



יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים,  
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות  
בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima  
to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and  
all of Israel; may He end these wars with total success and  
peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.

# מטות-מסעי

שבת מברכים

## YERUSHALAYIM

in/out times for

## MATOT-MAS'EI

Shabbat M'vorchim Menachem Av

כ"ו תמוז ה'תשפ"ו

July 10-11, '26

 **7:14PM** Plag **6:20PM**

 **8:31PM** R' Tam **9:01PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales



The molad in clock time is Tuesday, 8:16pm Israel Summer Time.

In Rambam notation: ד' א:תקנז

The actual molad (New Moon) is on Tuesday at 12:24pm.

## What sedra is read on Shabbat M'vorchim Menachem Av?

Pinchas - 25.7% of years in Israel

Pinchas - 35.7% in Chutz LaAretz.

This year:

Matot-Mas'ei - 53.8% (all over)

Matot (alone) - 3.9% - Chutz LaAretz

Matot (alone) - 13.9% in Israel

Mas'ei (alone) - 6.66% (all over)

Rosh Chodesh Av is the yahrzeit of Aharon HaKohen. It is the ONLY yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah. and it is NOT mentioned when the Torah tells us of his death in Parshat Chukat - it is mentioned in this week's sedra, specifically Bamidbar 33:38 in Mas'ei.

According to Dor Dor V'Dorshav, Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen also died on Rosh Chodesh Av.

The 26th of Tamuz (this Shabbat) is the 140th yahrzeit of R' Shlomo Ganzfried, author of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.

The 29th of Tamuz (next Tuesday) is the 921st yahrzeit of Rashi.

## Shabbat M'vorchim

This Shabbat - Matot-Mas'ei, July 11, we bench Rosh Chodesh Av.

Rosh Chodesh Av is always one day in our current fixed calendar because Tamuz has 29 days.

רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ מְנַחֵם אָב יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם רְבִיעִי,  
הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

As to the name of the month, one common practice is to refer to the month as AV for the first 10 days of the month. From the 11th and on, the month is called MENACHEM AV. In the announcement of Rosh Chodesh on Shabbat M'vorchim, the month is called MENACHEM AV.

In the past, there have been suggestions that we not announce the coming of Rosh Chodesh Av, because of the statement in the Mishna (Taanit) - As Av enters, we diminish joy. Our practice is to bench R"Ch Av - and the thinking is: Is there a month that can use a blessing from HaShem more than Av?

The molad of Menachem Av is on Tuesday (July 14), 30 minutes and 17 chalakim after 7 in the evening.

הַמּוֹלַד יִהְיֶה בְּלֵיל רְבִיעִי, שְׁלֹשִׁים דְּקוּת  
וְשִׁבְעָה-עָשָׂר חֲלָקִים אַחֲרֵי שֶׁבַע.

# MATOT-MAS'EI

|                   | Matot | Mas'ei | M&M   |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| of 54 sedras      | 42nd  | 43rd   | –     |
| of 10 in Bamidbar | 9th   | 10th   | –     |
| lines in a Torah  | 190   | 189    | 379   |
| rank              | 29th  | 30th   | 1st   |
| Parshiyot         | 9     | 8      | 17    |
| P'tuchot          | 4     | 6      | 10    |
| S'tumot           | 5     | 2      | 7     |
| P'sukim           | 112   | 132    | 244   |
| rank (Torah/Bam.) | 24/7  | 12/5   | 1/1   |
| Words             | 1484  | 1461   | 2945  |
| rank              | 29/6  | 32/7   | 1/1   |
| Letters           | 5652  | 5773   | 11425 |
| rank              | 30/7  | 28/6   | 1/1   |

## Book of Bamidbar (rank)

1288 p'sukim (2nd)

P'sukim per sedra: 128.8 (1st)

Words per pasuk: 12.74 (5th)



# MITZVOT

Matot has two mitzvot; 1 positive and 1 prohibition. Mas'ei has six mitzvot; 2 positive and 4 prohibitions

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

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

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

## Kohen - First Aliya - 16+12=28 p'sukim - 30:2-31:12

[P> 30:2 (16)] "And Moshe spoke to the leaders of the Tribes of Israel..." The first principle of the topic of Nedarim (vows & oaths) is that a person must fulfill the terms of his vow (counted elsewhere as a mitzva) and it is prohibited to "profane one's word" [407, L157 30:3].

On the other hand, built into the Torah's laws are procedures for release from vows. These procedures also constitute a mitzva, known as HAFARAT N'DARIM [406, A95 30:3] (not Hatarat Nedarim - that's a different deal). A girl (12-12½ yrs. old - officially called a NAARA) who makes a vow can have her vows nullified by her father (only on the day he hears of them). Similarly (but with differences), a wife's vows can be nullified by her husband. (In this case, only some vows, those which affect the husband or which are disgusting can be nullified by him.)

## MITZVAnotes

In addition to HAFARAT N'DARIM, the nullification of a wife's or daughter's

vow by husband or father, there is another aspect of the laws of N'darim, known as **HATARAT N'DARIM**. This is the nullification of one's vows (those that halachically CAN be nullified) by a Rav-expert in the laws of N'darim or a panel of three dayanim (even laymen).

**HATARAT N'DARIM** is a rare (but not unique) example of a mitzva that is Torah law, although there is no specific supporting text in the Written Word. The Mishna in Chagiga assures us that Hatarat N'darim is no less a Torah concept because of the lack of a written source-text. This is but another in a long series of demonstrations of the absolute necessity of defining Torah as BOTH the Written Word and the Oral Law and Tradition.

[P> 31:1 (12)] G-d next commands Moshe to do battle against Midyan, and then to prepare to take leave of this world. Moshe drafts 1000 men from each tribe for the task.

**SDT:** Commentaries point out that the People were reluctant to comply because they knew that Moshe would die shortly after successful completion of the battle. Moshe, on the other hand, enthusiastically complies with G-d's command, his personal interests to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The Chatam Sofer notes that when G-d commands the battle against Midyan, He calls it **NIKMAT B'NEI**

**YISRAEL**, a revenge for Israel's sake. When Moshe calls the people to battle, he refers to revenge for G-d's honor. If the people would be fighting for their own honor, they might forgo the battle and not hasten Moshe's end. But to avenge G-d's honor, they dare not refuse.

Pinchas is sent as "chaplain". The 12,000 strong army succeeded in killing all male Midyanites including five kings and Bil'am. The women, children, herds, flocks, and possessions of Midyan were taken as booty. The cities and palaces were destroyed. The army returned to the Israelite camp at Arvot Moav.

**SDT:** There is uncertainty among commentaries as to whether the tribe of Levi sent a contingent to fight this war or not. If they did, did Menashe and Efrayim combine as the tribe of Yosef, thereby keeping the total number at 12,000, or were there actually 13,000 who fought. Levi's possible involvement is due to the fact that the war was NOT for the purpose of conquest of territory; it was to avenge HaShem's Honor. If so, maybe Levi was involved. Had it been for territory, Levi would not be directly involved. If so, Menashe and Efrayim probably fought as the tribe of Yosef in this war against Midyan.

Bottom line: Most m'forshim go with the usual war configuration: Menashe and Efrayim but not Levi. It seems that the Midrash Tanchuma goes with

Levi being involved and Menashe and Efrayim combining as Yosef. Still 12,000. I would suggest that had Levi been fighting, then it is difficult to understand the fact of the tax on the people of 2% going to Levi. A bit confusing.

## Levi - Second Aliya - 12+17+13=42 p'sukim - 31:13-54

[S> 31:13 (8)] Moshe, Elazar, and the tribal leaders went out to greet the returning army. Moshe was angry that the officers kept the women of Midyan alive since it was they who were instrumental in the downfall of Israel in the Pe'or affair and the consequent plague that took 24,000 lives. The women and male children were killed; the girls remained captive. The soldiers were told to remain outside the camp for seven days because of their ritual impurity as a result of the war.

[S> 31:21 (4)] Elazar HaKohen sets down the laws of purification of vessels. Many of the details of "kashering" and "toveling" (which are not the same thing) of vessels are derived from here.

[S> 31:25 (30)] G-d tells Moshe to order a counting of the spoils of war. The booty is to be divided equally between the soldiers on the one hand and the People on the other. Taxes of 1/500 were imposed upon the soldiers.

Detailed itemization takes up many p'sukim of this portion. The taxes were turned over to Elazar HaKohen.

And then the half that went to the people is itemized. A tax of 1/50 (the standard amount for T'ruma) is imposed upon the people. These taxes were given to the Leviyim. Detailed itemization takes up many more p'sukim.

The officers approach Moshe with more gifts of gold in thanks to G-d for not losing even one person in battle.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 19 p'sukim - 32:1-19

[P> 32:1 (4)] The Torah tells us that the tribes of Reuven and Gad were heavily laden with flocks of sheep and that they noticed that the lands of Ya'zeir and Gil'ad were particularly suited for raising livestock. They came before Moshe, Elazar, and the leaders of the People and they "mentioned" that the territory was good for animals and that they happened to have many animals.

**Note** the unusual pasuk, 32:3, in which each of its 9 words is the name of a city. Rashi just mentions that these were cities in the former territory of Sichon and Og. Targum Onkeles, interestingly, does not leave the city names as they are in the Torah - which is usually the case, but he renders the names into Aramaic.

[S> 32:5 (11)] They then requested

permission to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe's initial reaction is intense anger, fearing that the request of the two tribes would discourage the People of Israel from wanting to proceed into the Land, repeating the experience of the Meraglim of almost 40 years earlier.

[S> 32:16 (4)] The key objection on Moshe's part seems to be the potential negative effect on the rest of the People. To this, the tribes replied that they would be prepared to settle their animals and families "here" and they would surely accompany their brethren into Eretz Yisrael and not return to the east bank until all is settled in the Land.

**SDT:** In addition to the main "dressing down" that Moshe gives Reuven and Gad, there is a more subtle rebuke on another issue. The tribes offer to build enclosures for their flocks and homes for their children. Later, when Moshe gives them permission to establish themselves on the East Bank, he tells them to build homes for their children and accommodations for their animals. Your children go first. Then your possessions. It is important that we get our priorities straight in life.

**R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya -  
23+10+39=72 p'sukim -  
32:20-33:49**

*The fourth Aliya is always the BRIDGE*

*Aliya between two sedras when they are combined. This particular R'vi'i is THE longest Aliya in the Torah. There are seven whole sedras each with fewer p'sukim than this Aliya.*

[P> 32:20 (23)] Moshe's response is the administration of an oath (many details of the proper form of "conditions" are derived from this famous oath of the 2½ tribes) agreeing to the request to settle on the east side of the Jordan iff (that's not a typo; it's the abbreviated form of "if and only if" and is a valid word on its own) the 2½ tribes fight side by side with the other tribes of Israel.

The Torah describes the cities that the 2½ tribes established to settle their families and flocks prior to their crossing the Jordan.

