

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

ISRAEL'S PRESENT CONDITION AND HER DESERT EXPERIENCE: Contrasting the two is the theme of Jeremiah's prophecy. God remembers the people's first love in the desert (2:2):

*I recall the devotion of your youth  
The love of your bridal clinging;  
How you followed Me in the desert,  
In a land unsown.*

In contrast, the people do not cherish this memory (6):

*They do not ask:  
Where is the Lord,  
Who brought us up from Egypt;  
Who led us through the desert;  
Through a wasteland of drought and darkness;  
A land which no one ever crossed;  
Where no one ever stayed!*

Jeremiah's equation conveys a double complaint: Why don't the people recall God's devotion in the past? Why don't they recall the harshness of the desert? Recalling both may serve as inspiration and comfort. For harsh as the desert was, it prevented neither God nor the people from showing devotion to each other.

## THOUGHT OF WEEK

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THE DESERT EXPERIENCE of Israel during the 40 years of wandering in the Sinai is seen by Jeremiah as the people's ideal epoch. Harsh as the physical conditions were, the desert was the arena of first love between God and Israel, and where that love grew and blossomed with the vigor of fresh beginning (2:2):

*I recall to your credit your youthful devotion,*

*The love of your bridal clinging;*

*How you followed Me in the desert, in a land unsown.*

By contrast, the people in the prophet's day do not remember this love; they do

not inquire (6):

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*Where is Hashem, Who brought us up from Egypt;*

*Who led us through the desert;*

*Through a wasteland of drought and darkness;*

*A land which no one ever crossed;*

*Where no one ever stayed!*

The prophet's complaint is double-edged: Why don't the people recall God's devotion in the past? Why don't they recall the harshness of the desert? For harsh as the desert was, it prevented neither God nor the people from showing devotion to each other.

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## **Thought of the Week**

**By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda**

**WANDERINGS AND BOUNDARIES** are the two main themes of the final chapters of the Fourth Book of Torah: Wanderings of the people in the Sinai desert, and Boundaries for the people in the Land of Israel. The juxtaposition of these two motifs is symbolic of the long history of Israel: constant wanderings in the "wilderness" of many nations and persistent yearnings for the restoration of the Land and its boundaries. Without the latter the former would have resulted in the end of the people. Jews would not have survived wandering around among the nations without keeping in mind the Land as the very core and soul of their existence. Because of this vital and powerful attachment to the land for centuries—the State of Israel became a reality in our age.