

Candles (earliest)	MAS'EI	Havdala	next week
7:03 (6:13)	Yerushalayim	8:18	6:57 / 8:12
7:19 (6:14)	S'derot	8:20	7:14 / 8:13
7:18 (6:13)	Gush Etzion	8:18	7:12 / 8:12
7:20 (6:15)	Raanana	8:20	7:14 / 8:14
7:18 (6:13)	Beit Shemesh\RBS	8:19	7:13 / 8:12
7:20 (6:15)	Netanya	8:21	7:15 / 8:14
7:19 (6:14)	Rehovot	8:20	7:14 / 8:13
7:16 (6:13)	Be'erSheva\Otniel	8:18	7:11 / 8:12
7:19 (6:14)	Modi'in\Chashmona'im	8:19	7:13 / 8:13
7:03 (6:14)	Petach Tikva	8:20	6:57 / 8:14
7:03 (6:12)	Maale Adumim	8:18	6:57 / 8:11
7:19 (6:14)	Ginot Shomron	8:19	7:13 / 8:13
7:18 (6:13)	Gush Shiloh	8:18	7:12 / 8:12
7:18 (6:13)	K4 & Hevron	8:18	7:12 / 8:11
7:18 (6:13)	Giv'at Ze'ev	8:18	7:12 / 8:12
7:19 (6:14)	Yad Binyamin	8:20	7:14 / 8:13
7:20 (6:15)	Ashkelon	8:20	7:15 / 8:14
7:09 (6:13)	Tzfat	8:20	7:03 / 8:13

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - MAS'EI - 8:59pm

Used to itemize deductions

Find out about horse races down under

Who lives at Uziel corner Parnach?

The Balak-Mas'ei connection

In other words, the fraternity leader

Brothers in name only

Calendar Trivia: Av and August dates match this year (1st thru 30th). This happened previously in 1981, 1962, 1924. This kind of match up with any pair of months happens about every 2½-3 years. Most recent match ups occurred with Elul 5768 & September 2008 - 35 civil calendar months ago which was 36 Jewish month ago. Before that, Adar 5766 & March 2006. Before that, only 2 months earlier - Tevet 5766 and January 2006.

Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI
25 Tamuz - 5 Av • Jul 27 - Aug 5

Earliest Talit & T'filin	4:55-5:02am
Sunrise	5:52-5:58am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:37-8:41am)	9:18-9:21am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:52-9:55am)	10:27-10:29am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	12:45¾pm-12:45¼am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	1:21-1:20pm
Plag Mincha	6:13¼-6:07¾pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 7:39-7:32pm)	7:44-7:37pm

www.ttidbits.com
for PDF files of TT (whole, lite, XL), ParshaPix, text file, Palm version, Torah Tidbits Audio mp3 files... and more!

LEAD TIDBIT continued from FRONT page

the Rambam counts separately). Mitzva #4 is based on Bamidbar 33:53 - "You shall possess the Land and you shall settle in it, for to you have I given the Land to possess it."

The different understandings of the opening "command" of V'HORASH-TEM, aside, according to Ramban, this is the command from G-d to the Jew to settle in the Land of Israel. See further in the Sedra Summary, the other aspects of this mitzva that the Ramban spells out. Ramban makes a very strong case for the various parts of this mitzva being obligatory on the Jewish People... even today.

Although a full presentation of this issue is beyond the limited space allotted the Lead Tidbit, let's touch on a few points.

First, this is NOT an objective presentation of the topic of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael. It is colored by a firm and passionate conviction that G-d commands us to live in Eretz Yisrael, that He WANTS us to live our Torah lives in the Land of Israel.

Let's spend some time on the absence of this mitzva on the Rambam's list of mitzvot (and that of the Chinuch).

The Rambam states very clearly and strongly in his halachic work, Yad Chazaka, the imperative nature of living in Eretz Yisrael. He echoes the Gemara in stating that "a person should rather live in the Land of Israel in a city the majority of whose inhabi-

tants are idol worshipers, rather than live outside Eretz Yisrael, even in a city with a majority of Jews." He is clear in echoing the statement that "one who lives outside of Israel is like one who has no G-d."

So why isn't living in Eretz Yisrael on the Rambam's list of Taryag (613)?

Some suggest that the Rambam considers Yishuv Eretz Yisrael as a Supra-mitzva, one that is above, transcends, encompasses, and facilitates other mitzvot. Living in Israel is more than a specific mitzva to live here. Living in Israel (even in our time without the Beit HaMikdash, without a Sanhedrin, without Yovel in effect) brings in its wake a variety of other mitzvot. Living in Israel - according to the Ramban and others - gives the opportunity of fulfilling other mitzvot (even those not dependent upon the Land) on a higher level.

Mitzvot of this type do not get numbered by the Rambam among the 613. But they are nonetheless (and probably more so) mitzvot.

