

## The Long and Winding Road

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The shortest route between two points is a straight line. It would make sense that when the Jewish people depart from Egypt, the fastest route to take on their journey to Eretz Yisrael would have been a straight shot across the northern Sinai desert into the Negev. Yet as they begin their trek in the opening of Parshat Beshalach, God directs the nation southwards toward the Yam Suf, making the route unnecessarily longer.

As the Jewish people reach the Yam Suf, fearing for their lives as the Egyptian army rapidly approaches, a miracle occurs; the sea splits before their eyes, allowing them to walk within it on dry land. One would presume that the path taken through the sea was a straight line – crossing directly from the western shore eastwards to the Sinai desert.

But astonishingly, the Rambam (commentary to [Avot 5:4](#)), Tosfot ([Arakhin 15a](#), s.v. 'Khsham'), and the Ibn Ezra ([Shemot 14:17](#)) all deduce that the Jews emerged from the Yam Suf on the same side of the beachhead from which they entered! In reading the p'sukim describing the journey of the Jewish people in Bamidbar (33:7-10), we see that the dry path through the Yam Suf was actually a semi-circle, returning the Jews to the very shore from which they came.



- diagram of the semicircle crossing pattern sketched and placed into the Rambam's commentary on the Mishnah.

Why, then, does God take them on this path, which while miraculous, was no shortcut?

Often, the journey itself is more critical than the destination. There is so much to be learned when we journey. The travails of wandering sharpen our perseverance. Along the journey we are able to hone an appreciation for what is most significant in our lives. The destination is never guaranteed, but the values and priorities we bring into the journey are, as are the values and priorities we develop along the way.



How long will it take us to win this war? What does victory look like? No one knows. The chapter of Jewish history we are living through is yet another personal and national journey, a challenging detour from the path we felt we were on.

But let us stop for a moment and think about what values we have brought to this journey as we move towards victory. We have seen the country, indeed world Jewry, come together in unity, doing whatever we can to help the other. I have seen soldiers committed to each other to the point they are willing to risk their own lives to protect the other.

The bumpy, treacherous road on which we travel has taught us a great deal about maintaining solidarity and identifying our national priorities. Zionism was a word on the decline both in Israel and the diaspora. Yet now the term and fidelity to its ideal has had a resurgence, even becoming a rallying cry. We bemoaned the priorities of the younger generation. Yet on this journey, we all realize the amazing valor and selflessness of our youth.

The values we bring to this journey shape the weltanschauung, the spirit of our country. We would never have asked for the horrors that brought us here, and we pray for the challenges to cease. But along the way, we have doubled down on our values and maintained our faith. We have journeyed many times before, and we have always come out stronger and more resilient. This is why Am Yisrael is never afraid of the long and arduous journey.

*Nesiyah tova* – safe travels.