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PARASHAT HASHAVUA

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Le-zekher Nishmat HaRabbanit Chana bat HaRav Yehuda Zelig zt"l.

This shiur is dedicated in memory of
Dr. William Major z"l.

PARASHAT MASEI

"And These are the Journeys of Benei Yisrael..."

Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

Parashat Masei, which concludes Sefer Bamidbar, has two main subjects: first, a summary of the journeys of Benei Yisrael, the Jewish nation, in the wilderness; second, the final preparations for entering the land.

Thus, this final parasha serves as a fitting conclusion to the sefer which describes the Jews' wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

In this shiur, we shall focus on the description of the journeys (33:1-49) and how Parashat Masei summarizes the period in the wilderness. Is this just a travelogue, or is Masei teaching us a more fundamental lesson about the journey?

"At God's command"

The unit opens with a double introduction:

- (1) And these are the journeys of Benei Yisrael — who came out of the land of Egypt with their hosts — by the hand of Moshe and Aharon.
- (2) And Moshe wrote down their departures according to their journeys at God's command, and these are their journeys according to their departures.

What is added by verse 2? It tells us that Moshe transcribes "their departures according to their journeys at God's command." This emphasizes that Benei Yisrael's journeys in the wilderness are not a wholly human endeavor "by the hand of Moshe and Aharon" – but also "at God's command." [1]

This emphasis sits well with the depiction of the journey in Sefer Bamidbar. Bamidbar describes the Jews in the wilderness as a camp centered around the Divine Presence in the Mishkan (Tabernacle). [2] In Chapter 9, the text emphasizes that the journey's progress is entirely by God's command:

(18) "At God's command Benei Yisrael journeyed, and at God's command they encamped; as long as the cloud rested upon the Mishkan, they encamped.

(19) And when the cloud remained upon the Mishkan for many days, then Benei Yisrael kept God's charge and did not journey.

(20) And sometimes the cloud was but a few days upon the Mishkan; by God's command they encamped, and by God's command they journeyed...

(23) By God's command they encamped and by God's command they journeyed; they kept God's charge at God's command, by the hand of Moshe."

The expression "at God's command" appears seven times in the description in chapter 9, and then in Chapter 10 (v. 13), it appears again: "And they journeyed for the first time at God's command, by the hand of Moshe."

In Parashat Masei, which lists all the stations of Benei Yisrael in the wilderness, the Torah chooses to emphasize once again that their journey is "at God's command."

Eilim and Refidim

Most of the journeys that are listed in Parashat Masei are recorded only briefly: "They journeyed from ____, and they encamped at ____." There is almost no mention, in this parasha, of events that happen to the nation. Nevertheless, the Torah chooses to mention four incidents. Surprisingly, they are not the central nation-molding events that we might expect – such as the giving of the Torah. The four incidents that are recounted are, instead, seemingly marginal episodes.

Why are these events mentioned? Do they convey any message as to the Torah's purpose in recording these travels?

The first two events mentioned in Parashat Masei are the abundance of water at Eilim and the lack of water at Refidim. Why does the Torah focus on these episodes? The common theme that they share is the importance of water in the desert. However, during the course of forty years, there are a number of other episodes that involve water and the miracles that God performs in order to provide it. Hence, we must still ask: why is it these two particular events that are recalled here?

Let us consider the places where the Torah notes problems of water in the wilderness:

a. Shur Wilderness (Shemot 15:22): "Moshe led Israel from the Reed Sea, and they went out to the Shur Wilderness, and they walked for three days in the wilderness, and they did not find water." In Parashat Masei (33:8) the text recalls only the three-day journey in the wilderness of Etam (Shur), with no mention of the lack of water.

b. Mara (Shemot 15:23-26):

They came to Mara, and they could not drink the water at Mara for it was bitter (marim); therefore it was called "Mara." And the people complained to Moshe, saying: "What shall we drink?" And he cried out to God, and God showed him a tree, and he cast it into the water, and the water became sweet.

In Parashat Masei (33:8), only the name "Mara" is mentioned, without the story.

c. Eilim (Shemot 15:27): "They came to Eilim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water." This desert oasis is recalled in Parashat Masei (33:9), in exactly the same language.

d. Sin Wilderness (Shemot 16): Upon reaching the Sin Wilderness, Benei Yisrael complain of hunger, and in response God promises them daily manna (and a one-time gift of meat). Parashat Masei lists the Sin Wilderness (33:11) as a station, but neither the complaint nor the manna is mentioned.

e. Refidim (Shemot 17:1-7):

All the congregation of Benei Yisrael journeyed from the Sin Wilderness, by their travels, at God's command, and they encamped at Refidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. And the people strove with Moshe... And the people were thirsty there for water, and the people complained against Moshe... And Moshe cried out to God, saying: "What shall I do for this nation? They will soon stone me." So God said to Moshe, "...you shall hit the rock, and water will emerge from it, and the people will drink." So Moshe did so... And he called the place "Massa U-mriva," because of the strife (riv) of Benei Yisrael and because of their testing (nassotam) God, saying, "Is God in our midst or not?"

Parashat Masei recalls only partially the events at Refidim (33:14). No mention is made of the complaint, nor of the miracle of water gushing from the rock; the Torah notes only the lack of water.

f. Kadesh, Tzin Wilderness (Bamidbar 20:1-4, 11-13):

The nation dwelled in Kadesh, and Miriam died there... And there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered against Moshe and against Aharon... And the people strove with Moshe... "And why have you brought God's congregation to this wilderness to die there, we and our cattle...?" And Moshe raised his hand and he struck the rock with his staff twice, and much water emerged, and the congregation and their cattle drank...

And God said to Moshe and to Aharon: "Since you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of Benei Yisrael, therefore you will not bring this congregation to the land which I have given to them." This is Mei Meriva (Waters of Strife), where Benei Yisrael strove (ravu) against God, and He was sanctified through them.

This traumatic event, in the wake of which God decrees that Moshe and Aharon will not enter the land, appears nowhere in Parashat Masei. The text mentions only "the Tzin Wilderness, which is Kadesh" (33:36).

The Torah notes the issue of water in the wilderness, but ignores the events related to it. What is the significance of this? Apparently, the intention is to summarize the water issue with two general principles. On the one hand, God kindly provides water in the wilderness; an example of this is the station at Eilim. This shows that although Benei Yisrael spend forty years in the wilderness, they do not spend all of this time in arid, difficult places — they also encamp at oases. It seems that Eilim is chosen because this is the only oasis explicitly described as such. (Devarim 1:46 notes that the nation "dwelled at Kadesh for many days" — Rashi specifies: "nineteen years" — presumably because there is a very large oasis there, but this is never stated explicitly.)

On the other hand, the Torah seeks to note the difficulty inherent in journeying through the wilderness, where there is very little water. An example is Refidim where, indeed, there is no water for the people to drink. For this reason, no mention is made of the complaint at Refidim, its being renamed "Massa U-mriva," or the war against Amalek. The Torah notes only the lack of water, serving as an example of the hardships of a nation traveling through the wilderness.[3]

This difficulty stands eternally in Israel's favor, as the prophet Yirmiyahu declares (2:2): "So says God: 'I recall for you the kindness of your youth, your love as a bride, when you followed Me in the wilderness, in an unsown land.'"

The complaints and strife, and the miracles that are performed in the wake of these complaints, address the reality of journeying through the wilderness, but Parashat Masei teaches that these are not the most important lesson. Ultimately, the message is that the journeying through the wilderness represented mutual commitment and love: God's love in providing for the needs of Benei Yisrael in this arid, unsown environment, and Israel's love in following God through the wilderness, despite the great difficulties involved.[4]

Kadesh

Let us examine one section out of the list of journeys, which describes no incidents but is nevertheless most interesting:

(16) And they journeyed from the Sinai Wilderness, and they encamped at Kivrot Ha-ta'ava.

(17) And they journeyed from Kivrot Ha-ta'ava, and they encamped at Chatzerot.

(18) And they journeyed from Chatzerot, and they encamped at Ritma...

(36) And they journeyed from Etzyon Gever, and they encamped in the Tzin Wilderness, which is Kadesh.

Let us compare this summary of the route to its description earlier in Sefer Bamidbar, beginning with "Benei Yisrael traveled by their journeys from the Sinai Wilderness, and the cloud rested in the Paran Wilderness" (10:12). At the nation's first station after leaving Mount Sinai, the people start complaining; as a result, God punishes them, giving the place its name (11:4, 33-35):

And the admixture that was in their midst experienced lust, and Benei Yisrael, too, cried and said, "Who will feed us meat...?"

The meat was still between their teeth, not yet chewed up, and God's anger burned against the nation, and God smote the nation with a very great plague. And he called that place Kivrot Ha-ta'ava (Graves of Lust), for there they buried the people who had lusted. From Kivrot Ha-ta'ava the nation journeyed to Chatzerot, and they were at Chatzerot.

It is at this station, at Chatzerot, that Miriam is struck with the tzara'at plague (12:1, 15-16):

Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe...

And Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days, and the nation did not journey on until Miriam was gathered in. And afterwards the nation journeyed from Chatzerot, and they encamped in the Paran Wilderness.

In the Paran Wilderness, the debacle of the Spies takes place (13:1-3, 21, 25-26):

God spoke to Moshe, saying: "Send for yourself men, that they may scout out the land of Kena'an..."

And Moshe sent them from the Paran Wilderness at God's command...

And they went up and they scouted out the land, from the Tzin Wilderness up to Rechov, on the way to Chamat...

And they returned from scouting out the land after forty days. And they went, and they came to Moshe, Aharon and the entire congregation of Benei Yisrael, to the Paran Wilderness, at Kadesh...

The Sin of the Spies occurs at Kadesh Barne'a,[5] in the Paran Wilderness, on the southern border of the land of Kena'an. From this point, they are meant to enter the land. However, in the wake of the Sin of the Spies, it is decreed that the nation must wander in the wilderness for another thirty-eight years (14:25): "Turn and take yourselves into the wilderness, by the way of the Reed Sea."

Where do they journey throughout those many years? Before Parashat Masei, Sefer Bamidbar makes no mention of the places where Benei Yisrael encamp during all this time, nor does it recall any events that take place then. After the Sin of the Spies, the Torah mentions only the challenge by Korach and his company (which apparently takes place soon after the story of the Spies) in Chapters 16-17, and then a few commandments in Chapters 18-19. The next station that is mentioned is Kadesh in the Tzin Wilderness, what we may refer to as "Kadesh-Tzin," where the nation arrives in the fortieth year.[6] This gives rise to another complaint about the lack of water,[7] as mentioned above, which leads to the sin of Moshe and Aharon and the decree that they will not enter the land. Another event that takes place at Kadesh is sending messengers to the king of Edom, with a request to pass through his land.

We may therefore summarize the journeys of Benei Yisrael from the Sinai Wilderness to Kadesh-Tzin, according to the description in the early part of Sefer Bamidbar, as follows: from the Sinai Wilderness they journey to Kivrot Ha-ta'ava, from there to Chatzerot, and from there to Kadesh in the Paran Wilderness (what we may call "Kadesh-Paran"), where the episode of the Spies takes place. As a result, they wander in the wilderness "by way of the Reed Sea" for thirty-eight years, but we do not know where exactly, and at the beginning of the fortieth year they reach Kadesh-Tzin.

The description in Parashat Masei similarly describes the nation as journeying from the Sinai Wilderness to Kivrot Ha-ta'ava and from there to Chatzerot. However, no mention is made of Kadesh-Paran. Instead, there is a list of eighteen journeys to places that are mentioned nowhere previously in Sefer Bamidbar, and eventually the nation arrives as "the Tzin Wilderness, which is Kadesh."

This is most surprising: after all, Kadesh-Paran is not a minor, insignificant station in Benei Yisrael's travels! This is where the Spies give their report and the people cry, as a result of which they wander for another thirty-eight years in the wilderness. Surely this station is of great significance! Moreover, Kadesh Barne'a is a large oasis that serves as a very comfortable station, and Benei Yisrael dwell there for close to two decades, as noted above. How can it be that Parashat Masei makes no mention of this place at all?

A number of possibilities have been raised to solve this riddle. One possibility is that the eighteen journeys from Ritma to Etzyon Gever are all journeys in the Paran Wilderness, from Chatzerot to Kadesh, and that the Sin of the Spies takes place afterwards, in Kadesh. According to this view, Kadesh-Tzin is the same as Kadesh-Paran,[8] and two events take place there: in the second year – the Sin of the Spies, and thirty-eight years later, the Mei Meriva debacle.[9]

Another possibility, as proposed by Rashi, is that "Ritma" is the place where the Sin of the Spies takes place,[10] and all of the journeys that follow are the stations covered during the thirty-eight years. Rashi's interpretation serves to bring Parashat Masei in line with the other parashiyyot in Sefer Bamidbar, but it remains difficult to explain the appearance of the name "Ritma" instead of "Kadesh."[11]

Yet another possibility[12] is that right after Chatzerot, the nation reaches Kadesh-Paran, and in the wake of the Sin of the Spies, they leave there and turn around "by way of the Reed Sea." The stations "by way of the Reed Sea," from Ritma to Etzyon Gever,[13] are not listed in the account in the early part of Sefer Bamidbar, but Parashat Masei mentions them. From Etzyon Gever, they return to the region of Kadesh, this time encamping not at exactly the same spot – at Kadesh-Paran — but at a point nearby, "Kadesh in the Tzin Wilderness." [14] Kadesh-Paran is a huge oasis, and apparently another nation occupies it while Benei Yisrael are wandering in the wilderness, so that the Jews are unable to return to it. They therefore settle in the nearby Kadesh-Tzin, but there is not enough water, and the nation complains about the situation.

We may summarize the route, according to this third explanation, as follows:

Bamidbar 10-20
Parashat Masei
Sinai Wilderness
Sinai Wilderness
Kivrot Ha-ta'ava
Kivrot Ha-ta'ava
Chatzerot
Chatzerot
Kadesh-Paran

Wandering in the wilderness "by way of the Reed Sea"
Ritma, Rimmon Peretz, Livna, Rissa... Etzyon Gever
Kadesh-Tzin
Kadesh-Tzin

We may then refer to a map of Israel's journeys through the wilderness. [15] (See below).

This hypothesis gives rise to a difficult question: why does Parashat Masei ignore Kadesh-Paran, where the Sin of the Spies takes place and where Benei Yisrael dwell for so long?

Let us leave this question aside for the moment and consider another interesting point. Even if Kadesh-Paran is not the same place as Kadesh-Tzin, it is difficult to ignore the similarity between them: both are called "Kadesh," and both are located in the same area, on the border, the gateway into the Promised Land. Twice Benei Yisrael arrive at Kadesh on the border of the land. The first time they reach Kadesh is in the second year, after a short journey of only two stations (from the Sinai Wilderness, via Kivrot Ha-ta'ava and Chatzerot, on to Kadesh). They are stationed on the border of the Promised Land and are about to enter it. At the last minute, they falter. They decide to send spies, and this leads to the sin and the decree that they will not enter the land, but rather wander for 38 years until the entire generation dies out.

The second time they reach Kadesh is in the fortieth year, after prolonged wandering in the wilderness. Once again, they are poised to enter the land, and once again, at the critical moment, there is a sin that prevents entry into the land: the sin of Moshe and Aharon at Mei Meriva, as a

result of which they are forbidden to lead the nation into Kena'an. However, this time it is the sin of Moshe and Aharon alone; only they will die in the wilderness as a result of this sin. The nation as a whole is embarking on the process of entering the land. From the point of view of the nation, the second arrival at Kadesh is a repair of the first arrival, and it is from here that the entry into the land commences.

Parashat Masei makes no mention of the first Kadesh; it mentions only the second Kadesh. This brings us back to our question: what is the meaning of the complete omission of the first Kadesh? This presentation creates the impression that after leaving Chatzerot, the nation wanders about in the wilderness; only after this prolonged sojourn do they reach Kadesh, on the border of Kena'an. The Torah lists the places where Benei Yisrael wander for 38 years; it does not ignore this time. However, it does ignore the fact that all of this results from the nation's failure; it ignores the fact that they could have entered the land already in the second year.

Perhaps Parashat Masei means to present a different picture of the years of wandering in the wilderness. Perhaps it seeks to show that the wandering of the 38 years is not altogether superfluous and meaningless, but rather part of a process that the Jewish nation undergoes in the wilderness to prepare to enter the land: a process, "at God's command," which is inevitable.[16] Wandering in the wilderness for so many years, as the entire generation that had been slaves in Egypt dies, prepares the nation for their entry into the land.

Parashat Masei skips over the first station at Kadesh, in effect telling the reader: it was never realistic to arrive at the border of Kena'an and enter the land in the second year of the Exodus from Egypt. The nation was not ready: their soul still bore the marks of slavery; their faith in God was not yet firm. For this reason the Spies see themselves (13:33) as "grasshoppers" in relation to the land's inhabitants; for the same reason, the nation is frightened by the Spies' report.

Thus, the result of sending the Spies is wandering in the wilderness for many more years, until the nation can grow stronger and become worthy of entering the land. All the people whose souls are still enslaved, and who are incapable of fighting for the land, have to die off. The nation needs time to internalize the connection between themselves and God, and their faith in God as the Provider for all of their needs. They need to develop the confidence that they are capable of entering the land despite the difficulties, because God will help them in their conquest. Hence, the wandering in the wilderness is not only a punishment for sin, but a necessity arising from reality.

As noted above, Parashat Masei describes the wandering in the wilderness, where Benei Yisrael are required to maintain absolute trust in God and to follow Him despite all of the hardships. At the same time, the Torah describes how God provides for their needs in the wilderness. After forty years of this situation, creating a very special relationship between Benei Yisrael and God, the nation has internalized God's love for them, and they know that God is with them and will be on their side as they wage war. Armed with this consciousness, they are ready to enter the land.

The Death of Aharon

The next event mentioned in Parashat Masei is the death of Aharon at Hor Ha-har (33:38-39). Why does Parashat Masei make special note of this event? The decree against him and Moshe has given rise to much commentary, since it is difficult to understand why, as a result of such a seemingly minor sin, these great leaders must die rather than enter the land. Parashat Masei casts Aharon's death in a different light:

Aharon the Kohen ascended Hor Ha-har at God's command, and he died there in the fortieth year of the Exodus of Benei Yisrael from the land of Egypt.

Just as all of the journeys of Benei Yisrael are undertaken "at God's command," and just as the wandering in the wilderness and the death of the entire older generation is a necessity (not just the result of a momentary lapse in the form of the Sin of the Spies), so too the deaths of Moshe and Aharon in the wilderness are "at God's command," as part of the overall plan: none of the generation that left Egypt can enter the land; even the leaders of this generation – Moshe and Aharon – must remain in the wilderness, with their flock.[17]

Parashat Masei emphasizes the date of Aharon's death: in the fortieth year, on the first day of the fifth month. Aharon is the last of the older generation to die (except for Moshe). His death symbolizes the passing of the entire generation and the end of wandering in the wilderness. After his death, the nation can commence its entry into the land.

"And the Kena'ani... heard"

Immediately after the death of Aharon, comes the war against the Kena'ani. They hear that Benei Yisrael are approaching the border of the land, and they come out to wage war against them. Parashat Masei makes note of this war, even though it makes no mention of the other wars that Benei Yisrael fight in the wilderness (the war against Amalek and the wars on the eastern side of the Jordan). What is the significance of recalling this war?

The war is described in Parashat Chukkat (21:1-3):

- (1) And the Kena'ani, the king of Arad, dwelling in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by way of the Atarim, and he fought against Israel and took some of them as captives.
- (2) And Israel made a vow to God, and they said, "If You will give this people into our hands, then we will utterly destroy their cities."
- (3) And God heard Israel, and He delivered the Kena'ani; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities, and they called the place "Chorma."

Benei Yisrael pray and are ultimately victorious. The site of the battle is named Chorma (Destruction), commemorating the victory. This battle is highly reminiscent of another. After the Sin of the Spies, when Benei Yisrael hear that they will not be permitted to enter the land, some of them attempt to proceed, unauthorized, towards the mountains and to enter the land, even though God is not with them (Bamidbar 14:37-45). The result is that "The Amaleki and the Kena'ani who dwelled in that mountain came down, and they struck them and crushed them as far as Chorma."

Twice Benei Yisrael are in the region of Kadesh; twice war breaks out there against the Kena'ani, who dwell in the mountains, in the region of Arad. On both occasions the site of the battle is named "Chorma".

The first time, after the Sin of the Spies, Benei Yisrael fight their battle while they are unworthy of entering the land. They are proceeding against God's will, and they are defeated. The second time, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they approach the battle as a more mature nation, ready to enter the land. They receive God's assistance, and they are victorious. The second war is a rectification of the first one. This time the nation is worthy; they go into battle with faith in and prayer to God, and therefore they are successful.

This is the first battle for the conquest of the land. It is therefore no wonder that Parashat Masei mentions specifically this war, with which the conquest of the land commences.

Summary

The list of journeys in Parashat Masei is not just a chronicle meant to aid geographical identification. The parasha also comes to summarize the period of wandering in the wilderness and to illuminate its significance.

Parashat Masei presents the wandering in the wilderness as proceeding "at God's command."

The parasha makes no mention of Kadesh Barne'a, where the Sin of the Spies occurs, but it does note the stations covered during the subsequent 38 years. Thus, these journeys are presented as part of the journey "at God's command," as a necessary process to prepare the nation for entering the land.

The years of wandering "in the wilderness, in an unsown land," create a special connection between the Jewish nation and God – a connection of mutual love, commitment and faith. Parashat Masei conveys the formation of this special connection by mentioning the encampment at the oasis of Eilim, and by mentioning Refidim, where there was no water.

After this special bond is firmly established, Benei Yisrael are able to return to the same point – Kadesh, on the border of Kena'an. There Aharon dies, as the last of the slave generation; there the war of conquest commences with the victory over the Kena'ani; and from there, the nation proceeds anew on its journey into the Promised Land.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

[1] The Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni understand "at God's command" as referring to the journeys. The Ramban, however, applies it to what was Moshe's transcription of the journeys.

[2] See my shiur on Parashat Bamidbar.

[3] To illustrate the problem of the lack of water, the Torah could have chosen other places. It may be that the choice of Refidim is incidental, and that by the same measure the text could have named the Shur Wilderness, Mara, or Kadesh. However, there may be some significance to the specific selection of Refidim. In the Ramban's view (commenting on v. 14), Refidim is mentioned "because the matter of Refidim is a significant event, in that they tested God... and He was sanctified before their eyes... and the war against Amalek came upon them there." It is interesting to note that specifically the journey to Refidim (like the journey from Mount Sinai) is noted as being "at God's command." It may be for this reason that Masei, describing the journey "at God's command," specifically mentions it.

[4] The Rambam (Moreh Ha-nvukhim III:50) explains that the purpose of Parashat Masei is to show that Benei Yisra'el journeyed through the wilderness, a place unfit for human habitation, and nevertheless survived for forty years. This demonstrates God's kindness and love in performing such miracles for them. The Seforno (33:1) adopts the other perspective: "The blessed God wanted the journeys of Israel to be recorded in order to make known their merit in following Him 'in the wilderness, in an unsown land.'" In the interpretation which we proposed above, these two approaches come together.

[5] The Kadesh of the Spies is repeatedly referred to as Kadesh Barne'a; see Bamidbar 32:8; Devarim 1:19, 9:23.

[6] See the commentary of the Ibn Ezra on this verse.

[7] The lack of water proves that Kadesh-Tzin is not the same place as Kadesh-Paran, since the latter is a large oasis and could not have suffered a water shortage.

[8] See The Carta Bible Atlas, pp. 40-41

[9] This theory raises a great number of geographical and biblical difficulties. We shall not elaborate here, but interested readers are referred to Masei Sinai by Menasheh Harel, pp. 277-81.

[10] According to Rashi, it is "commemorating the evil speech of the Spies, as it is written (Tehillim 120:3-4): 'What is given to you, and what shall be added to you, deceitful (remiyya) tongue? Arrows of the mighty one sharpened with coals of broom (retamim).'"

[11] We know of places that are named for events that occur there (Mara, Kivrot Ha-ta'ava) but the Torah itself explains the names in these cases. When it comes to the story of the Spies, there is no mention of the place being called "Ritma" as a result of what happens there; we encounter the name change for the first time in Masei.

[12] My thanks to Rav Yo'el bin Nun for enlightening me in this regard; see "Masei Sinai" by Menasheh Harel.

[13] We know that Etzyon Gever is near Eilat (Devarim 2:8); thus it makes sense as the end-point for wandering "by way of the Reed Sea".

[14] To follow the route, see the attached map.

[15] Map copied from Masei Sinai by Menasheh Harel. The identification of places as presented in this map differs in certain fundamental respects from the Carta map. See Carta for a comparison.

[16] This may help us to explain the discrepancy between Bamidbar and Devarim in terms of sending the Spies: "at God's command" vs. the nation's initiative. This episode, which leads to such a long delay, is a failure on the part of the nation, but it is "at God's command." God knows that Benei Yisra'el are not yet ready to enter the land; they need to wander until the next generation can do so.

[17] Admittedly, the fact that there is a separate decree for Moshe and Aharon in the fortieth year indicates that they are in a different category. They themselves are worthy of entering Israel in the second year, but ultimately they are prevented from doing so because they are the leaders of the older generation. (See Pirkei Mo'adot II, by Rav M. Breuer, "The Sin of the Spies and the Sin of Moshe Rabbeinu" (Heb.), pp. 441-44).