

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT MATOT-MASEI

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What does God think of us?



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Parashat Masei details the many places (42, in fact) in which the Jewish people encamped during their long journey from leaving Egypt to arriving in Canaan (Israel). You might wonder, as many commentators do, why it is necessary to include the name of every single place that the Jews passed through.

One answer given by Rabbi Ovadia Seforno (1475-1550, Italy) is that God wanted to publicise the Jewish people's dedication in continuing to follow Him. They followed Him, surrounded by the Clouds of Glory, through each and every one of those places on their journey that ultimately led them to the Promised Land.

Thinking about this answer with the historical context in mind, provides us with incredible insight into what God really thinks of us: In Egypt, the Jews were made to suffer terribly under the horrendous enslavement of Pharaoh for over 200 years. Then, the Jews witnessed miracle after miracle as the ten plagues punished the Egyptians whilst leaving the Jews unscathed. They experienced the splitting of the sea, which allowed them to safely leave Egypt with huge wealth, as their Egyptian taskmasters drowned behind them. From there, they were looked after directly by God throughout their travels in the desert – for example, fresh food called 'Mann' (Manna) was provided daily, which could taste like any meal you wanted!

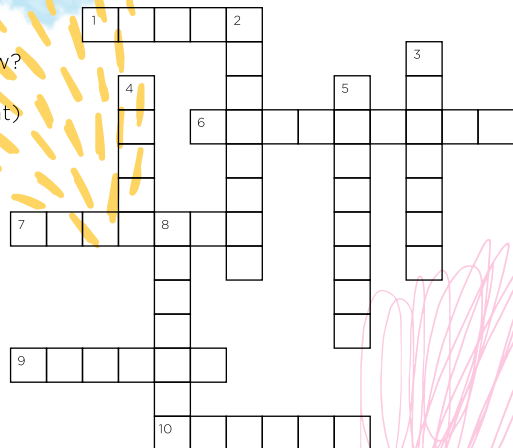
And after all this, God still praises the Jews for following Him to each

of the 42 places! Why would the Jews not want to remain under this constant care and follow God? What was the alternative? Return to Egypt to enemies that would enslave them once again, or worse, kill them? Or weather the dangers of travelling the desert on their own without the protective Clouds of Glory? Clearly, following God was the most logical and safe option.

Despite this, God still considered the Jewish people meritorious for following Him, and awarded them the honour of acknowledging every place that they passed through on this journey. If, in God's eyes, our actions are worthy of such honour even when they seem like the only logical option, how much prouder must He be when we follow His ways when times are more difficult, and the best option is not as clear?!

Speaking of travelling...

How many of these Israeli cities do you know? Check your knowledge in this puzzle. (Fill in the crossword before or after Shabbat)



Across

1. E I █ █ █ █
6. █ █ █ █ S A █ █ M
7. N E █ █ █ Y A
9. H A D █ R A
10. █ S H D O █

Down

2. T I █ █ R I A █
3. T E █ █ V I █
4. H █ █ F █
5. A S █ █ E L █ N
8. N A H █ R I A