

MASSEI – “Journeys”

NUMBERS (BE’MIDBAR 33:1 – 36:13)

INTRODUCTION

1. Portion begins by describing the stages of the journeys of Israel from Egypt to plains of Moab.
 - a. It serves as historical record and spiritual example.
2. There were, in all, 42 encampments:
 - 14 before mission of spies.
 - 20 until the death of Aaron (38 years between these two events).
 - 8 after Aaron’s death until they arrived at Moab (all these in 40th year).
3. That there were only 20 encampments in the 38 “silent” years implies times of rest.
 - a. This, even though they were destined to “wander” wilderness for total of 40 years.
4. Nachmanides suggested Moses was to record all these places because great spiritual secrets are contained in each of them.
5. It is interesting to me that 42 is a significant number for other reasons in Scripture:
 - Two periods of 42 months in Revelation – two witnesses and Beast are given power.
 - Generations from Abraham to Messiah.

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations. And from David until the carrying away into Babylon, fourteen generations. And from the carrying away into Babylon until Messiah, fourteen generations.” – Matthew 1:17

6. These three “divisions” total 42 – interestingly, there are 3 divisions of encampments.

CHAPTER 33: JOURNEY FROM EGYPT TO THE JORDAN

1. Verse 1: “These are the journeys of the Children of Israel...under hand of Moses and Aaron”
 - a. The Hebrew root word for “journeys” is **מסע** *masa’* – a “departure,” “breaking camp.”
 - b. Implying more than a short or one day journey; implies stages or stations of journey.
2. This root comes from **נָסַע** *nasa’* – “to pull up (tent pin), “to start.”
 - a. Also implies traveling to a more appropriate place.
 - b. Related to **נָסַח** *nasah* – “to prove”; term used for Abraham in Gen. 22.
 - c. Hinting that these journeys were intended to “prove” Israel as opposed to “test.”

“All the commandments which I command you this day shall you be careful to do, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness in order to humble you, to **prove (הִנִּיחַ) you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Deuteronomy 8:1-2**

3. This word also related to idea of “miracle” (**נִס** *nes*) and “to raise up” (**נָשַׁע** *nasa’*).
4. Verse 2: “And Moses wrote their goings forth by stages at the commandment of the LORD.”
 - a. That the LORD commanded this means there is more to it than history.

b. Verse 2: Repeats the phrase journey and going forth but in reverse order.

“And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these are their journeys according to their goings out.” – Numbers 33:2

5. Rabbinical commentary expounds upon this by saying, God’s purpose in causing them to “go forth” on a “journey” was to get them to progress to the next step in His overall plan.
 - a. i.e. “to raise up, prove” – to see the purpose and destiny.
6. The people only desired the journey because they were tired of the resting place.
 - a. They were not thinking of the long-term goal of being proven or raised up as a people.
 - b. They were thinking only of the journey, not the destination.
 - c. They were not focused on the long-term goal of the Creator.
7. Those who “go forth” from mainstream Christianity to Messianic/Hebrew Roots are susceptible to this mindset.
 - a. Some are into change of scenery for the sake of change itself.
 - b. Some never focus on the change that needs to occur in them and to them.
8. Another viewpoint on this repetition in verse 2 is the hint at the future redemption.
 - a. The so-called “Second Exodus” when Israel will journey from exile to the Land.
9. Which is a good point to raise in light of verse 3:

“And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover the children of Israel went out with an **high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.” – Numbers 33:3**

10. The departure was public. Nothing was secret about it; left with their oppressors having full knowledge of it.
 - a. Furthermore, there was no ambiguity concerning when and how they would leave.
 - b. Hinting that, in the future, there will be no ambiguity then.
 - c. Also, it will be public – not secretive.
 - d. Does this pattern negate belief in a secretive escape or “rapture”?
11. Their departure was occurring even as Egyptians were burying their dead firstborn (verse 4).
 - a. Not one house in Egypt without a corpse (Ex. 12:30).
 - b. While Israel left with a “high hand” Egypt was bent low in humiliation.
 - c. Tares were broken because of pride.
12. Verse 4: God executed judgment upon their gods as well.
 - a. Obviously, He didn’t punish idols of wood and stone – He proved they were not gods.
 - b. Punished Egypt by showing all they trusted in was worthless and powerless.
 - c. These idols were made to be contemptible in eyes of Egyptians.
13. Judgment means death and humiliation for some while life and joy for others.
 - a. Destroyed their “future” (firstborn) and their “past” (gods).
 - b. In coming redemption, does the pattern repeat?
 - c. Will everything Egypt believes in – economy, military, philosophy – be toppled?
14. Verse 5: In sharp contrast, Israel went from Rameses (Ra’s burden) to Sukkot (Joseph’s bones “resurrected”).
 - a. Verse 7: Still had to go to “mouth of gorges” (Pi-hachiroth).
 - b. Had to face “Lord of the north” (Ba’al-Tzephon) before the fortress (Midgoll).

15. Still He brought them through the sea (verse 8).
 - a. On their journey they camped at Elim – 12 springs of water and 70 date palms.
 - b. 12 tribes (12 sources of water) – 70 elders (70 sources of fruit).
 - c. All in the midst of the wilderness.
16. Verse 16-36: Not much is written about this time – details are a mystery.
 - a. Hard to identify the exact route; some believe the journey took them into Arabia.
 - b. Caldwells specifically identify Arabia.
 - c. The *haftarah* mentions *aravah* and completely desolate land.

“Neither said they, ‘Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?’ – Jeremiah 2:6

17. Verse 18: Mentions the camp at Ritmah – this is the camp at time of spies’ evil report.
 - a. This is where they left from; also called Kadesh (Ex. 13:26).
 - b. This is distinguished from the “Kadesh” of verse 36 – where Miriam died in 40th year.
 - c. Ritmah alludes to sin of *lashon ha’ra* – slander against the land and God’s ability.
 - d. People stayed in this camp for 19 years according to Rashi.
18. This camp is the fourteenth camp since leaving Egypt.
 - a. This would correspond (in generations – Adam’s “journey”) to Eber – 14th from Adam.
 - b. Interesting because his name is from עבר *avar* – to cross over.
 - c. This gives cause for Abram to be called העבר *ha’ivri* – the Hebrew.
19. Unfortunately, the generations of the spies were not spiritually prepared to “cross over.”
 - a. They didn’t reflect the character of their ancestor Abraham who was a spy of sorts.
 - b. He journeyed to a land he didn’t know and which was inhabited by same people.
20. From Abraham, fourteen generations later would be David.
 - a. First king of Israel first gained notoriety by slaying a giant.
 - b. This “obstacle” was what provoked the evil report at Ritmah.
 - c. The spies did not reflect the character of their descendant David.
21. Verse 38: Aaron dies in Mount Hor in the 40th year on 1 Av at age 123.
 - a. Aaron died at 33rd encampment.
 - b. Traditionally, Y’shua died in 33rd year.
22. Verse 48-49: They pitched camp by the Jordan “from Beit-Yeshimot to plains of Shittim.”
 - a. At this point, they received instructions for when they entered the land.
 - b. Specifically as it relates to dealing with the inhabitants of the land.
 - c. This camp corresponds to Y’shua crossing the Jordan to go up to Jerusalem.
 - d. After He raised Lazarus from the dead, some sought to kill Him.

“Y’shua therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. And the Jews’ Passover was at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then they sought Y’shua, and spoke among themselves, as they stood in the temple, ‘What do you think - will He not come to the feast?’ ... Then Y’shua six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.” – John 11:54-56; 12:1

23. Bethany is located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.
24. According to Luke 19, Y'shua passed through Jericho on way to Jerusalem at this Passover.
 - a. He had dinner with Zacchaeus.
25. This wilderness city may likely have been across the Jordan meaning He had to cross over.
 - a. Went up to Jerusalem to “destroy” the works of the Adversary.
 - b. That we might inherit the Land.
26. Verses 50-56: Israel receives commands concerning the settlement of the Land.

“Then you shall drive out all those who live in the land from before you, and destroy all their carved images, and destroy all their molded images and pluck down all their high places. And you shall possess the land, and live in it. For I have given you the land to possess it.” – Numbers 33:52-53

27. To destroy their images and high places is not commanded them for any land – only Canaan.
 - a. Because this is to be the land of their possession - the land once called Eden.
 - b. This is His Land that He has deeded to Abraham and his seed.

**“The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and those who dwell in it.”
– Psalm 24:1**

28. Consider that Paul did not smash the idols of the nations to which he went.
 - a. In Athens used the idol to the “unknown god” to introduce the one God (Acts 17:23).
 - b. Point is: they only smashed the idols in the land of their possession.
 - c. One day, He will cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess.
29. Verse 54: The Land is divided by lot – the larger tribes receive more; the smaller, less.

“But if you will not drive out the people of the land from before you, then it will be, those of them whom you let remain shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. And it shall be, as I thought to do to them, so I shall do to you.” – Numbers 33:55-56

30. This is a stern warning; to fail to drive them out means Israel can’t stay in the Land.
 - a. They must rid the land of the corruptive influence of the Canaanites.
 - b. Remember the influence the women of Midian had upon them.
 - c. Had Pinchas not stayed the moral plague, many of Israel would have perished.
31. To exterminate an entire people seems cruel; but holy can’t mingle with profane.
 - a. To fail to rid the land meant that Israel would fall victim to their influence.
 - b. Which indeed happened on many occasions.
32. Separate them from you and you from them and if not:
 - a. They will separate you from them like Hitler did in 30s and 40s.
 - b. Israel is called to be “holy nation.”
 - c. When not set apart by choice, they are set apart by others.
 - d. Israel has to leave their homes and enemies occupy them.

“And the LORD, the God of Israel says, I said indeed, ‘Your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever.’ But now the LORD says, ‘Be it far from Me! For

those who honor Me I will honor, and those that think little of Me shall be lightly regarded. Behold, the days come when I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that no old man shall be in your house. And you shall see an enemy (Heb. צר *tzar*) in My house.” – 1 Samuel 2:30-32

33. It goes back to the garden: Adam told to “work and guard” which he failed in.
 - a. Had he been diligent to guard, the Adversary may never have been in midst of garden.
 - b. Consequently, Adam and wife would not have been exiled from the Land.
 - c. Theme of “working” and “guarding” runs throughout the Scripture.
 - d. The failure results in Israel doing to itself what the enemy couldn’t do.
 - e. God does to Israel what He determined to do to their enemies.
34. “Pricks in your eyes” – having the connotation of “restraining” – a hedge of pricks.
 - a. Keeping Israel “hemmed in” from being who they are meant to be.
 - b. Can’t see clearly when pricks in the eyes.
35. “Thorns in your sides” – a barb (something piercing) to harass and weaken Israel.
 - a. Reminiscent of what the land would produce for Adam (different words).
36. Interesting to consider what the Philistines did to Samson – put out his eyes.
 - a. Interesting to consider what the nations allowed to do to Messiah
 - Thorns on head (eyes)
 - Pierced in side with sword.
37. Moses would later warn them of this and predict their failure and exile because:

“They went and served other gods, and worshiped them, gods whom they did not know, and who had not given to them any portion. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring on it all the curses that are written in this book. And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger and wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is today.” – Deuteronomy 29:26-28

38. Also consider what Canaanite’s corruptive influence did to the land itself – it was to be holy.
 - a. How come they were allowed to be there in Abraham’s day?
 - b. Apparently, they had been given a space of time to live there.

“And He said to Abram, “You must surely know that your seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs, and shall serve them. And they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also I will judge that nation whom they shall serve. And afterward they shall come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” – Genesis 15:13-16

CHAPTER 34: BOUNDARIES OF THE LAND

1. The boundaries given here are the ones determined by the Creator.
 - a. These were attained only briefly during reigns of David and Solomon.
 - b. Some argue not completely even then; only during Messiah’s reign will it happen.

CHAPTER 35: LEVITICAL CITIES AND CITIES OF REFUGE

1. 48 cities are set aside with land attached to each one for the Levitical families.
2. These cities served for the purpose of:
 - Equal dispersion of Levites among the other tribes.
 - Would be among them to labor with them.
 - Would be a source of Torah instruction for the other tribes.
 - Would retain their tribal identity by living together in these cities.
3. Also consider that Levites depended upon tithes of the people for their support.
4. These cities were to have open land meaning there were no houses, vineyards or farms.
 - a. They could, however, use it for their livestock and other resources.
 - b. Beyond that was land used for planting and vineyards.
 - c. There was an outer, an inner (open space) and innermost (city).
5. Verse 6: Among those 48 cities, six were set aside as cities of refuge.
 - a. These were places of asylum for those who committed involuntary homicide.
 - b. These were not for those who committed willful and premeditated murder.
 - c. They were available to citizens and to the resident aliens.
6. Levitical cities were used for this purpose because:
 - There was a sacred character to these cities.
 - Inhabited by men who should be able to discern between willful acts and accidental acts.
7. If a person killed someone, accidentally or otherwise, an avenger of blood had right to kill him.
 - a. Unless he fled to city of refuge.
 - b. It is possible that the person may not be worthy of death, thus the city of refuge.
 - c. A court would later decide the person's fate.
8. The name of these six cities are:
 - Bezer
 - Ramot
 - Golan
 - Kedesh of Galilee
 - Shechem
 - Kiryat Arbah (Hebron)
9. Verse 8: Instructed that tribes who have more cities should assign more to Levites.
 - a. East of the Jordan, there were 10 Levitical cities.
 - b. In Canaan, there were 38 cities.
10. Footnote: In Y'shua's day there was a region called Decapolis – “ten cities.”
 - a. These were not the same as the Levitical cities.
11. Another interesting note: Cherokees of north America had cities of refuge as well.
12. Verse 12: “The cities shall be for refuge from the avenger” – Heb. **גא'ל** *go'el*.
 - a. Literally, this word means “redeemer.”
 - b. It is often rendered **גא'ל הדם** *go'el ha'dam* – “avenger of blood.”
 - c. Interesting to consider that the “redeemer” is also the “avenger.”
 - d. The Redeemer Y'shua also comes as an avenger of the blood of His kinsmen.

“Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One adorned in His clothing, bending down in His great power? I who speak in righteousness, great to save. Why is Your clothing red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me; for I will tread them in My anger and trample them in My fury; and their blood will be sprinkled on My

garments, and I will stain all My clothing. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.” – Isaiah 63:1-4

13. Why does He come from Edom? Because Edom has “shed the blood” of Jacob.
 - a. Ezekiel 35:5
14. Verse 15: Cities of refuge were for all people including resident alien and temporary resident.
 - a. But were for those who committed accidental acts.
15. These should not be confused with the asylums of Rome and Greece.
 - a. These were breeding grounds for criminals.
 - b. In days of Tiberius, crime so rampant, asylums were limited to small number.
 - c. Medieval Church gave sanctuary to criminals of every sort in shrines.
 - d. Torah forbid sanctuary for willful murderers.

“But if a man comes presumptuously upon his neighbor to slay him with guile, you shall take him from My altar, so that he may die.” – Exodus 21:14

16. With this in mind, consider today’s sanctuary cities – e.g. San Francisco.
 - a. Becoming a haven for criminals of every nationality and type.
17. Verses 16-18: Specifies who is a murderer; someone who struck the other with:
 - An instrument of iron.
 - A stone.
 - A weapon of wood.
 - Or hurled something at him or “thrust” at him – i.e. pushed him off cliff or house.
18. The weapon proves the person is a murderer and is to be put to death.
 - a. Tubal-Cain was first to develop weapons of iron and brass.
 - b. Tradition says Cain struck Abel with a stone.
 - c. Torah makes distinction of those who “lie in wait” and those acting without enmity.
19. Verse 19: “The avenger of blood (גאל הדם *go’el ha’dam*) shall put the murderer to death.”
20. Verse 25: If a person is found not to be worthy of death, remains in city of refuge until death of the High Priest.
 - a. Until that time, he must live in the city of refuge – there he is safe.
 - b. To venture out of city makes him vulnerable to avenger of blood.
 - c. Were that to happen, avenger slays him without blood guilt.
21. Upon death of high priest, slayer may return to land of his possession.
 - a. Making duration of his exile a matter left in the hands of God; i.e. High Priest’s death.
 - b. In that day, death of High Priest would have been of national consequence.
22. Asylum was connected with the altar of Sanctuary and cities of refuge, so death of Priest – not the King – determined the slayer’s term of exile.

CHAPTER 35: REGULATIONS CONCERNING MURDER

1. In some ancient cultures, murder could be compensated with execution of any member of the murderer’s family.
 - a. Torah makes it clear that only the murderer is to forfeit his life.
 - b. Furthermore, it cannot be atoned for with the payment of money.
 - c. Not even the unintentional murder can ransom himself from city of refuge.

2. Verse 30: “The murderer shall be slain at the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die.”
 - a. There must be two or more witnesses.
3. Verse 31: “You shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer.”
 - a. Or for the release of the unintentional killer.
 - b. Or else the land is polluted with innocent blood.

“So you shall not defile the land in which you are. For blood defiles the land. And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him that shed it. So do not defile the land which you shall inhabit, in which I dwell. For I the LORD dwell among the sons of Israel.” – Numbers 35:33-34

4. Verse 33: “defile” comes from root חָנַף *chanaf*, meaning to “act wickedly, profane, pollute.”
 - a. To be able to ransom with money would cheapen a human life.
 - b. The land would be completely corrupt.
5. In the days of Noah, the earth was “corrupt before God and filled with violence” – Gen. 6:11
 - a. “Violence” is חָמָס *hamas* – perhaps hinting that innocent blood polluted the land.
6. Considering innocent blood pollutes the land and can only be atoned for by the guilty party consider the state of our land with murder, abortion, etc.
7. If the Land became polluted with innocent blood – the Land the LORD dwelt in – caused God to dwell among the contamination.
 - a. Eventually His *Sh’kinah* (Presence) would depart.
 - b. If His Presence has been in our land, at what point does He leave?
 - c. At one point, does it mean Ichabod?

CHAPTER 36: LAWS CONCERNING HEIRESSES

1. Because previously, daughters of men who had no sons were allowed to inherit lands, fear *arose that if those daughters married men from other tribes, the lands allotted to one tribe would pass to another tribe.*
2. Verse 4: Argument made this transfer will be made permanent in the Jubilee.
 - a. Jubilee provided for return of purchased land not inherited land.
 - b. Land belonging to daughters of Zelophehad would be outside provisions of return.
 - c. Those lands, were they to marry other tribesmen, would be forever lost.
 - b. Furthermore, it cannot be atoned for with the payment of money.
3. The issue was raised by chiefs of Machir of Gilead from tribe of Manasseh.
 - a. Verse 5: Moses makes the declaration that they are right in their argument.
 - b. Again, did this point escape the attention of the Creator?
4. The determination / law was: they could marry anyone they wished as long as they were from the same tribe.
 - a. This would ensure that the lands would not pass to another tribe.
 - b. Children of Israel “shall cleave each one to its own inheritance.”
 - c. Indicating that the Creator’s wishes are that the allotments to tribes be permanent.
5. Might this suggest, we are to be who we are and not be conformed to another tribe?
 - a. Am I to be conformed to the tribe of Judah if I am Israel?