



Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat August 2, 2008 / Av 1, 5768

Parashah #43

Torah: *Masa'ei* (Stages/Journeys of), *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 33.1-36.13

Haftorah: *Yirmeyahu* (Jeremiah) 2.4-28; 3.4; 4.1-2

Suggested Messianic Writings: *Ya'akov* (James) 4.1-12

Shalom,

With this parashah we finish up the book of B'Midbar. The title *Masa'ei* is based upon the listing of the various encampments as Israel wandered for the forty years. The root of *masa'ei* מַסָּעִי is *mahs-sah* מַחֵס, which literally means, "the breaking up of a camp, and then a train, or march¹." It is noted that there are 42 stops listed in the text, and commentators and numerologists have come up with a variety of meanings for the number 42, some of which are conceivable, some quite bizarre. Do a Google on the Biblical number 42 and you'll see.

There is a lesson to be learned from the closing verses of chapter 33, however. HaShem commanded Israel through Moshe, "When you cross the Yarden [Jordan] into the land of Kena'an [Canaan], you are to expel all the people living in the land from in front of you. Destroy all their stone figures, destroy all their metal statues and demolish all their high places. Drive out the inhabitants of the land, and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess... But if you don't drive out the inhabitants of the land from in front of you, then those you allow to remain will become like thorns in your eyes and stings in your sides — they will harass you in the land where you are living."

Sadly, Israel has NEVER fully obeyed this commandment. *Y'hosha* (Joshua) did not drive out all of the enemy, neither did David nor any other leader. Modern Israel has not done so either. Think of what a change the Land would have if all of those foreigners who do not stand with Israel were driven out. But as it now is, idolatry, paganism, immorality, worldliness, atheism, abortion, you name it, are allowed to exist side by side along with the worship of HaShem in the Promised Land. In fact, the only system that has had to *fight* to be allowed to exist in Israel is Messianic Judaism. What does that tell you? This is why we must pray for the eyes of Jewish Israeli leaders to be opened to see the truth — that Yeshua is indeed the Messiah and God of Israel. But until that happens, terrorism and anti-Semitism from Israel's enemies will continue — the continuous harassment of "thorns in your eyes and stings in your sides". Some of the worst includes the control of the Temple Mount by Islam, and the giving away of land for peace — a false peace. I'm sure that we are all aware that the land given to Israel by HaShem as their possession and inheritance encompasses a lot more than the size of the current state of Israel.

At the end of the parashah, at the end of B'Midbar, HaShem instructed Moshe that the inheritance of each tribe was to remain with that tribe. It could be entirely possible that that may be part of the land problem in Israel today, for no Jewish person today, except possibly those from the tribe of Levi, is really sure what tribe they are from. The Southern Kingdom of Israel had become known as Judah, after the largest tribe. After the exile of the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel or Ephraim in the later Tanakh, a study of the Books of the Chronicles reveals that a large portion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel drifted down into the Southern Kingdom of Judah upon return to the Land. There was no specific point of return from exile for the Northern Kingdom, as the Southern Kingdom had. The Land became known simply as Israel again, with the residents all being called "Jews," short for Judah, even though they were from various tribes. "Jews" are not just from the tribe of Judah. There may be pockets, from all of the tribes, which moved away and "disappeared" — most notably those that are being found in China and India and such regions, but most are all interspersed within the people known as Jews today.

We can also look at those closing verses of chapter 33 on a more personal level. After "crossing over" into our Promised Land [of salvation], how much of what was already in existence in our lives has not been removed? What do we allow to remain and continue in harassment of our spiritual state? Certainly we cannot defeat the enemies through our own power, just as Israel could/can not drive out their enemies through their own power. The key is found here in B'Midbar 35.34: "No, you are not to defile the land in which you live *and in which I live*; for I, Adonai, live among the people of Isra'el" (emphasis added). If He indeed lives in our "land," we must allow Him to aid us in driving out those enemies.

In the passage above, HaShem commanded Israel to “*expel* all the people living in the land, *v’ho-rahsh-tem et kol yish-bey ha-aretz*, וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ”. The root of *expel* is ורש, *yah-rahsh*, which means, “to occupy, to seize, to take possession of, to drive out”. In the ancient Hebrew, the root letters ש (shin) and ר (resh), were written, or pictured, as ש ר²; the latter pictograph of the *resh* is of a head. The *head* of someone or something signifies, or is, the authority figure, the one in charge, the one that gives the orders; in other words, “Go into the Land and take over, be the head, be in charge of the Land I am giving you.”

Israel, as the chosen people, has been given to us corporately as an example of life. Israel was disobedient to their Creator, and has endured centuries of punishment and wandering. This has caused her enemies to take full advantage of her. Cannot the same happen in our own lives, in a sense? Yet if the *chosen* has had to endure such, what of all those nations and peoples who did the advantage taking, who stand against the chosen, or who waver, such as our own land, insisting that Israel continue to give up land and *not* fight back against terrorism? These enemies, or even insincere weak “friends,” will certainly *not* be spared the wrath of HaShem to one degree or another, and that day may come suddenly, I fear. We who are believers must must be ready for difficult times. It is so sorrowful to see the high percentage of the church that demands and insists and teaches that it has replaced Israel, that Israel no longer has a right to the land, or that modern-day Israel is not part of the current plans of HaShem. I would fear to be in their shoes standing before the G-d of *Avraham*, *Yitz’khak v’Ya’akov*.

Just as the Day of Adoni will be a “suddenly,” I would tend to believe that the Day of total Yeshua-recognition in the Land of Israel will be a “suddenly.” It has been a long and difficult battle, but Messianic Judaism is becoming almost a recurring topic in Israeli news, and is spoken of with more kindness and understanding in much of the media than in the past. And from time to time I hear or read the stories, or rumors or whatever, of large groups of Orthodox Jews who are secret believers. The sources must be considered, for one early well-known source seemingly fell from grace, but the stories still tend to surface from other places. One hopes there is some level of truth there.

The answer for our own lives, and the answer for Israel can be found in this week’s *Messianic Writings* reading, from *Ya’akov* (Jacob/James) 4:7-10, (these verses, by the way, sound like “law” to me. Guess it isn’t all just found in the Old Testament, hey?): “Therefore, submit to God. Moreover, take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and he will come close to you. Clean your hands, sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded people! Wail, mourn, sob! Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into gloom! Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” Sounds pretty stern, but in reality this is the excellent way of achieving true joy in Adoni.

And so we have finished the book of *B’Midbar*, Numbers.

חַזַק! חַזַק! וְנִתְחַזַק! *Kha-zakh! Kha-zakh! V’neet-kha-zayk!*
Be strong! Be strong! And let us be strengthened!

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם – *Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B’rakhot v’todah rabbah
(Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1.11 CJB)

¹ BDB, Brown-Driver-Briggs Commentary

² From the *Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible*