



# Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### Journeys

*“These are the journeys of the Children of Israel” (33:1)*

Can you remember what you did on a certain Tuesday, five years ago? How about a particular day last year? How about last month? When our lives follow a routine, it becomes very difficult to separate one day from the next. The past seems to spread back behind us like an almost endless gray carpet. Here and there, however, landmarks protrude above the humdrum scenery. A marriage, a birth, a death, a golden anniversary. The same is true when we travel. We remember clearly the five minutes we spent at Niagara Falls as though it were yesterday,

although it happened ten years ago. We still smell the rain of a tropical rainstorm

on Fiji, the fumes of a childhood traffic-jam on the way to the Eiffel Tower. Travel makes time significant and memorable.

We talk of life being a journey. The essence of life is to journey, to move, to develop. When G-d appeared to Abraham and told him that he would be the progenitor of a holy nation, it was with the command: *“Go to yourself.”* The essential journey is to the self, to develop the internal landscape of the soul. In order for Abraham to fulfill his potential and be the Father of the Jewish People, he had to go, to journey. Maybe it was for this reason that G-d didn't tell him his destination. For the destination was not the essence of the journey, rather the journey itself was.

In this week's reading of the Torah, there is a list of 42 encampments of the Jewish People on their journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel. Every time the camp travels the Torah repeats the phrase *“They journeyed from...”* Why was it necessary to repeat this phrase with every encampment? Obviously, if they camped in a different place they must have journeyed from the place they had previously stopped.

The Jewish People's journey through the desert was a spiritual rite of passage between the decadence of Egypt and the land flowing with the milk and honey of holiness. It's easier to take the Jew out of Egypt than Egypt out of the Jew. It took 41 separate spiritual journeys to impact on the collective spiritual psyche of the Jewish People and ready them to enter the Promised Land.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

The Torah portions of *Matos* and *Masei*, whether they are read together or apart, are always read between the two fast days of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av. This period in the Jewish Calendar is known as “between the straits,” since seminal disasters befell the Jewish People on these two dates.

On the Seventeenth of the month of

Tammuz, Moses returned from receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai to find the people involved in the worship of a golden calf, resulting in the breaking of the first two tablets of the Ten Commandments. On the same date in a later year, the walls of Jerusalem were pierced by a Roman siege that eventually razed Jerusalem to the ground.

On the Ninth of the month of Av, the spies that were sent to survey the Land of Israel before the Jewish People entered the land brought back a distorted, nega-

tive report about the Land of Israel. Their report weakened the faith of the people, and was punished by the death of all the adult males of that generation through forty years of wandering in the desert. Throughout history, the Ninth of Av is a day ear-marked for tragedy and suffering.

Thus at this time of our national sadness, to refresh and give strength to our downtrodden spirits, we read specifically about the division of the Land of Israel, reminding ourselves of G-d's promise *“to these you will apportion the land.”* The Torah assures us that no matter how long we may wander in exile, all the Jewish People will eventually return from exile to the land that G-d has promised them.

## Light Update

Close to a thousand English-speaking students studying in Israel gathered for workshops and lectures by world renowned scholars in a day-long Outreach Leadership

Training Seminar organized by Ohr LaGolah Leadership Institute, Sunday July 12th 1998 at the main campus of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem.

## The Other SIDE of the Story

### GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

*It's easy to judge others favorably, once you learn how. Until then, you may need a little...*

**“Help!”**

“I can't believe it — this guy is elbowing his way through shul. Bad enough on a regular day, but on Rosh Hashanah! Look, he's actually pushing people out of his way to get to his seat. Okay, it is jammed and he's late — but he should have gotten here on time if praying on

time with everyone is so important to him. It's a perfect example of someone trying to do the right thing and doing it in the wrong way. It's amazing how the people he's shoved out of the way just ignore him and continue praying — what concentration they have! Well, at least he's finally made it to his seat. I see him reaching into his book-and-tallis compartment and taking out... an EMT box! He's an emergency medical technician, and a volunteer, rushing to his seat to get his box of medical equipment!”

*Judaism teaches that people are innocent until proven guilty. If you assume that others are acting with the best of intentions, you will often find that you are absolutely right.*

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## Response Line

**Shifra wrote:**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*Can you please tell me according to Jewish law, if a Jewish woman may, when she marries either keep her maiden name or hyphenate her name? Thank you.*

Dear Shifra,

Last names are a relatively new 'invention.' Only recently has "Jon the Tailor" become "Jon Taylor," and "Moses Jacob's son" become "Moses Jacobson." So the idea of a woman taking on her husband's last name doesn't really have a strong basis in Jewish law.

However, the sanctity, specialness and exclusiveness of the husband/wife relationship is so central to Judaism, the

woman changing her name is a good signal to people of her sanctified status.

*Shifra responded:*

*One last question about last names if you don't mind. When you said you advise one to hyphenate a woman's name with her husbands, was that your personal opinion only?*

*Thanks, Shifra*

Dear Shifra,

I can't claim that it is anything other than my own opinion. I feel, however, that there is more to it than that.

According to the Torah, a single man is not a complete human being. A single woman is not a complete human being. A complete human being is a married man/woman unit.

The Talmud says that the original Human was an androgenous being, a combination of man and woman. When G-d took "Adam's rib," G-d was essen-

tially separating out the female part of Adam and making it into a separate being. A Jewish marriage is therefore seen as the re-uniting of the parts that are originally and essentially one.

*"G-d created them Male and Female, and blessed them, and G-d called them 'Adam' on the day G-d created them" (Genesis 5:2).* The classic commentaries explain the phrase *"G-d called them 'Adam'"* to mean that separately, a male or a female is not called "Adam" (human). Only together as a married unit can a male and female truly be called 'Adam.'

Therefore, it seems fitting that the couple try to create a unified, harmonious whole, and adopt one name as a symbol of that. Why adopt the male name? Perhaps adopting the term 'adam' is a precedent, the term used for the male alone, and for the unified couple.

I would personally advise that the woman should change her name to her husband's, or at least hyphenate it with her husband's name.