

Torah Weekly



Prepared by **Ohr Somayach Institutions**

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel

Tel: 972-2-810315 Fax: 972-2-812890 Internet: ohr@jer1.co.il

Parshas Masei

For the week ending 2 Av 5755
28 & 29 July 1995

Summary

The Torah names all forty-two encampments of the *Bnei Yisrael* on their forty-year journey from the Exodus to the crossing of the Jordan

river into *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem commands the *Bnei Yisrael* to drive out the *Canaanim* from *Eretz Yisrael* and to

demolish all vestige of their idolatry. The *Bnei Yisrael* are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the *Canaanim*, those who remain will be pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides. The boundaries of the land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside forty-eight cities for the *Leviim*, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the land. Cities of refuge are to be established:

someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The Torah permits marriage between different

tribes with the condition that the land of the tribal inheritance must stay with the original tribe: This is what the daughters of *Tzelofchad* do. Thus ends the Book of Bamidbar/Numbers, the fourth of the Books of The Torah.

Three thousand years later, the Jewish People are still journeying...

Commentaries

“These are the journeys of the Bnei Yisrael...” (33:1).

Hashem recounts all the stops along the journey from Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*. This may be compared to a king whose son was ill, and he brings him to a distant place for treatment to heal him. On the way back home, the father begins to reminisce to his son — enumerating the stages of their journey. “...Here we slept, and here we got cold, here your head was hurting.”

(Rashi)

The *Admor M'Gur zt"l* explains the deeper significance of these places: “Here we slept...” — on the morning of the giving of the Torah, the people over-slept, and Moshe had to run through the camp to rouse them from their slumber. “Here we got cold...” — Amalek, the arch-enemy of the Jewish People, “cooled” their ardor in the service of their Creator. “And here your head was hurting...” — (lit. you “doubted your head”) — in the incident of the golden calf you “doubted your head”, your doubted your leader Moshe, which showed a lack in the fundamentals of faith.

“These are the journeys of the Bnei Yisrael...” (33:1).

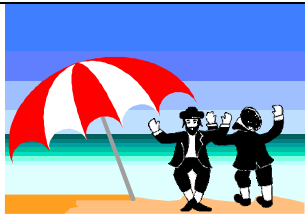
What is the reason for these forty-two stops in the desert? There is a mystical concept that the purpose of these encampments was for The Children of Israel to release and gather the sparks of holiness which are trapped in the desert's emptiness. Each of these stopping places correspond to a letter of Hashem's Name, and so by gathering the sparks from each place a little more of Hashem's Name — His recognition in the world — is revealed. Three thousand years later, the Jewish People are still journeying — a hundred years here, two hundred there. On their journeys through Spain, England, China and America, etc., the Jewish People “extract” and redeem the sparks of holiness which are trapped throughout the world. When this process is complete, Mashiach will gather all the Jewish People to the land of Israel and Hashem will be revealed to be the One True G-d. “On that day, Hashem will be One, and His Name, One”.

(Based on the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, *The Malbim*,
Rav Shmuel M'Ostropole)

“These are the mitzvos and the ordinances that Hashem commanded through (lit. in the hand of) Moshe to the Children of Yisrael...” (36:13).

These final words of the Book of Bamidbar state that the mitzvos were given “in the hand of Moshe,” a term which does not appear at the end of Sefer Vayikra/Leviticus, the previous Book. This alludes to a basic change in the nature of the covenant between Hashem and Israel: The covenant of the Vayikra was founded on the first Tablets of the Law which Moshe broke. Now, in the Plains of Moav, Moshe forges a new covenant, based on the second tablets which he has ‘in his hand’ — symbolizing that this covenant is eternal.

(Artsroll Stone Chumash)



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Haftorah: Yirmiyahu 2:4-28 & 3:4

“For my people have perpetrated two evils: Me have they forsaken, the source of living waters; to dig themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (2:13).

In this, the second Haftorah of the “three (Haftoras) of affliction”, the prophet speaks out not only against Israel’s disloyalty to Hashem who saved them from slavery, but also against the disloyalty to the Torah which has been exchanged for the empty vanities of foreign culture. Our Sages teach us that Hashem lamented: “If they had forsaken only Me, but had kept the Torah, its spiritual light would have influenced them to return to the path of righteousness.” However the Jewish People, seduced by the superficial glitter of the foreign ideologies, abandon the Torah, their only lifeline, and imbibe the brackish water of false ideas which constantly change and contradict themselves. From this only tragedy and exile can ensue.

Chapter 3

Father, Son and Brother

Pirkei Avos

“Be extremely respectful to your superior, pleasant towards your inferior and receive every man with joy.”

Rabbi Yishmael (Avos 3:12)

In human relations you are likely to meet someone who is either of a higher or lower status or a peer. If you wish to be beloved by all you must follow this counsel:

Treat a superior with the respect he deserves and he will love you like a son.
Treat an inferior with courtesy and he will love you like a father.
Welcome your peer with joy and he will love you like a brother.

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Parshas Masei

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