Does the mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael apply in our time or not? Is the mitzva obligatory or "merely" a matter of fulfilling it (CHIYUVIT or KIYUMIT)? All interesting questions and subject to much discussion. Aside from all of these issues is the clear picture that emerges from the Torah - R'TZON HASHEM - What does G-d want of each Jew? Where does He want us to be? Is this really a question at all?

Mas'ei

43rd of the 54 sedras; 10th of 10 in Bamidbar

Written on 189 lines in a Torah (rank: 30th)

8 Parshiyot; 6 open, 2 closed

132 psukim - ranks 12th (5th in B'midbar)

1461 words - ranks 32th (7th in B'midbar)

5773 letters - ranks 28th (6th in B'midbar)

P'sukim of Mas'ei are the shortest in the whole Torah. Hence the severe drop in rank from p'sukim to words.

MITZVOT

6 of the 613 mitzvot, 2 positives, 4 prohibitions

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya 10 p'sukim - 33:1-10

We indicate here the standard arrangement of Aliyot for Mas'ei when it is read separately from Matot. However, some shuls/communities have the custom

not to stop during the "travelog", but rather to combine the first two Aliyot (making the first Aliya 49 p'sukim long, moving it into first place as the longest (in p'sukim) first Aliya). Sources explain this practice based on a parallel between the 42 places of encampment and the 42-letter name of HaShem (which must not be split up). In this case, an additional Aliya-stop is inserted elsewhere. This issue comes up only when Matot and Mas'ei are read separately. When combined (which is most often, as we've said several times), the whole travelog is contained in R'VI, the bridge aliya of the two sedras.

[P> 33:1 (39)] The sedra of Mas'ei begins with a listing of the 42 places of encampment during the years of wandering in the Wilderness. Most places are just listed; a few are anecdotal. The present day identity of many of these places is in dispute or unknown. This portion covers the Exodus from Egypt (the city of Ra-m'ses), the passage through the Sea, and the 3-day journey that brought the People to Mara, with its "water problem" (and solution). From there, it was back to Yam Suf, before continuing into the Wilderness.

Note that the city from which the Exodus was launched was Ra-m'seis, as opposed to Ra-am-seis, one of the two supply-cities the Jews were forced to build (see Sh'mot 1:11).

Travelog These are the places of encampment and some comments...

From Ra-m'seis (0) [Gimatriya of

RA-M'SEIS = 430, the number of years from the original prophecy to Avraham Avinu in the BRIT BEIN HA'B'TARIM until the EXODUS (as in Sh'mot 12:40-41)] to Sukkot (1) [The first stop out of Ra-m'seis is SUKKOT, G'matriya = 480, the number of years from the Exodus until the building of the First Beit HaMikdash (a.k.a. SUKKAT DAVID) - the arrival of the People EL HAMENUCHA V'EL HANACHALA (D'varim 12:9). So just the first leg of the wandering represents (numerically) the major first (and second) leg of the journey of Jewish History. Note too that until the Beit HaMikdash was built, the Mikdash was the Mishkan - in different forms and several places. The Tabernacle, just as Sukkot is called. SUKKOT, says the Baal HaTurim, got its name from the Heavenly Clouds that began "functioning" there] to Eitam (2) to Pi HaCherot (3) to Mara (4) to Eilim (5) to Yam Suf (6)...

Levi - Second Aliya 39 p'sukim - 33:11-49

From Yam Suf to Midbar Sin (7) [MIDBAR SIN got an extra YUD and became SINAI to mark the fact that the ASERET HADIBROT were given there. - Baal HaTurim] to Dofka (8) to Alush (9) [The Midrash says that it was at ALUSH that the People first received the Manna and where we spent our very first Shabbat. The Manna was given to the People of Israel in the merit of our mother Sarah, who was asked by Avraham to

knead and bake cakes for the angels/guests. Her enthusiastic providing of food for others was repaid by G-d, Who provided food for Sarah's children more than 400 years later. The name ALUSH is a play on the word "I will knead"] to R'fidim (10) to Midbar Sinai (11) to Kivrot HaTaava (12) to Chatzeirot (13) to Ritma (14) [RITMA was the place from which the spies were sent, and therefore the place where the decree to wander the wilderness was pronounced. One can imagine a qualitative difference in the mental attitude during the first 14 encampments as compared to those following Ritma] to Rimon Peretz (15) to Livna (16) to Risa (17) to K'heilata (18) to Har Shefer (19) to Charada (20) to Mak'heilot (21) to Tachat (22) to Terach (23) to Mitka (24) to Chashmona (25) [CHASHMONA was the 25th resting place of the People. Centuries later, there was a resting (from battle) on the 25th (of Kislev). The people through whom G-d wrought the miracles of Chanuka were the Chashmona'im. This is considered one of the "hints" to Chanuka from the Torah] to Moseirot (26) to Bnei Yaakan (27) to Chor HaGidgad (28) to Yotvata (29) to Avrona (30) to Etzion Gever (31) to Midbar Tzin (which is Kadesh) (32) to Hor HaHar (33)... This is where Aharon died at the age of 123. He died on Rosh Chodesh Av [This the only Yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah. Furthermore, it is interesting that the date is NOT mentioned in Chukat where

we read of Aharon's death. It appears only here in the recounting of the episode - which "happens" to be read on or near Rosh Chodesh Av].

