



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

LOOKING FORWARD

Every family knows how hard it is to go on a family holiday.

Everything packed after constant arguments about what to take, parents and children pile into the car and set off.

It is probably quite a long journey and fractious children make it worse.

"Are we there yet?" they keep asking.

"Not far now", replies the sorely tried driver, fully aware that it will take at least another hour or two.

Amazingly, next year they'll do it all again!

Not that interminable journeys are a modern problem. Imagine what it was like for the B'nei Yisra'el in the Wilderness, knowing that their arrival in the Promised Land was not likely to be soon or easy.

Just look at the opening verses of this week's reading - "When you come to the Land which the Lord our God gives you..." (D'varim 26:1-3).

It took forty years (even the most fractious modern family never has such a lengthy trek), but on arrival a new reality had to be confronted -

settling in, adjusting, carving out a future, and establishing a regime on the basis of the moral law of the Torah constitution.

Some Israelites constantly looked back, nostalgic for what they were used to.

But the best way to face a new chapter in life is to live for tomorrow, not yesterday, and to say it's a time to create. As the Aliyah song used to say, "to build and to be rebuilt".

Olim who arrive in Israel need to decide that Israel isn't France or America: it's Israel, and Olim have to help make it the best Israel they can.

ALL MIXED UP

The AL CHEIT confession on Yom Kippur ends with us asking God to forgive us for the sin of TIMHON LEVAV, "confusion of heart".

Unfortunately we are left on our own when it comes to the meaning of the phrase.

Eventually we find that it comes straight out of this week's Torah portion, much of which is a TOCHECHA, a set of rebukes that carry a severe list of punishments.

One of the worst punishments comes in a sentence which reads, "God will afflict you with madness, blindness and TIMHON LEIVAV, confusion of heart" (D'varim 28:28).

The translators are not all of one mind about the meaning of the phrase. The renderings include "astonishment of the heart", "dismay", and "confusion of the mind".

Let's see if the context helps us.

We are talking about ways in which God can punish us. Ibn Ezra notes that all three punishments in the verse are mental - BALEV, which though it literally means "in the heart", denotes "in the mind" in Biblical linguistics.

The verse mentions madness, a mental condition in which one's

thinking and decision-making are not reliable.

It mentions blindness, which must be meant metaphorically, in the sense of not seeing, perceiving, or grasping a situation.

Then it mentions TIMHON LEIVAV, which could indicate being uncertain, perplexed, pulled in many directions at once. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH