

PARSHAT MATOT-MASEI
NUMBERS 30:2-36:13
HAFTARAH JEREMIAH 2:4-28, 3:4
26 TAMUZ 5784/01 AUGUST 2024



Seven Types of Ambiguity
Oil on unsized, unprimed canvas by Helen Frankenthaler

THE PLAY OF AMBIGUITY

1. "...the boundary shall continue downward and abut on the eastern slopes of the Sea of Kinneret. The boundary shall then descend along the Jordan and terminate at the Dead Sea." (Numbers 34:11-12). Parsha Masei ("travels")

"I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea and Philistia, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates..." (Exodus 23:31)

2. "Do not cause us to cross the Jordan" (Numbers 32:5). Parsha Matot ("tribes")

They confused Moses. By their speech they led him to assume that they feared the battle ahead and were seeking a way to avoid helping conquer the land. They should have said: "We are ready to join in conquering the land and will be satisfied if you allow us to inherit this land east of the Jordan." (Abravanel)

Moses should have apologized for his hasty, false assumptions. Their error was not in their motives but in their lack of clarity about their goals. They were incapable of articulating a clear direction. (Akedat Yitzhak)

3. How a picture works best for me involves how much working false space it has in depth...whether it be a Cubist Picasso or Braque or a Noland stripe painting – it's a play of ambiguities. (Helen Frankenthaler)

4. As the print evolves, it tells you, you tell it. You have a conversation with a print. (Helen Frankenthaler)