



Parashat Matot/Masei

There is no such thing as anything extra or redundant in the Torah. Every letter in the Torah is written for a reason. Sometimes, simply from the setup of the words alone, many laws and lessons are learned out. If so, we have a very obvious question. The Torah lists in detail all the places that the Jews traveled to and from throughout their 40 years in the desert. The list is not a short one. A total of 42 campsites are listed, all of which would seem to be for no apparent purpose. Why is it necessary for all this to be written?

There are many answers given by the commentaries. Perhaps we may add one more. Some of these camps are sites at which great miracles occurred. Others are places where arguments, complaints, rebellions, punishments or tragedies happened. However, they are all listed together in one list. Each and every camp has something for us to learn and grow from. A disappointment, and indeed a punishment, although we pray not to have any, is not a setback. It is there to encourage us to work harder and to succeed. We learn from our mistakes and experiences. All of them are important milestones. Sometimes we are successful in our endeavors. Other times we may fall short and are disappointed. But each step is something that makes us grow more and rise to another challenge.

We are in a period of time which is the saddest for Jews- the 3 weeks, the 9 days. But we can realize that punishment from Hashem is not because Hashem wants to “get us back” for misbehaving. Hashem doesn’t want revenge. Like a loving parent or a good teacher, Hashem is disciplining us in order to direct us to do the right thing in the future. Both success and disappointment are important milestones in the life of a Jew.

Shabbat shalom,
Shelomo Elnadav

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