

Tell a story
Parshah Masei
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-07-30

Comments

Numbers 33:1-36:13

This part of the Torah portion covers the sons of Reuven and Gad promise to help the other tribes settle in the land of Israel. They promised to do this before they themselves crossed the Jordan River. They make this promise to Moses, and he records the journey of the Jews from when they left Egypt and made their way to Israel. That's what a lot of this parsha is about Moses keeping track of all the places and stops they made. They were led out of Egypt with the help of Moses and Aaron from the first month on the fifteenth day, it happened on the morning of the Passover offering. The Jewish people left Egypt in the eyes of all the Egyptians, it so happened at the time G-d had struck the Egyptians down with the death of the first born, with judgement upon their own gods. G-d had a long talk with Moses, He told him to inform the Jews when they would cross into the land of Canaan the goal was to drive out all the people living there and destroy their symbols of idols and places that they worshiped.

G-d put a decree out there, that the land of Canaan was going to now belong to the Jewish people. G-d warned Moses that if he and the other Jews didn't drive out every single person living there, anyone left over would remain as a thorn in the side of the Jewish people. G-d continued to warn Moses that those living in Canaan now, would oppress the Jews as enemies in the land. G-d's final warning was very severe, if there were any Jews who didn't go along with this plan G-d had come up with, His wrath would happen to them too. G-d told Moses about the borders of Canaan and which part of the land of Israel every tribe would receive. Whatever information G-d gave Moses, he passed onto the Jewish people. Every tribe was to give part of their possessions, land, and this included their animals to the Levites.

The Levites were the ones taking care of the Tent. That Tent was an important place, because that's where the Jews went to worship G-d, and study the Torah as well. G-d told Moses to inform the Jews, when they would reach the land of Canaan there would be "safe cities". These cities or refuge venues were places for people to go if they murdered someone. The one who murdered is to stay there and wait until they have been judged, whether they are guilty or innocent. G-d wanted there to be six safe cities all together, three on the side of Jordan and the other three in Canaan.

The laws of murder were very important and Moses passed the information down to the Jews. It was complicated for one thing, if one killed another out of hatred they would be punished with death. They could only be punished by death if there were two people witnessing the murder. That person who killed someone out of hatred can't be put to death if there is only one witness. No Jew was to accept a bribe in order to keep the person who murdered someone alive. If the murder is to die, then do so. If a murder happens not because of hatred or desire to hurt anyone that person is to be taken to a safe city.

If the killer leaves the safe city, then it is okay for them to be killed. This was the law of justice for everyone in the land of Canaan. G-d told Moses to inform the Jews to not turn the Promised Land in a place where they could sin, tell lies, and practice injustice. G-d wanted for the Jews to keep the Promised Land pure. It was important for the Jewish people to know that G-d was going to be watching them to make sure no one was to attack them, but also that they were going to follow His laws.

In this parsha we learn about the five sisters who receive part of the land themselves, since their father died before. G-d told Moses that if there were no male inheritances of Zelophehad's daughters they could have some part of the land. At first the tribal members were concerned because of the transference of land when these daughters were to get married. Moses came up with a law that G-d was okay with, for these daughters to marry someone in the family of their father's tribe that way no inheritance would transfer from one tribe to another. The five sisters did end up following the plan Moses had set up.