurance, that despite his absence, the presence of Hakadosh Baruch Hu will remain ever-present.

The message is one of eternal support, not only for the generation entering Eretz Yisrael, but for all generations who will follow. No matter what circumstances one may face, no Jew is ever left to stand alone. Hashem guides us, supports us and provides for us. As Bnei Yisrael travelled through the *midbar*, we can only imagine the vast expanse that lay before them and the loneliness that must have been felt. Yet knowing, in a very real sense, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was with them allowed them to feel safe, secure and content. Similarly, when we are gripped by fear and despair, the knowledge that we are not truly alone, allows those feelings to dissipate and enables us to move forward.

Recognizing the presence of Hashem in our lives makes difficult and painful experiences more manageable and even allows them to become meaningful and growth oriented. If we can apply this principle to our daily lives, then the tribulations and suffering that comes our way will certainly be easier to overcome. As we approach Tisha B'Av, recalling the many instances of pain and destruction, we must strive to accept that throughout all those hardships and episodes of adversity, Hashem has never abandoned us but watches over us throughout. May we merit to truly heed this very important parting message of Moshe, as we continue on the course of Jewish destiny and may this be the last mournful Tisha B'Av we experience.