

Dear Chavraya,

Summer is a time of travels, of journeys from place to place, a time that allows for pause to consider our inner journeys and the course of our life's journeys. The second of this week's double Torah portion, *Parashat Mattot/Massey*, is about the desert journeys of Israel. *Massey* derives from the root *nasah*, to journey, literally "to pull out or up, as to "pull up tent pegs" as the first step in a journey. Though referring to the entire desert journey, *massey* is in the plural, *eleh massey b'nei Yisrael*/these are the journeys of the children of Israel. The journey of our lives is formed of many journeys, of many paths and experiences that come together to form the path that is our life. The journey and the destination become one in the way of our living.

The Slonimer Rebbe speaks of *Parashat Massey* as one of the great *parshiot* of the Torah. Throughout Chassidic literature, the journeys of Israel become a metaphor for the journeys of each person's life. At the very beginning, the Baal Shem Tov, the trunk in the tree of Chassidism, taught that each person's life corresponds to Israel's desert journeys: *from the day of one's birth, of coming forth from their mother's womb, it should be understood as the Exodus from Egypt, from which time one journeys from journey to journey until coming to the Land of the Living Above....*

All the journeys of our lives become one whole as we travel from journey to journey. The Torah speaks of Israel's journey from the place called *Harei Ha'avarim*/the Mountains of Transitions, a beautiful image of the heights to be scaled sometimes in the course of moving forward. So too, Israel camped *b'yei ha'avarim*/in the Wastelands of Transitions. Sometimes our journeys bring us through hard places that seem as "wastelands," but they too are part of our lives. We learn from the hard times, as from the good times. The Slonimer teaches of all of those journeys, the ups and the downs, as part of who we are, each informing the nature of our being: *as each person passes through their life, there are journeys of ascent and journeys of descent, and from all of them one arrives at their essence/u'mikulam hu magiah l'tachlito.*

Along summer's path, may we find time to consider the path of our lives and the nature of our travel from journey to journey toward the destination our being who we are.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor