

Parashah MAS'EI (Journeys Of)

Numbers 33:1-36:13, Jeremiah 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2, James 4:1-12

“These are the journeys of the children of Israel...
(Numbers 33:1)

Shalom and Welcome to this week's Torah study, Masei, which describes the journeys of the Israelites from Egypt to the Plains of Moab.

This account of the journeys of Israel may be likened to a father, who, after having taken his ailing son to a distant place to be cured, recounts their journey together and all that transpired along the way. Israel is God's child, whom He leads, guides, loves and disciplines as a good Father.

Israel went out from Egypt **with a ‘high hand’ in the sight of all the Egyptians**, while they were still burying all their dead, whom the God of Israel struck in the final plague upon Egypt. (Numbers 33:3-4)

There was nothing secretive or humiliating about Israel's exodus from Egypt; but rather, it was a public display of God's victory over all the gods of Egypt. This beaten down groups of slaves went out in triumph while their former oppressors remained broken and defeated!



"Departure of the Israelites", by David Roberts, 1829

When God delivers us from the circumstances that have held us in bondage for so long, we will also go out with a 'high hand': **“You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace....”** (Isaiah 55:12)

The Lord spoke to Moses by the Jordan at Jericho, giving directives regarding their imminent entry into the Promised Land. God's first command is to **“drive out all the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein; for unto you have I given the land to possess it.”** (Numbers 33:53)

God warns Israel of the consequences if they fail to drive out the inhabitants of the Land:

“But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then all those that you let remain of them be as thorns in your eyes, and as pricks in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land wherein you dwell.” (Numbers 33:55)

Today, we have a similar situation in the Land of Israel. The exiles have returned to the Promised Land, but some of the inhabitants of the land who have been allowed to remain continue to harass and terrorize the people of Israel.

A man who radically advocated for Israel and world Jewry based upon this Scriptural admonition was **Rabbi Martin David Kahane** also known as **Meir Kahane** (1 August 1932 – 5 November 1990). He was an ordained Orthodox rabbi and later served as a member of the Israeli Knesset.

Rabbi Kahane favored the idea of a ‘Greater Israel’ which would annex the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. In order to prevent the Arabs from becoming a majority in Israel, Kahane proposed a plan to allow Arabs who do not accept Israel as a Jewish state to voluntarily leave and to receive compensation for their property. Those Arabs who refused this offer would be forcibly removed.

By 1988, the Israeli government had banned Kahane as being ‘racist’. And following the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre,¹ which was perpetrated by a Kahane follower, Baruch Goldstein, the political party of *Kach* (*founded by Kahane*) was banned completely. In 1994, it was listed as a terrorist organization by the U. S. State Department.

In November 1990, Rabbi Kahane was assassinated by an Arab gunman in a Manhattan hotel lobby, after giving a speech warning American Jews to emigrate to Israel before it was "too late."

The point is, that although Kahane is dead, his ideology lives on amongst some in Israel who believe that God was right in warning Israel to drive out the inhabitants of the Land.

All over Israel we may often see graffiti that reads, “Kahane Tzodek”, **כהנא צדק** meaning Kahane was right!

Graffiti in [Herzliya](#): "כהנא צדק"

("Kahane was right")



¹ This attack on Muslims praying in a mosque left 29 dead and 125 wounded. Most Israelis denounced the perpetrators' actions as terrorism and considered him insane.

The prophet Isaiah promised us that one day, Hamas (Hebrew for violence) would be destroyed and would no longer be a thorn in Israel's side.

“No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.” (Isaiah 60:18)

We must make sure that we also drive out all the sin that has been occupying our 'land' before we were redeemed, lest the sin we allow to remain become thorns in our eyes, pricks in our sides and a continual harassment in our own 'journey' with the Lord Adonai Yeshua.

Ironically, this week's parashah, Masei, (Numbers 34:1-29), also contains God's Word about the borders **He** has set for Israel, in contrast to the borders that the nations of the world want to impose upon Israel.

Presently, a heated controversy is taking place, and will probably heat up even further when the United Nations plan on coming together to vote upon a proposal to divide up the tiny land of Israel even more. They will vote on whether or not to establish a Palestinian state on Israel's territory and to force Israel back to its pre-1967 borders.

This proposal stands in total opposition to God's word, which states that He will judge those who attempt to divide up His land (Joel 3:2).

Six cities of refuge were also to be set aside as a place of asylum for those who commit accidental homicide. (Numbers 35:9-15) In the case of deliberate murder, however, the murderer was to be put to death. (Numbers 35:16)

All human life is holy and the shedding of innocent blood pollutes the land. (Numbers 35:33)

Thus ends the book of Numbers (Ba'midbar- In the Desert). Shabbat Shalom.

Haftarat Ma'asei

“For two evils My people have done; they left Me, the Source of Living Water, to carve for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which cannot hold water.”

“Although you wash with lye and use soap, the stain of your guilt is before Me, says the Lord God.” (Jeremiah 2:13,22)

Haftarat Ma'asei is one of the few prophetic portions which don't seem to have a direct connection to the parashah, but rather correspond to its place on the Biblical calendar. It occurs in the middle of the three haftorah of rebuke, read between the 17th of the month of Tamuz, and the 9th of Av.

It is a period of time called ‘Bein HaMitzarim’, which means literally ‘between the straits’ but is also a reference to labor and childbirth. When a woman is in full, active labor she is said to be ‘bein Hamitzarim.’

This is a critical time, also called transition, when the labor is hopefully going to proceed to the delivery of a healthy baby. If things go badly, however, it can lead to dire consequences, and even death for either or both mother and child.

This haftorah describes this transition point, bein hamitzarim, when Israel turned away from God and sought after idols. Israel’s denial and forsaking of God led to her destruction on the 9th of Av (Tisha B’av) at which time both Holy Temples were destroyed and the people sent into captivity.

However, it doesn’t have to be this way. Our ‘transitions’ don’t necessarily have to lead to death and destruction; they can lead to the birth of a new life.

A name for God here is **The Source of Living Water (Makor Mayim Chayim).** God calls out, through His prophet, Jeremiah, to come back to the source of life.

Yeshua said, “**I am the way, the truth, and ‘THE LIFE.’**” (John 14:6)

On the last day of the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), Yeshua stood up and boldly proclaimed Himself the source of living water:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scriptures have said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-39)



It was the Spirit of the Living God that Yeshua spoke of. When we drink of these ‘living waters’, not only may we have life, but that living water will also flow out of us to refresh the lives of others.

The lyrics from one of my very favorite (Vineyard) worship songs (All Who are Thirsty) are these: “All who are thirsty... all who are weak... come to the fountain... dip your heart in the streams of life... Let the pain and the sorrow... be washed away... by the waves of His mercy... as deep cries out to deep, we sing Come Yeshua Come... Holy Spirit come.....

I can’t tell you how often this beautiful worship song has comforted my soul in times of deep distress. I love to play it on my harp and I once sang it to prostitutes at a shelter in Tel Aviv.

Most recently, however, while going through a really difficult time, the Holy Spirit showed me so clearly that Yeshua is the fountain of Living Waters to whom we can turn for life.

While driving one Sabbath to our weekly congregational meeting, the conversations in the car degenerated once again into strife and bitter accusations. It just seemed more than I could bear. It was all I could do to continue driving the car to our destination.

Usually we would arrive early in order for Timothy to participate in the pre-service worship practice. We’d often park next to a nice grassy area in the center of Jerusalem to wait for the start of the service.

On this particular day, after this harrowing drive into the city, I ran from the car and fell, face down upon the grass and just sobbed. I felt like a torrent of tears that would never end. It no longer mattered to me who noticed or what people thought of this crazy woman, crying in a public park.

The only thing that existed was this all-encompassing emotional pain that wouldn’t go away – the pain of having a dysfunctional family and feeling that it is all my fault and that nothing I ever do or don’t do, pray or not pray, will ever make a difference. I felt so absolutely hopeless that my family situation would ever get any better; and I felt completely unable to cope.

Have you ever felt this way? So utterly alone and lost?

Avi, bless his young compassionate heart didn’t know what to do, so he just sat beside me, patting my back, until the weeping finally subsided. It was then that I looked up and saw the fountain – streams of water flowed right beside where I lay.



And these words of comfort began to run through my head: “All who are weary... all who are weak... **Come to the fountain...**dip your heart in the streams of life...let the pain and the sorrow...be washed away... by the waves of His mercy...as deep cries out to deep...we sing Come Yeshua come....

In my heart I began to reach out to that fountain of living waters, to drink from the streams of life, to allow His mercy to wash away the pain and the sorrow – the loneliness, the fear, the frustration, the strife, the confusion, the shame and the guilt.....

The Holy Spirit began to wash over me and brought a beautiful comfort and peace to my soul.
Fountain at Independence Park in Jerusalem

Yeshua said, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest...”** (Mathew 11:28)

In our journey through life, we may come to many ‘turning points’, transitions, times when we are truly ‘bein hamitzarim’ (between the straits). As with labor and childbirth, the pain can feel excruciating, but these times do not necessarily have to end in death. If we will turn to the source of living waters (makor mayim chayim), these turbulent times can lead us towards a healthy birth of a whole new life.

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ...because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen...” (Isaiah 43:18-20)

SHABBAT SHALOM! Love Hannah

About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior.

She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the



Jewish roots of their faith.

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