

**Narrow Escape**

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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"These are the journeys of the children of Israel, going out of the land of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt)." So opens the Torah section of *Massei* ("Journeys"---Numbers 33-36), which goes on to chronicle their travels from Egypt to the Holy Land, listing their forty-two encampments from Ramases in Egypt to the Plains of Moab on the eastern bank of the Jordan River.

It would seem, however, that there was only *one* journey which took the Jewish nation out of Egypt: their journey from Ramases to Sukkot. The other forty journeys were between points outside of the geographical borders of Egypt. Why, then, does the Torah speak of the journeys, in the plural, of "the children of Israel going out of the land of *Mitzrayim*"?

**Daily Exodus**

*Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "boundaries" and "narrow straits." On the spiritual level, the journey from Egypt is a journey from the boundaries that limit us---an exodus from the narrow straits of habit, convention and ego to the "good broad land"<sup>1</sup> of infinite potential implicit in the divine essence of the human soul.

And the journey from *Mitzrayim* is a perpetual one: what is expansive and uninhibited by yesterday's standards, is narrow and confining in light of the added wisdom and new possibilities of today's station. Thus, each of life's journeys is an exodus "from the land of *Mitzrayim*": having transcended yesterday's limitations, a person must again journey from the *Mitzrayim* that his present norm represents relative to his newly-uncovered potential. In the words of our sages, "in every generation, and every day, a person is obligated to see himself as having today exited Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

The endeavor to exit *Mitzrayim* takes on a special significance in the stretch of calendar known as *Bein HaMetzarim* ("between the narrow straits")<sup>3</sup>--the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av. *Bein HaMetzarim* is our annual re-experience of the tragedy of *galut*--our banishment from the "good broad land" and the diminution of G-d's manifest presence on physical earth with the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. It is no accident that the Torah section of *Massei* is read and studied<sup>4</sup> in this time of narrowing horizons and constriction of the spirit, imparting its eternal message that wherever one may stand in the forty-two-rung ladder from utter slavery to divine expanse, there is always the need, and capacity, to achieve an exodus from all that constrains us, from without and from within.

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18 June | 7 Tammuz

**Parashat Chukat**

Shabbat Begins: 9:07 pm

Shabbat Ends: 10:27 pm