



Massei

Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:1 - 36:13

Parshat Massei describes the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness, from Ramses in Egypt to the mountains of Moab, on eastern side of the Jordan River; 42 stations in all. There is an additional warning to uproot idol worship from Canaan and instructions on dividing the land of Israel among the nine-and-a-half tribes that crossed the Jordan River. After the conquest of the land of Israel, the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasheh would return to their homes on Moab, as was described in Parshat Mattot.

Why was it necessary to record all the legs of the journey in such detail? The great scholar Maimonides gives a suggestion in his masterpiece Moreh Nevuchim (The Guide for the Perplexed) "... People would think that the Israelites sojourned in a desert near to cultivated land, and in which man could live. ...or that it consisted of places in which it was possible to till or reap or feed off plants... or that there were wells of water in those places. Therefore all these possibilities are rebutted, and these miracles are confirmed through the enumeration of these stations."

Parshat Massei also provides the boundaries of the Land of Israel. Then, following the procedure for the division of the land among the tribes, the Torah decrees that 48 cities are to be given to the Levites. The text goes on to outline the laws concerning the cities of refuge, to protect the accidental slayer from the victim's avenging family.

There are final discussions concerning the ruling that the daughters of Zelophchad were eligible to inherit their father's portion of the Land. The ruling is qualified, however, to ensure that their father's properties stay in the tribe for all time, and not become the property of another tribe of Israel. With the reading of this week's parshah, we conclude the Book of Bamidbar.



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