[P> 33:40 (10)] The Torah then tells us again that our presence was noted by the K'naani king of Arad in the Negev of Eretz Yisrael. We know from earlier in the Chumash, that the K'naani attacked the people after Aharon's death, but that is not mentioned here. Rather, the list of places then continues...

...to Tzalmona (34) to Punon (35) to Ovot (36) to I'yei HaAvarim (37) to Divon Gad (38) to Almon Divlataima (39) to Harei HaAvarim (40) to Arvot Moav (41).

Apparently, the counting of the encampments includes their first point of departure, which we marked as 0. So the number 42 holds. The reason we chose not to number from 1-42 is because of Chashmona, which by our count comes out #25 and that fits with Chanuka on 25 Kislev and the Chashmona'im.

• Rashi points out that with 14 places before the decree to wander, and with 8 places in the final year, there were only 20 places that the People moved to and from in 38 years or so. That is not really all that much. G-d was merciful with the People even as He was punishing them.

Shlishi - Third Aliya **22 p'sukim - 33:50-34:15**

[S> 33:50 (7)] G-d speaks to Moshe in Arvot Moav and

commands the People to enter, conquer, acquire, and settle the Land, according to the "Divine Lottery". This is one of the 613 mitzvot according to Ramban - The mitzva of YISHUV ERETZ YISRAEL, the mitzva to live in Israel. Ramban says that this mitzva applies in all times, including our own.

Part of the mitzva, explains the Ramban, is that the people of Israel may not shun G-d's gift and promise and go conquer and settle elsewhere. Jews who live anywhere in the world outside of Israel should always remember their "stranger in a strange land" status. Adopting someplace else as your own and removing Israel from your personal agenda, seems to contravene the spirit (and maybe the letter) of this mitzva.

We Jews have been often exiled in the past, throughout a large part of Jewish History. If we were asked, What are you doing in Bavel, you belong in Eretz Yisrael? - we would be able to answer, We were exiled from our Land; G-d has expelled us from our Land; G-d has sent us here. But what happens today - 5771 - when a Jew who lives in exile, who lives outside Eretz Yisrael is asked: What are you doing here, you belong in Eretz Yisrael?

[S> 34:1 (15)] The boundaries of the Land are detailed. These boundaries are now for the 9½ tribes, since Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe have claimed their allotments on the East Bank.

Read the description of the boundaries of the land that is being given by G-d to

the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To us. Unlike the identity of many of the encampments from Egypt until arriving at the Jordan River, we know where these boundaries are. Eretz Yisrael for the Jewish People goes at least (see below) from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. The Torah does not seem to indicate that parts of the Promise Land should become a foreign state or be given to enemies of the State of Israel or enemies of the Jewish People.

In G-d's original promise to Avraham Avinu, the land to be given to his descendants was to be "from the Egyptian River until the great river, P'rat". The boundaries described in this week's sedra contain a territory significantly smaller than that which was promised. Our Sages tell us that the original promise includes territory to be added to Eretz Yisrael in the future, in the times of the Moshiach.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya **14 p'sukim - 34:16-29**

[S> 34:16 (14)] Next the Torah lists the new leaders of the tribes who will be in charge of the "Divine lottery" by which the Land will be apportioned.

Elazar HaKohen and Yehoshua bin Nun are the overall leaders of the Nation.

Yehuda: Kalev b. Yefuneh
Shimon: Shmuel b. Amihud
Binyamin: Elidad b. Kislon
Dan: Buki b. Yogli

Menashe: Chaniel b. Eifod
Efrayim: K'mu'el b. Shifan
Zevulun: Elitzafan b. Parnach
Yissachar: Paltiel b. Azan
Asher: Achihud b. Shlomi
Naftali: P'dah-el b. Amihud

A note on pronunciation (again)... P'DA-TZUR (in Parshat Bamidbar) has a HEI with no vowel under it - the HEI is silent. With P'DAH-EL here in Mas'e'i, there is a SH'VA (NACH) under the HEI and it is to be sounded.

Note: The absence from the list of leaders of Reuven and Gad. They will not participate in the apportionment of the land across the Jordan.

