

## **D'VAR TORAH**

Presented at the Rashi Community Forum on October 2, 2007

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Have you ever wondered why the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land of Israel took forty years? The distance between the Nile River and the borders of the land of Israel is only about 125 miles. By foot, it might take a week or two, but for our ancestors it took four decades of wilderness wandering.

In a similar manner, we began the Rashi School twenty years ago at Temple Shalom in Newton. Our proposed new home on the Dedham-Needham line is only 10 miles from our original home, yet for twenty years we have been wandering from place to place to place just like our Israelite ancestors.

The main reason that our ancestors wandered for so long is that they had not embraced Moses' vision. When things got tough, Moses tried to keep the dream of living in their own land alive, but the Israelites kept reminding him that even as slaves in Egypt, they got three square meals a day with more variety than plain old manna and plenty of water as well. The land of Canaan represented the unknown and they feared it. In a similar way, I sense that to many in the Rashi community, Dedham seems like an unsubstantial, filmy desert mirage. Better to live as tenants in a place we know in nearby Newton, even with all its insufficiencies, than to pull up roots and move to Dedham.

Tragically, in the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness Moses failed to convince the generation that was born in Egypt that the land of Canaan was an important and feasible goal. And because of that he, like they, never got to enjoy the Promised Land.

To prevent our suffering the same fate, the entire Rashi community, and especially the parent body, needs to wholly embrace the vision of our future in Dedham. We need to understand that when our children can study Torah, English, and Math in beautiful spacious, sun filled classrooms, it will enhance their learning. We need to recognize that when Rashi students have a sacred place to pray within our school, their worship will be deepened. We need to realize that when our children can exercise and compete in their own gymnasium and playing fields, they will be energized and filled with love for their home turf. Moreover, when the lovely grounds and the beautiful building where we study, pray and come together are actually our own, we will be able to take a special interest and pride in the school that we have not been able to do for our first two decades. It will really be our home

Matt King said to me, "I dream of the day when on Route 128 we will see a sign nearby the ones that read 'Nobles' and 'St. Sebastian,' 'Next Exit, The Rashi School.' If we work together, we can make this happen. As Theodore Herzl said about the seemingly impossible dream of returning to the land of Israel after a 2000 year exile *Im Tirzu Ein Zo Agada* – "If you really want it, it is not a fictional tale, but an attainable dream."

May the New Year 5768 bring renewed vision and energy to us all that will enable us to bring an end to our wandering and bring about the establishment of the new home of the Rashi School.  
*Keyn Y'hee Ratzon* – May it be God's will! Amen.