Note: The word NASI is used for seven of the 10 tribal leaders. Ohr HaChayim says in the name of Rabeinu Nissim Gaon that Kalev was so well known as a leader of the people that it was not necessary to identify him as a Nasi. Shimon's leader was not worthy of the title. And Elidad from Binyamin was Eldad, a prophet. Prophet is a higher title than Nasi. Ohr HaChayim adds that for Yehuda and Binyamin, another reason for not using Nasi is that each will have kings from them - Sha'ul from Binyamin and David, etc. from Yehuda. King is higher than Nasi. Haamek Davar, on the other hand, says that Kalev was not a Nasi but was selected for land distribution only.

Chamishi 5th Aliya **8 p'sukim - 35:1-8**

[S> 35:1 (8)] Following the general plans for dividing the Land, the People are instructed to

provide cities for the Leviyim [408,A183 35:2], since they, the Leviyim, do not receive Land as inheritance. The cities and their surrounding areas, number 48, including the 6 cities of refuge.

Note that the 2000 amot "city limit" was borrowed by the Sages in fixing the distance outside one's dwelling place for T'CHUM SHABBAT.

Rashi points out that there were three cities of refuge on each side of the Jordan River, even though in the western case, they would serve 9½ tribes and in the eastern case, they would serve 2½ tribes. An inference is drawn that there would be more careless homicides on the eastern side of the river.

These cities, to be given by the tribes to the Leviyim, were given proportional to the populations of the tribes.

Reference in this portion is made to 1000 amot and to 2000 amot outside the city itself. Rashi explains that the outer 1000 amot area is for fields and vineyards; the inner 1000 is to serve the city for whatever open areas are used.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 26 p'sukim - 35:9-34

[P> 35:9 (26)] The cities of refuge (and the other 42 Levite cities, with some differences) serve to protect the inadvertent killer. Even a murderer flees to a protecting city pending trial.

It is forbidden to kill a murderer

until he stands trial and is found guilty [409,L292 35:12].

The inadvertent killer is sent - or he flees - to a city of refuge [410, A225 35:25] The Torah presents guidelines for defining murder and inadvertent killing and sets down some of the court procedures, such as the prohibition of a witness also acting as judge in a criminal case [411,L291 35:30]. We are also warned not to permit substitute punishments for a murderer [412, L296 35:31] and the inadvertent killer [413,L295 35:32]. Strict adherence to all rules of justice assure us continued "quality living" in Eretz Yisrael, accompanied by the Divine Presence.

Mitzvot 412 and 413 basically command us to follow other mitzvot in the Torah that require a convicted murderer to be executed and a convicted SHOGEG-killer to be exiled to a City of Refuge. Why would the Torah specifically command compliance with another command. It is quite possible for us to rationalize an alternative punishment or treatment of the convicted murderer - intentional or inadvertent. And sometimes, the alternative suggestion will be more appealing, more logical, more beneficial than the Torah-required procedure. Very tempting. So the Torah comes to reinforce its insistence that its procedures be carried out.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya 13 p'sukim - 36:1-13

[P> 36:1 (13)] Leaders of the

family of Menashe to whom the daughters of Tz'lofchad belong, approach Moshe and raise the problem of potential erosion of their tribal allotment if Tz'lofchad's daughters marry outside their tribe, taking their land with them. Moshe issues a ruling restricting them from marrying outside their tribe. This is not a law in perpetuity (and therefore, it is not counted as a mitzva among the Taryag); it applies only in this case. In compliance, Machla, Tirza, Chogla, Milka, and No'a marry cousins from their tribe of Menashe.

The Book of BaMidbar ends with the statement, "These are the Mitzvot and the Laws that G-d commanded Moshe to (transmit to) Bnei Yisrael, in Arvot Mo'av on the Jordan (Jericho) River."

Haftara 28 p'sukim Yirmiyahu 2:4-28, 3:4

Some add pasuk 3:4 to the end of the second perek of Yirmiyahu; others add 4:1,2 instead.

This is the 2nd of the 3 Tragic Haftarot read during the Three Weeks. It is the continuation of last week's haftara. G-d, speaking through the prophet, chastises the People of Israel for the terrible double sin of forsaking Him AND turning to gods who are nothingness. Repeatedly, we are asked

how it was possible that we turned away from G-d so. Terrible punishment for this betrayal of G-d is prophesied. The haftara ends on the hopeful note that if we return to G-d, then He will return to us and restore His special relationship with us.

Divrei Menachem

A popular proverb tells us that when a person moves from one place to another, so does his luck change. Is that because a person, dissatisfied with his domicile, is leaving that distressing place? Or does that mean that reaching his new home, the happy individual is now fulfilling his dreams, the realization of a cherished ideal?

These questions are implied in the beginning of our parsha that describes Israel's journeys from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael: "Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem; and these were their journeys according to their goings forth" (Bamidbar 33:2). Note the same idea repeated at the end of the verse but in the reverse order.

The first phrase indicates how Hashem viewed the people's travels: He wanted Bnei Yisrael to go forth and progress to the next stage of the long journey. The latter phrase, however, implies that the people, impatient of tarrying in one place, were just content to leave and to travel on (R. Hirsch).

No wonder, then, that the Ramban notes the importance of Moshe recording each of the 42 stops that Bnei Yisrael made in the desert. For each place had significance; at each stop the

people were to recognize Hashem's miracles. Collectively, the 42 sojourns built the nation. And so it could be today, in our personal and collective experience, as each of us moves along from one place to another.

VEBBE REBBE

QUESTION: *May I make a chanukat habayit ("inauguration" of a home) celebration in Israel during the Three Weeks, before Rosh Chodesh and the beginning of the Nine Days?*

ANSWER: Of the different levels of national mourning leading up to Tish'a b'Av, the lowest level is that of bein hametzarim (the Three Weeks, but before Rosh Chodesh). During this time, for example, the minhag for S'faradim is to even allow weddings, whereas Ashkenazim do not.

These matters are tricky to analyze halachically. On one hand, the more important a matter is, the more we want to allow things that are usually forbidden. That is why it is accepted to eat meat at a siyum during the Nine Days, when Ashkenazim usually do not eat meat. On the other hand, the stronger an event's happiness, the more likely it is that the celebration itself is significant enough to be forbidden even if celebrated without flourishes. Therefore, it is forbidden to get married even without a celebratory

meal (Mishna B'rura 551:15).

A chanukat habayit is essentially a form of Jewish expression of the joy of moving into a home that is new for its inhabitants. During the Nine Days, it is forbidden to do non-essential/beautification work on a home (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:2). Along the same lines, we avoid entering a new home during this time unless needed to avoid loss (see Bemareh Habazak III, 60). Since one may enter a home before the Nine Days, the problem is only from the perspective of the added activities of the celebration.

A lot has to do with the nature of the celebration. Many S'faradim have the minhag to have a ceremony, with specific Torah texts to recite, on the day they enter the house, and some will not sleep in the house before doing so. Here, the words of Torah are the purpose, and accompanying festivities are ancillary, and such an event is certainly permitted. This is further bolstered by the fact that many consider a chanukat habayit in Israel a mitzva, which then allows for the leniencies connected to a seudat mitzva. The Torah (D'varim 20:5) views inaugurating a home as significant enough to allow someone to leave the battlefield, but only in Eretz Yisrael (Yerushalmi, Sota). While one can distinguish between actually living there and the celebration, the B'er Sheva (70) says that the celebration is a seudat mitzva in Eretz Yisrael, and not abroad. While it is not simple to allow this celebration during the Nine

Days (see Levushei Mordechai, OC 101), it is permitted before Rosh Chodesh.

If the celebration is not on the day one enters the home, there are two reasons to be more stringent. One is that the level of mitzva may be lower when it is not on the same day. The other is that if one is already delaying the celebration, it makes more sense to delay further until after Tish'a b'Av. That being said, since there is no classical source to forbid a chanukat habayit before the Nine Days, if one has good reasons to do it specifically at that time, we would not forbid it but would urge him to remember to put a stress on divrei Torah and thanks to Hashem.

However, certain things that might go on at the celebration are problematic. We do not say Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks because "this time" is a sad one (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:17). Some people normally make Shehecheyanu as they enter the home as well, which is problematic during the Three Weeks. However, we anyway believe that this is not the correct b'racha to make (see Bemareh Habazak, ibid.). It is accepted not to play music or dance during the Three Weeks (Mishna B'rura 551:16). Since it is not an integral part of a chanukat habayit, it is proper to forgo music, certainly live music, which is more stringent than recorded, or dancing at the celebration (see Shemen Afarsimon, siman 10).

Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute

CHIZUK AND IDUD
*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

If one had to select a Parsha for promoting Aliyah, this week's parsha would be the perfect one, for it is in Maasei where we find the Mitzva of Yishuv HaAretz. "V'horashartem et haaretz vishavtem bah ki lachem natati et haaretz lareshet otah" (Bamidbar 33:53) – "And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have assigned the land to you to possess." While this sentence is sufficient to require Jews to live in Eretz Yisrael, it does require some discussion.

Rashi in commenting on this pasuk, states, "V'horashartem otah miyoshvehah v'az vishavtem bah", "first you shall take possession of it and then you shall dwell in it." Obviously Rashi is telling us that the Mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael becomes operative after Bnei Yisrael take possession of the land.

The Rambam does not list dwelling in the land as a Mitzva in his "Sefer Hamitzvot". Megilat Esther states the reason why the Rambam does not list this as a Mitzva is because it applied only in the days of Moshe, Yeshoshua and David and while the Jews are in exile from their land this Mitzva is not observed until Mashiach will come. The Ramban disagrees with the Rambam and states that even in our time the Mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael remains a commandment from the Torah.

There is an Avnei Ezer - which incidentally is quoted by Rav Yisraeli

ZTL, that disagrees with the Megilat Esther and states that the Rambam considers the commandment to dwell in Eretz Yisrael applicable in our time. The reason that the Rambam does not list it is that he subsumes it under the Mitzva of taking possession of the land. It is possible that since Rashi states that dwelling in the land is applicable only after taking possession of it, that he agrees with the Rambam - that living in the land is a Mitzva of the Torah only after Bnei Yisrael takes possession of the land.

Nevertheless, the Rambam does state in the "Yad Hachazaka": Code of Jewish Law" that living in Eretz Yisrael is very important and that every Jew should strive to fulfill this Mitzva.

Rabbi Binyamin Walfish, Jerusalem

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

MAS'EI: Journeys

For many of us, traveling on a long journey is a vacation; especially here in the United States, where we have come to glorify long family road trips. We consider them recreational, fun, and a time for parents and children to be together.

Even before the advent of the automobile and the superhighway, a journey was thought to be a pleasant and even edifying experience. Thus, the early 19th century British essayist, William Hazlitt, included an essay entitled **On Going a Journey** in his delightful

collection, Table Talk. Among the statements in this essay, Hazlitt avers, "One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself."

Somehow, from the perspective of the Jewish history, journeys are not at all pleasant. "Wandering Jew" is an epithet that has been applied to us, sometimes out of sympathy and sometimes out of scorn, but never as a compliment. Never in our tradition is wandering viewed as pleasant. For us wandering is galut, exile.

Interestingly, the very act of travel is seen in our tradition as negative. Abram, when he set out to travel the long distance from his birth-place to the Holy Land, was given a special blessing to counteract the effects of the journey. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great..." (B'reishit 12:2) On this verse, Rashi comments that this tripartite blessing was necessary because "the road interferes with reproduction, diminishes financial success, and makes it difficult to achieve a name, a reputation."

The very title of this week's Torah portion, Mas'ei, means journeys. The portion begins with a long and detailed description of the many way stations which punctuated the long and arduous journey that our ancestors traveled in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. There is something about the mere recitation of these verses that suggests a slow and arduous process. The travel through the wil-

derness was no pleasant interlude.

I have always found it somehow ironic that the custom is to chant the monotonous list of journeys and sojourns with a triumphant melody. Listen, and you will hear as the Torah reader, almost joyfully, sings aloud, "And they journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, and pitched in Dofka... and they journeyed from Dofka, and pitched in Alush" (Bamidbar 33:12-13).

Why do the stages of a tortuous 40-year-long trip through the desert deserve musical accompaniment? After all, this ordeal was a punishment for the Jewish people, as we read several weeks ago in the Torah portion of Sh'lach. It was as a result of the sin of the spies that all of this traveling became necessary. Absent that sin and the journey would have been one of days, and not one of long and hot and aimless wandering during which an entire generation slowly died out.

I think that the reason for the singsong chanting of the masa'ot, of the stations along the journey, has to do with the rest of this week's Torah portion. For immediately after the long list of brief stops on the painful journey, at the conclusion of all that travail, God says to Moshe, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: when you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan... you shall drive out the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein; for to you have I given the land to possess it... and you shall inherit the land by lots according to your families..."

(Bamidbar 33:51-54)

Aimless wandering, with no end in sight, is torture. But a journey with a clear destination, on the other hand, is a wondrous experience, despite its many obstacles. Without the promise of the inheritance, without the assurance of an eventual place for our families to take root, the many way stations would be chanted to a very solemn melody, perhaps even to the melody of Lamentations, which we will soon read on the Ninth of Av.

But with the vision promised to us, with the delineation of the exact borders and boundaries of our lands, all of the suffering along the way somehow becomes worthwhile. The lengthy list of way stations becomes transformed into the lyrics of a triumphant marching song.

It is not by coincidence that we read the portion of Mas'ei during the three weeks prior to Tish'a b'Av. These are three weeks reserved for reflection upon the experience of exile, upon the trials and tribulations of the centuries-long journey through "the desert of the nations". This week's Torah portion begins with the long passage which foreshadows that experience.

But during these three weeks, the shloscha d'puranuta, while we deprive ourselves of all manner of special celebrations, we are at least aware of the seven weeks which are to follow. These are the seven weeks of consolation, the shiva

d'nechemta, during which we rejoice for the conclusion of exile and celebrate our ultimate return to the Promised Land.

The words of the opening chapter of Mas'ei drive home the painstaking station-by-station journey through history. But the accompanying marching melody assures us that celebration and triumph lie ahead.

Maharal on the Sedra

The Five Names of Sinai

Bamidbar 33:36 - ...they encamped in the Tzin wilderness which is Kadesh.

Tiferet Yisrael 26:398 - Rabbi Yosi said [Shabbat 89a]: The mountain was called by six names -

- Tzin wilderness for Israel was commanded [nitztavu] there
- Kadesh wilderness for Israel was sanctified on it
- Paran wilderness for they were fruitful and multiplied on it
- Sinai wilderness for enmity descended to those who opposed Hashem
- Kedmut wilderness [D'varim 2:26] for precedence [of Israel] was given there
- Chorev for destruction descended to those who opposed Hashem.

These are not all the same place, but the rabbis are not troubled by this, for

the uninterrupted wilderness is one big desert. From the moment Israel entered the Sinai wilderness they were in that desert, for there was no settlement. Why did Hashem prefer the desert over a settled place? The desert is desolate and appropriate for decree and commandment which Hashem decreed with the power of Judgment from the aspect of the one who decrees. Although the commandments are for the ultimate benefit of man, they were not given a priori for man's benefit. The desert is the place for the Attribute of Judgment.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr

Dr Kuhr is the author of *Lion Cub of Prague - Genesis. The next volume on Exodus and Leviticus is in press.*

ParshaPix explanations

The Pyramids, the many arrows, and the outline of Israel, of course, stand for the travels of the people from the Exodus to Eretz Yisrael • The compass at the top of the ParshaPix represents the description of the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael, with the pasuk taking us through the compass points • The map with a big 3 on each side of the Jordan River refers to the Cities of Refuge to be designated in Eretz Yisrael • The road sign to Hebron is one of the requirements for Cities of Refuge (of which Hebron is one) • Elsie the Cow has two horns. They stand for the rare (this once only) occurrence of the TROP called KARNEI PARA • logo of YOTVATA, the choir is for MAK-HEILATA, the Lulav for SUKKOT, the dreidel is for

CHASHMONA - all names of places of encampment • Chatan-Kallah multiplied by 5 is for the daughters of Tz'lofchad who marry distant cousins to solve the old "land going from one tribe to another tribe" problem • Under the number/letter 2K is the TROP-note is YERECH BEN YOMO. It is as unique to the Chumash as the KARNEI PARA (see above) and is under the word ALPAYIM, meaning 2000 (2K) • The 12 springs stand for EILIM, as described in B'midbar 33:9. Obviously, the place was an oasis • The circle (yellow) with three black triangles is the symbol for a fallout shelter, a MIKLAT. With an ear attached to it, we have an IR MIKLAT • To the right of Elsie is a graphic made up of two Ms on each side of a square, representing the cities of the Leviyim which had an area on all sides of the city of 2000 amot, so the Leviyim would have place to have fields and vineyards. (M is the Roman numeral for 1000) • The monogrammed pomegranate belongs to someone named Peretz - it is RIMON PERETZ, one of the encampments • The picture at the top is of Yisrael Medad. Commentaries say that K'MU'EL b. SHIFTAN, tribal leader of Efrayim was MEIDAD of ELDAD & MEIDAD fame • The young fellow between the springs and the lulav is a minor Star Trek character named Azan. The tribal leader of Yissachar was PALTIEL b. AZAN • Between the two maps of Israel is a camping vest - in Hebrew: EIFOD. The tribal leader of Menashe was CHANI'EL b. EIFOD • Diet Sprite and the logo of Crocs - in

the haftara of Mas'ei we find (Yirmiyahu 2:25) - Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst... This can be accomplished with Crocs on your feet and something to drink • from 12 Sivan until 22 Menachem Av, inclusive, are 70 dates (date palms) that go with the 12 springs at Eilim (no significance in the specific dates) • Under the dates is the logo for Davka, the program with which Torah Tidbits is produced and a sound-alike of DOFKA, one of the places of encampment • the strange vehicle is a MITKA trike • plus three Unexplaineds.



Last issue's (**Matot**) TTtriddles:

[1] **3 of the five end in aliterative pairs**

Three of the five books of the Chumash end in two sedras that begin with the same letter: B'reishit - Vayigash, Vaychi; Vayikra - B'har, B'chukotai; Bamidbar - Matot, Mas'ei.

[2] **Loss of the HEI is well made up for**

Matot is one of five sedras whose name has a HEI prefixed to it, which has been dropped in the name we call it by: HaMishpatim, HaTruma, HaSh'mini, HaM'tzora, HaMatot. In the first portion of MATOT there are 31 words with a MAPIK HEI, causing us to repeatedly hear the final HEI.

[3] **3 sedras in a row & once in Va'eira**

The name PINCHAS occurs in the Torah four times: In Parshat Va'eira and

in the three consecutive sedras of BALAK, PINCHAS, and MATOT.

[4] Connection between Reuven & Gad and Dan

The tribes of Reuven and Gad promised, "But we ourselves will go ready armed before the people of Israel," - the term for ready armed is CHUSHIM. That is the name of DAN's son (B'reishit 46:23).

[5] sausage curfew snapback

First & second letters, fourth & fifth letters of each word are: Au, Ag, Cu, Fe, Sn, Pb. These are the symbols for the metals listed in Bamidbar 31:22 - ZAHAV (gold), KESEF (silver), N'CHOSHET (copper), BARZEL (iron), B'DIL (tin), OFERET (lead).

[6] A beheaded salmon by any other name...

Behead (remove first letter) salmon and get Almon. Its other name is ANATOT, mentioned in the first pasuk of the haftara of Matot.

[7] ALEF BET GIMEL DALET HEI VAV MEM NUN REISH

These letters (in alphabetical order) rearrange to spell REUVEN, GAD, and half of MENASHE (the MEM and HEI).

"Why the Land was Destroyed (Nedarim 21a):

The Cycle of National Disasters [2] by Dr. Meir Tamari

"Why was Yerushalayim destroyed? Because they did not recite the bracha before [learning] the Torah" (Nedarim 81a). This b'racha, "Who has chosen us from all the nations and given to us His Torah", is so fundamental and intrinsic to Judaism that by ignoring it, scholars, pious people and spiritual leaders have caused the destructions and tragedies that we mourn and remember (an oft repeated teaching of Harav Tzvi Yehuda Kook).

The Torah was not given to individuals, neither to special families, tribes, sects or schools of thought, nor was Torah given to certain pious, learned or singular saints. The Torah over which we recite this bracha was given to a Chosen People to be observed in a Chosen Land, so that all social, political, economic actions, acts of war and of peace, the pursuit of justice and righteousness can be devoted to G-d and His Words. "Adam, created in His Image, was given the divine power of speech, so that all of Mankind has the power to take oaths making certain actions or things forbidden to their community or society. However, only Jews, because of Israel's special relationship to Hashem, have the further spiritual power to use speech to make oaths making something forbidden to one person whilst permitted to all others" (Shem MiShmuel). Perhaps this is similar to the idea that while all peoples have the obligation to praise,

beseech and thank G-d and indeed have done so throughout the ages in many forms, only we have the mitzva of the communal prayer of Shmoneh Esrei based on the national korbanot.

Rabbi S. R. Hirsch repetitively refers to the nation-religion of Judaism; rejection of which leads to a Judaism that is merely a religion, in which the Rhine, the Volga, the Thames or the Hudson is as holy as the River Jordan. Basic as it is, this concept of Nation-Religion seems to have been one that is extremely difficult to accept and translate into practice, both throughout the centuries and even in our own day. Close to 500 years elapsed between the conquest under Yehoshua and the building of the Beit Mikdash; 500 years when bamot, altars of regional, tribal or personal worship existed rather than the National-Religious Avoda in 'the place that G-d chose'. After Shlomo, the 10 Tribes set up centers of idolatry that would battle the centralized Mikdash in Yerushalayim and even the righteous kings of Yehuda were powerless during most of the years of Bayit Rishon to destroy the bamot. As the haftarat of Mas'ei and Shabbat Chazon show, ignoring or minimizing the national nature envisaged by the Torah, led to the sin of ingratitude for all G-d's goodness to Israel and to Israel's indiscipline, resulting in the idolatry, bloodshed and sexual immorality for which the first Temple was destroyed.

However, even when these three sins do not exist, the rejection of Nation-Religion leads to the fragmentation of both the nation and of the religion. Instead of Am Yisrael, of Klal Yisrael,

of Am Kadosh, of Mamlechet Kohanim, one is left with sects and sectarianism, with social tribalism and differing schools or systems of religious thought, practice and custom. Sinat Chinam and divisiveness are often the result. "Why was Bayit Sheini destroyed when there was Torah, Mitzvot and Gemilut Chasadim? Because there was sinat chinam" (Yoma 10b). "Because of this sinat chinam, they suspected as being apikorsim all those whose way in Yirat Hashem they saw as not acting according to their own way. So they came to all the inconceivable wrongs in the world until the House was destroyed" (The Natziv's Ha'Ameik Davar, Introduction to Sefer B'reishit).

Perhaps it is worthy of noting that the language that Chazal use is sinat chinam, needless hatred, national discord and social dissolution, rather than the more individualized and personalized form of lashon hara, one of the derivatives of sinat chinam.

"Birchat HaTorah ends, 'G-d gave the Torah', once they forgot that there was a G-d who gave them the Torah they were studying, all social and moral corruption became possible; even though the Temple stood, the way to idolatry, immorality and bloodshed stood open before them" (Shem MiShmuel).