*Perhaps the seemingly unnecessary details give us the message that we are dealing with part of Eretz Yisrael, and not just something extra-territorial.*

[P> 33:1 (39)] The sedra of Mas'ei begins with a summary 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.

## THE *Travelog*

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

VAYIS-U from... VAYACHANU at/in

From (0) Ra-m'ses  
at (1) Sukkot  
at (2) Eitam  
at (3) Pi HaChirot  
at (4) Mara  
at (5) Eilim  
at (6) Yam Suf  
at (7) Midbar Sin  
at (8) Dafka  
at (9) Alush  
at (10) R'fidim  
at (11) Midbar Sinai  
at (12) Kivrot HaTaava  
at (13) Chatzeirot  
at (14) Ritma  
at (15) Rimon Peretz  
at (16) Livna  
at (17) Risa  
at (18) K'heilata  
at (19) Har Shefer  
at (20) Charada  
at (21) Mak'heilot  
at (22) Tachat  
at (23) Terach  
at (24) Mitka  
at (25) Chashmona  
at (26) Moseirot  
at (27) Bnei Yaakan  
at (28) Chor HaGidgad

at (29) Yotvata  
at (30) Avrona  
at (31) Etzion Gever  
at (32) Midbar Tzin (a.k.a. Kadesh)  
at (33) Hor HaHar...

**This is where Aharon died at the age of 123, on Rosh Chodesh Av.**

**Not only is this the only yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah, but it is interesting that the date is NOT mentioned in Chukat, where we read of Aharon's death. It appears here in the recounting of the episode - always read on or near that date.**

**[S> 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...

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

**Apparently, the counting of the encampments includes their first point of departure, which we marked as 0. So the number 42 holds. We numbered from 0 to 41 so that Chashmona would come out as the**

25th place of encampment and serve as one of the R'MAZIM (hints) to Chanuka from the Torah.

G'matriya 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).

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 - the arrival of the People of Israel 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.

SUKKOT, says the Baal HaTurim, got its name from the Heavenly Clouds that began "functioning" there.

MIDBAR SIN got an extra YUD (which is TEN) to be SINAI to mark the fact that the ASERET HADIBROT were given there. - Baal HaTurim

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 Sarah Imeimu, who was asked by Avraham to knead and bake cakes for the angel-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".

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 of the people during the first 14 encampments contrasted to those following Ritma.

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 Torah "hints" to Chanuka.

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.

## Chamishi - 5th 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 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, contravene the spirit (and maybe the letter) of this mitzva.

[P> 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, we know where these boundaries are. Eretz Yisrael for the Jewish People goes at least (see next paragraph) from the River to the Sea - Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. The Torah does not seem to indicate that parts of the Promised Land should become a foreign state - regular or demili-

tarized - or be given to enemies of the State of Israel or the Jewish People.

(Perhaps - no, not perhaps - it's a definite!) Do you believe that G-d created the world? Do you believe that G-d commanded us to keep the Shabbat? Do you believe that G-d gave Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish People, in perpetuity? Do you believe that it is His Will that we, His People, live in Eretz Yisrael? These questions are not 'pick and choose' for us. They are part of The Package Deal that G-d made with us and the reason He took us out of Egypt and made us a nation - His nation.

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.

## **Shishi** - Sixth Aliya - 14+8=22 p'sukim - 34:16-35:8

[P> 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 and Yehoshua are the overall leaders of the Nation.

Kalev b. Yefuneh is the leader of Yehuda.

Shimon: Shmuel b. Amihud.

Binyamin: Elidad b. Kislou.

Dan: Buki b. Yogli.

Menashe: Chaniel b. Eifod.

Efrayim: K'mu'el b. Shiftan.

Zevulun: Elitzafan b. Parnach.

Yissachar: Paltiel b. Azan.

Asher: Achihud b. Shlomi.

Naftali: P'dah'el b. Amihud.

[P> 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 measure of 2000 amot as "city limit" was subsequently borrowed by the Sages in fixing the distance outside one's dwelling place that a person may walk on Shabbat, known as 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.

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 26+13=39 p'sukim - 35:9-36:13

[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 attempt 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.

# MITZVAnotes

Mitzvot 412 and 413 basically command us to follow other mitzvot in the Torah that require a convicted murder to be executed and a convicted SHOGEK-killer to be sent to a City of Refuge.

How unusual for the Torah to do that. The small Sanhedrin of 23 judges, whose jurisdiction it is to carry out the commands of the Torah in matters of "sentencing" for certain crimes/sins are duty-bound to comply with halacha. Why these extra commands to follow procedures that are already required?

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. Ir Miklat is punishment, protective custody, and atonement rolled into one. And it is the command of G-d. We can't change it.

IR MIKLAT is called, in Parshat Mas'ei - CHUKAT MISHPAT. The term seems to contradict itself - CHUKIM are enigmatic mitzvot that do not easily (or at all) fit logic or common sense.

MISHPATIM are mitzvot that seem very reasonable and logical, the kind of mitzvot that society might come up with on their own, even if not commanded. CHUKAT-MISHPAT can be understood as a mitzva with elements that are easily understood, but also contain elements that are CHOK-like. Hence, the Torah's extra insistence that Beit Din does not deviate from the Torah-ordained procedures and details.

Just as one example of the CHOK-aspect of IR MIKLAT - one person can be there for one day, if that's when the Kohen Gadol dies. And, by the way, it isn't just the current active Kohen Gadol whose death releases a SHOGEK-killer from Ir Miklat. There can be a number of kohanim at a given time all of whom have the status of KG. If one of them dies, the SHOGEK's are released. Another person can be in Ir Miklat for 20 years. Another, who dies before the KG, is buried in the Ir Miklat and when the Kohen Gadol dies - even years later, the family will be allowed to rebury him elsewhere. And there are cases when someone is stuck in Ir Miklat forever.

[P> 36:1 (13)] Leaders of the family of Menashe to which 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 Taryag); it applies only in this first generation to enter and inherit the Land. In compliance, Machla, Tirza, Chogla, Milka, and No'a marry Menashe-ites.

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."



It is customary for the congregation to stand for the concluding pasuk of each book of the Torah.

This seems NOT to raise the objections that standing for the Aseret HaDibrot does.

The Torah-reader reads the final words with a dramatic flair, signalling the congregation to respond with CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEIK (Strong, strong, and let us be strengthened).

The reader then repeats that phrase.

Some say that the person who receives the Chazak Aliya should NOT say the phrase, as this might constitute an interruption between the Torah reading and his concluding bracha. Or possibly a different reason

- that the congregation is saying Chazak... to him.

It is considered a special honor to receive this Book-completing Aliya.

Then Chatzi-Kaddish is said and the last three p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

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

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.

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara  
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## A Prophet of Hope

**MATOT-MAS'EI - 28 p'sukim -  
Yirmiyahu 2:4-28, 3:4**

The haftara we read this week is a selection chosen from the second perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu, and a direct continuation of the navi's message that we read in last week's haftara. However, in this second perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu, the prophet is no longer conversing with Hashem but, rather, is delivering a harsh message directly to the people themselves, thereby, beginning the mission upon which G-d had sent him. Picking up on the theme he opened in the last perek, Yirmiyahu condemns the nation for their ingratitude toward BOREI OLAM. In order to accentuate the extent of Israel's sin, the navi reviews the kindnesses Hashem had done for them over the many years. Among them the Exodus from Egypt, the wonders G-d had wrought for them during their sojourn in the desert and His gift of a bountiful and fruitful land.

The prophet contrasts G-d's faithfulness to Israel with Israel's faithlessness to G-d. The nation's sins were

not limited simply to their disregard of Hashem's will but, even worse, their abandonment of His worship. By turning to other powers, Israel proved that they found G-d's gifts and His wonders were insufficient for them and, by seeking alternatives to G-d, they indicated that they regarded the Al-mighty as not All Mighty. It is for this reason that Yirmiyahu charges his generation that the behavior of Hashem's chosen nation was even more corrupt than the other nations who, sadly, remained faithful to their false gods.

Nonetheless, the navi tempers his harsh words by suggesting that Israel's infidelity to Hashem was less a result of rebelliousness and more one of confusion and error. Pointing to the leadership of the nation, Yirmiyahu charged them as being guilty of leading the people astray. He criticizes the kohanim who did not search for G-d, the scholars who did not seek to understand Hashem's ways, the leaders who openly rebelled against G-d and the (false) prophets who prophesied in the name Ba'al.

Given this reality of unethical and immoral behavior of these role models, G-d admits that the nation should not shoulder the entire guilt for their sins. Therefore, He tells Israel: OD ARIV IT'CHEM, "I will yet contend with you" - the implication being that G-d would not yet punish the people but would "contend",

argue, debate with the hope of convincing the nation to return and avoid punishment. And this, indeed, was the very mission of Yirmiyahu. He was not only the "prophet of doom" that we often think him to be, but also the "prophet of hope". This would illuminate G-d's words to Yirmiyahu in the last perek where the prophet is told that his job would be "to uproot and smash" but also "to build and to plant".

G-d sends prophets to try and bring His children back to Him. Declaring a message of hope to a sinful nation, (as Yirmiyahu did when the enemy had already built ramparts up to the wall of Yerushalayim!) is an essential part of the prophet's mission. Hashem desires return and not ruin.

And it was that message of hope that helped us survive the centuries of ruin until we could finally return home. ✨



*The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests*

## Pi-N'CHAS

No Unexplaineds

# MATOT-MAS'EI



Father/daughter - see them? He's giving her a bracha, but in the context of Parshat Matot, he (the father) has the power to annul her vows (on the day he hears of them). This applies to a daughter of a specific age - see Sedra Summary for details <> Husband/wife. This is the other pair that is involved in HAFARAT NEDARIM (not HATARAT). There are significant differences between the husband's setting aside his wife's vow and a father's setting aside his daughter's vow. Again, see Sedra Summary for details <> 5 crowns & one, with a sword over them refers to the five kings of Midyan - EVI, REKEM, TZUR, CHUR, REVA - and

BIL'AM who saw their end during the battle against Midyan - by the sword <> Face-to-face sheep, goats, cows, donkeys represent the even split of the spoils of war from Midyan - one for you and one for me - between the army and the people. This is an indicator of the debt of gratitude we owe our soldiers for protecting us and for fighting for us. It was so then and it is so today vis-a-vis TZAHAL, the police, and security personnel <> gold bars refers to the contribution of the officers of the battle in thanks to G-d for the zero casualty rate among them <> Pyramids - Egypt, where MAS'EI B'NEI YISRAEL began <> two sukkot for SUKKOT - first location out of Egypt <> logo of YOTVATA dairy company, stands for the place of encampment of the same name ✨ the choir for is for MAK-HEILATA, another encampment <> Chanukiya for CHASHMONA - which not only sounds like Chanuka's Chashmona'im, but it was the 25th place of encampment (depending upon how you count them), as in CHANUKAF-HEI <> Pomegranate with P for Rimon Peretz, another place of encampment <> 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 scales of justice are for the careful attention that the courts must pay in cases of homicide (the example from this week's sedra) in determining

culpability of the guilty party <> The road sign to Hebron is one of the requirements for Cities of Refuge (of which Hebron was one). Roads to them must be well-marked to facilitate the fleeing to them of one who committed a homicide, regardless of the level of his culpability <> Cow with the horns stands for the rare (this once only) occurrence of the TROP called KARNEI PARA <> the mathematically incorrect statement, that a fifth is equal to a quarter. A quarter is REVA, one of the five kings (1/5) killed in the Midyanite battle. <> Five more Chatan-Kalla, this time representing the daughters of Tz'lofchad who marry distant cousins to solve the "land going from one tribe to another tribe" problem <> Smiley is wearing a Mexican sombrero, so we are looking for the word smile in Spanish, which is RISA, a sound alike (or a sound the same) as the place of encampment, RISA <> ballot box with a hand putting a slip of paper with the letter O on it, on its way into the box. That, then, is an O-VOTE, as in the place called OVOT <> book-key as in the tribal leader of Dan, BUKI b. YOGLI <> compass with the North being designated by the letters LE rather than N. This gives us ELITZAFAN (close to TZAFON) ben PARNACH, the nasi of Zevulun <> the six elements are for the six metals mentioned in one pasuk - there is a subtle addition to this pictogram. In

the pasuk, when there is a VAV connecting two elements, they are touching with no space between them. When there is no VAV, the symbols are separated with a space <> The logo above the Chanukiya is for DAVKA writer, the fantastic word processor which has helped with Torah Tidbits for years and now helps with PhiloTorah. English, Hebrew - great nikud and trop capabilities. Data files of many sifrei kodesh. Good search ability. Lots of other good features. Sounds similar to DAFKA, one of the places of encampment <> Emblem of the city of Eilat. Etzion Gever (one of the places of encampment) is around Eilat and/or Aqaba <> The boy is trembling in fear - CHARADA (one of the places of decampment) <> March 20th to June 21 is Spring. 2015-2026 is a period of 12 years. That would be 12 springs, as in EILIM <> The army (IDF) flak jacket is called an EIFOD. Chaniel ben Eifod was the nasi of Menashe <> Two and a Half Men is a TV sitcom. For M&M, though, it represents the two and a half tribes to be settled on the east side of the Jordan River. Extra touch: MEN is half of MENASHE <> Rhyming royalty are TZUR and CHUR, two of the five kings of Midyan killed by the Israelite army. Side point: If the full fighting force of Israel was over 600,000 men, then the 12,000 who fought against Midyan are truly an Israel-lite army <> HA HA HA HA HA

are for the 5 sedra-names that have their initial HEI chopped off. HAMISHPATIM, HASH'MINI, HAM'TZORRA, HAMATOT, HAD'VARIM <> the equation:  $2+50+10 (62) + 200+1+6+2+50 (259) = 321$  is for B'nei R'uvein - who built CHESHBON (arithmetic) <> and two new Unexplaineds

לע"נ  
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל  
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

## The Danger of Suspicion

### MATOT-MAS'EI

It is a fascinating story, and from it comes one of the great principles of Judaism. Two of the tribes, Reuven and Gad, see that the land east of the Jordan is ideally suited as pasture for their large herds and flocks of livestock. They approach Moshe and ask for permission to settle there, rather than crossing the Jordan. Moshe is initially furious at their request. It is, he says, bound to demoralise the rest of the people ("Shall your fellow countrymen go to war while you sit here?"). Had they learned nothing from the sin of the spies who, by de-motivating others through their behaviour, condemned an entire generation to forty years of wandering in the desert?

The Reuvenites and Gadites take the point. They explain that they have no wish to exempt themselves from the struggles of their fellow Israelites. They are fully prepared to accompany them into the Promised Land and fight alongside them. "We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance." Moshe makes them take a public pledge to this effect and grants their request on condition that they fulfil their word. "When the land is then conquered before God you may then return, **FREE OF ANY OBLIGATION BEFORE GOD AND ISRAEL** and this land will be yours as your permanent property before God."

The phrase in uppercase - literally, you will be innocent before God and Israel - became in the course of time an ethical axiom of Judaism. It is not enough to do what is right in the eyes of God. One must also act in such a way as to be seen to have done the right in the eyes of one's fellow man. One must be above suspicion. That is the rule of **VIH-YITEM N'KI'IM**, "You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel."

How did this translate itself into Jewish law and life? The Mishna in Shekalim speaks of the three periods in the year when appropriations were made from the collective donations stored in the Temple treasury. The

Mishna states that "The person who made the appropriation did not enter the chamber wearing a bordered cloak or shoes or tefillin or an amulet, so that if he subsequently became poor, people would not say that he became poor because he committed an offence in the chamber, and so that if he became rich people would not say that he did so by misappropriating contributions in the chamber - for we must be free of blame in the eyes of people just as we must be free of blame before God, as it is said, 'You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.'"

Similarly the Tosefta states: "When one went in to take up the offering of the chamber, they would search him when he went in and when he came out, and they continue chatting with him from the time he goes in until the time he comes out."

Not only must there be no wrongdoing when coins are taken from the Temple treasury; there must be no suspicion of wrongdoing. Hence the person who gathered the money should not wear any item of clothing in which coins could be hidden. He was to be searched before and afterwards, and even engaged in conversation so that he would not be tempted to secrete some of the money in his mouth.

Two rabbinic teachings from the Second Temple period speak of

families famous for their role in Temple life and the lengths they went to place themselves beyond suspicion. The Garmu family were expert in preparing the Showbread. It was said of them that "their memory was held in high esteem because fine bread was never found in their children's homes, in case people might say, they feed from the preparation of the showbread." Likewise the Avtinas family were skilled in making the incense used in the Temple. They too were held in high regard because "Never did a bride of their family go forth perfumed, and when they married a woman from elsewhere, they stipulated that she was not to go out perfumed, in case people should say, They perfume themselves from the preparation of the Temple incense."

The general principle is stated in the Talmud Yerushalmi:

R. Shmuel bar Nachman said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan: In the Mosaic books, the Prophets and the Writings, we find that a person must discharge his obligations before men just as he must discharge them before God. Where in the Mosaic books? In the verse, 'You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.' Where in the prophets? In 'God, the Lord God, He knows and Israel too shall know.' Where in the Writings? In the verse, 'You shall find

grace and good favour in the eyes of God and men.' Gamliel Zoga asked R' Yosi bar Avun, Which verse says it most clearly? He replied, 'You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel.'"

This concern became the basis of two halakhic principles. The first is known as CHASHAD, "suspicion", namely that certain acts, permitted in themselves, are forbidden on the grounds that performing them may lead others to suspect one of doing something forbidden. Thus, for example, R. Shimon bar Yochai held that one of the reasons why the Torah prescribes that pe'ah [the corner of the field left unharvested for the poor] should be left at the end of harvesting was because of suspicion. If the owner of the field had set aside an unharvested corner at the beginning or middle, the poor would come and take what is theirs before the end of harvesting, and a passer-by might think that no corner had been set aside at all.

Likewise the rabbis ordained that if a house has two doors on different sides, Chanuka candles should be lit at both so that a passer-by, seeing one door but not the other, should not think that the owner of the house had failed to fulfil the command.

A closely related halachic principle is the idea known as MARIT AYIN, "appearances". Thus for example,

before milk substitutes became common, it was forbidden to cook milk-like liquids (made, for example, from almonds) together with meat on the grounds that people might think it was milk itself. Similarly it is forbidden on Shabbat to hang out garments that had become wet (for example, by falling into water) to dry, in case people think that one has washed them on Shabbat. In general one is not allowed to perform actions which, permitted in themselves, lend themselves to misinterpretation.

The connection or contrast between these two principles is a matter of some debate in the rabbinic literature. There are those who see CHASHAD and MARIT AYIN as very similar, perhaps even two names for the same thing. Others however see them as different, even opposites. CHASHAD represents the possibility that people might think you have done something forbidden and thus think badly of you. MARIT AYIN concerns cases where people, knowing that you are not the sort of person to do something forbidden, draw the mistaken conclusion that because you are doing X, Y is permitted, because X is easily mistaken for Y. Thus, to take one of the cases mentioned above, people seeing you hanging out clothes to dry on Shabbat might conclude that doing laundry is permitted, which it is not.

This concern for appearances is, on the face of it, strange. Surely what matters is what God thinks of us, not what people think of us. The Talmud tells us of a moving encounter between the dying Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and his disciples:

They said to him: Master, bless us. He said to them: May it be God's will that the fear of heaven should be as important to you as the fear of [the opinions of] human beings. They said: Is that all?

He said: Would that you were able to attain this [level of spirituality]. You can see [how difficult it is] because when someone wants to commit a sin, he says, I hope no one will see me [thus placing his fear of human beings above the fear of God who sees all].

What is more, it is forbidden to suspect people of wrongdoing. The rabbis said, "One who suspects the innocent is [punished by being] bodily afflicted" and "One should always judge a person in the scale of merits." Why then, if the onus is on the observer not to judge harshly, should we - the observed - be charged with the duty of acting above suspicion?

The answer is that we are not allowed to rely on the fact that others will judge us charitably, even though they should. Rashi makes a sobering comment on the life of Moshe:

If he left his tent early, people would say that he had had a row with his wife. If he left late, they would say, He is devising evil plots against us.

Rashi's commentary on D'varim 1:12 -

Even Moshe, who devoted his life with total selflessness to the people of Israel, was not able to avoid their suspicion. R' Moshe Sofer goes so far as to say that he was troubled throughout his lifetime by the challenge of the command, 'You shall be innocent in the eyes of God and Israel', adding that it was far easier to fulfil the first half of the command than the second (in the eyes of Israel'). Indeed he wondered if it was possible for anyone to fulfil it in its entirety. Perhaps, he said, this is what Kohelet meant when he said, "There is not a righteous man on earth who only does what is right and never sins" (7:20).

Yet there is a profound idea embedded in the concept of VIH-YITEM N'KI'IM, 'You shall be innocent.' The Talmudic sage Rava was scathing of those who stood in the presence of a Torah scroll but not in the presence of a Torah sage. To be a Jew is to be summoned to become a living Sefer Torah. People learn how to behave not only from the books they study but also - perhaps more so - from the people they meet. Jewish educators speak of 'text-people' as

well as 'text-books', meaning that we need living role models as well as formal instruction. For that reason, Rabbi Akiva used to follow Rabbi Yehoshua to see how he conducted himself in private, saying 'This too is part of Torah, and I need to learn.' The twin principles of CHASHAD and MARIT AYIN mean that we should act in such a way as to be held as a role-model (by being above suspicion - the rule of CHASHAD) and that, just as a book of instructions should be unambiguous, so should our conduct (by not laying itself open to misinterpretation - the idea of MARIT AYIN). People should be able to observe the way we behave and learn from us how a Jew should live.

The fact that these rules apply to every Jew, not just to great Sages, is eloquent testimony to the spiritual egalitarianism of the halacha. Each of us is bidden to become a role-model. The fact, too, that these rules exist despite the fact that we are commanded not to suspect others of wrongdoing, tells us something else about Judaism, namely that it is a system of duties, not just of rights. We are not allowed to say, when we have acted in a way conducive to suspicion, 'I have done nothing wrong; to the contrary, the other person, by harbouring doubts about me, is in the wrong.' To be sure, he is. But that does not relieve us of the responsibility to conduct our lives in a

way that is above suspicion. Each of us must play our part in constructing a society of mutual respect.

This brings us back to where we began with the request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad to settle the land east of the Jordan. Moshe, we recall, granted their request on condition that they first joined the other tribes in their battles. They did so. Years later, Yehoshua summoned them and told them that they had fulfilled their promise and were now entitled to return to the place where they had built their homes (Yehoshua 22).

However, by a profound historical irony, suspicion was aroused again, this time for a quite different reason, namely that they had built an altar in their territory. The other tribes suspected that they were breaking faith with the God of Israel by constructing their own place of worship. Israel was on the brink of civil war. The suspicion was unfounded. The Reuvenites and Gadites explained that the altar they had built was not intended to be a place of worship, but rather a sign that they too were part of the Israelite nation - a safeguard against the possibility that one day, generations later, the tribes living in Israel proper (west of the Jordan) would declare the Reuvenites and Gadites to be foreigners since they lived on the other side of the river:

That is why we said, 'Let us get ready and build an altar - but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices. On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at the Sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, "You have no share in the Lord." And we said, "If they ever say this to us or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord's altar which our fathers built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.'

Civil war was averted, but only just.

Suspicion is a pervasive feature of social life and it is intensely destructive. Judaism - a central project of which is the construction of a gracious society built on justice, compassion, mutual responsibility and trust - confronts the problem from both directions. On the one hand it commands us not to harbour suspicions but to judge people generously, giving them the benefit of the doubt. On the other, it bids each of us to act in a way that is above suspicion, keeping [as the rabbis put it] "far from unseemly conduct, from whatever resembles it, and from what may merely appear to resemble it."

Being innocent before God is one thing; being innocent before one's fellow human beings is another, and far more difficult. Yet that is the challenge - not because we seek their approval (that is what is known as pandering) but because we are summoned to be role-models, exemplars, living embodiments of Torah, and because we are called on to be a unifying, not a divisive, presence in Jewish life. As the Chatam Sofer said, we will not always succeed. Despite our best endeavours, others may still accuse us (as they accused Moshe) of things of which we are utterly innocent. Yet we must do our best by being charitable in our judgement of others and scrupulous in the way we conduct ourselves.

#### Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) **Have you ever misjudged someone? How did it feel to find out later you were wrong?**
- (2) **Can you think of a character in the Torah who was mistakenly suspected of some wrongdoing? What happened?**
- (3) **What is the difference between being a good person and being seen to be a good person?**

## Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

## Message from the Haftara

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## What the King Could Not Command

### MATOT-MAS'EI

The haftara for this week's parsha is drawn from the earliest prophecies in the book of Yirmiyahu, first delivered in the reign of Yoshiyahu, king of Yehuda, whose rule began fifty-three years before the destruction of the First Beit HaMikdash. As we move through the Three Weeks between Shiv'a Asar B'Tamuz and Tish'a b'Av, it is worth pausing on the tension at the heart of this haftara. The struggle Yoshiyahu faces reveals something deeper: the difference between building a religious society and merely policing one, a distinction that is critical for today's leaders and educators to understand.

Yoshiyahu was nothing like his father, Amon, or his grandfather Menashe, both of whom were steeped in idolatrous practice. Even as a child, Yoshiyahu sought connection with God (Divrei HaYamim Bet 34:3). Once he came to power, he moved aggressively to root out idolatry, not only within the kingdom of Yehuda but in the regions of Efrayim and Menashe and the territory of Naftali as well. He personally supervised the

work, and when his reforms met resistance, that resistance was answered with force (see Melachim Bet 23:20). Yoshiyahu did not stop at legislating against idolatrous practice.

He was determined that his people adhere to the Torah's laws, in sharp contrast to his father and grandfather, and he threw himself into refurbishing the Beit HaMikdash, purifying it after its desecration and restoring its service to Torah norms. Divrei HaYamim Bet 34:9 describes him raising funds to rebuild the Mikdash, an effort that met with real success. In the course of that renovation, Chilkiyahu the Kohen Gadol discovered a Torah scroll written long before, perhaps as far back as the days of Moshe Rabbeinu himself (Melachim Bet 22:8), a discovery that only deepened Yoshiyahu's resolve to purify the land, its government, and the region of Judea of every trace of idolatry. As Divrei HaYamim Bet 34 closes: "Yoshiyahu removed all the abominations from all the territories belonging to the Israelites, and required all who were in Israel to worship the Lord their God; all his days, they did not turn away from following the Lord, God of their ancestors" (34:33).

Given all this, it is striking that Yirmiyahu's prophecies in this very haftara denounce the people of

Yehuda and Jerusalem for their idolatrous ways. Hadn't Yoshiyahu gone further than any king before him to eradicate the worship of foreign gods? The answer emerges in the chapter that follows our haftara, where Yirmiyahu observes that despite all of Yoshiyahu's efforts and reforms, the hearts of the people remained unfaithful: "Yehuda did not return to Me with all her heart, but with deception, declares the Lord" (Yirmiyahu 3:10). Clandestinely, people continued their idolatrous practices. For all his labor, Yoshiyahu could not truly transform the inner lives of ordinary people.

There is an important message here for us, drawn from this episode in which even a king's best intentions were met with resistance and quiet evasion. As I noted in last week's column, top-down leadership, however forceful, achieves only so much when it comes to matters of God, purpose, faith, and spirituality. These are commitments that cannot be legislated. Leadership can and should create a context that inspires, but that inspiration must be bottom-up as much as top-down.


This is precisely the challenge we face today whenever we imagine that faith and mitzva observance can simply be taught rather than nurtured within the right spiritual environment. It is also why I believe the oft-cited communal anxiety within the Relig-

ious Zionist world over DATLASHIM, young people who step away from observance, is overstated. Every young person is on a journey. Many ultimately return, as they mature and build families of their own, reconnecting with the education and experiences of their childhood. Those homes may look slightly different from their parents' or grandparents' homes, but they will be intentional rather than rote, animated by a genuine search for purposeful engagement with God, and filled with a living spirit of religious commitment.

A second message emerges as well. Yirmiyahu reminds us that beyond the public work of confronting corruption in society, there is always a subtler, more difficult private struggle. As we work to build a better society, we cannot fix our attention on the public sphere alone. If we do, we ignore the private space - the quiet lives of ordinary people - at our own peril. Yirmiyahu captures this with the image of a thief caught in the night: "Like the shame of a thief when he is found out, so will the House of Israel be shamed" (2:26), a metaphor for the hidden betrayals of God that happen behind closed doors.

We face our own version of this danger when teachers and youth advisors, whether through negligence or lack of awareness fail the children entrusted to them at critical

moments in their development. Preventing this requires clear, carefully designed protocols to respond to challenges that youth are facing in their observance or general relationship with Judaism. But beyond systems and safeguards, religious education must also reach the inner world of our students, listening to them, understanding their questions, and engaging seriously with how they think and feel about Judaism, both in belief and in practice. This is especially important today, as Am Yisrael deals with internal division alongside the ongoing pressures of war and rising antisemitism.

As we navigate the Three Weeks and prepare for Tish'a b'Av, we are reminded that our task is not only to construct a healthy public religious life, but just as urgently to safeguard the wholeness of our children and families in private, so that a genuine passion for God and Torah is cultivated continuously. Yoshiyahu could command the destruction of every idol in the land, but his authority could not shape the people's hearts. Our aspiration must reach further than his: not merely a nation with the right leaders, but a whole people, publicly and privately, dedicated to building a more perfect society. 



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **Look at the Calendar; Look at the Sedra**

Last week's sedra, Pinchas, contained a mitzva which contrasted with one of the calamities associated with the 17th of Tamuz - the Korban Tamid and the cessation thereof.

Next week's sedra, D'varim, shares a calamity with Tish'a b'Av - the Sin of the Spies, the story of which Moshe told the generation poised on the threshold of Eretz Yisrael (in the sedra) and the saddest day of the year (Tish'a b'Av) declared because of Cheit HaMeraglim (and four other tragedies listed in Masechet Taanit.

And this week's sedra, Matot-Mas'ei has shared themes with the calendar, as well.

The period known as the Three Weeks (a.k.a. Bein HaMeitzarim) is the period of national mourning for the destructions of the two Batei Mikdash and the exile from Eretz Yisrael of the Jewish People.

In Parshat Matot, we find the request of the tribes of Gad and Reuven (later joined by half of Menashe) to settle on the east side of the Jordan River and NOT to receive land in Eretz Yisrael proper. Moshe's first reaction

was that of horror in the sin of the spies being repeated. It turned out not to be as devastating as Moshe first thought it might be, but it still ended up being a less than ideal situation.

Parshat Mas'ei, in a clearer way, is the opposite side of the Churban and Exile coin. We first find the travelog of the people from the time they left Egypt until - forty years and 42 encampments later - they are poised to enter the Land.

In Mas'ei, we find the source of the mitzva to conquer and settle in Eretz Yisrael. We find the description of the boundaries of the Land.

In Mas'ei, we find the names of the tribal leaders who will assist Elazar and Yehoshua in taking the people into the Land, conquering it, and settling it.

All that in sharp contrast to our mourning our loss of Eretz Yisrael.

The Torah - in Pinchas, Matot-Mas'ei, and D'varim show us what should have been; our calendar highlights when actually occurred. And the sedras also say to us: Don't get stuck in the cycle of fasts and yearly mourning. Let the Torah do more than show us what could have been, what should have been, but we (the people) messed up royally.

Let the Torah show us the way to repair the sins of then and work

towards what should have been and what will be with the Geula Sh'leima.

Every time a person says: We have everything we need for a complete Jewish Life here in (fill in your choice of the wonderful Jewish communities of Chutz LaAretz) - he/she perpetuates the sin of the spies. Every time a Jew says ALO NAALEH and makes Aliya, he/she is repairing that great sin and bringing us closer to the Geula. **PTDT**

לַהַטוּטָן

מִטְּוֵלָן  
microULPAN

LAHATUTAN is a juggler.

The word can also refer to a magician who performs sleight of hand.

Penn is both - the penn-ultimate LAHATUTAN!



## Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -  
[www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)

## Beauteous Evil

Summary: Superficial beauty does more than mask inner sordidness; it

actively erodes our natural aversion to it.

### The Offering of Midianite Jewelry

After the reprisal attack against Midyan, the Israelite soldiers presented an unusual donation to the Mishkan: gold jewelry seized from the Midianite women.

We wish to bring an offering to God. Every man who found a gold article – an anklet, a bracelet, a ring, an earring, or a body ornament – to atone for our souls before God. (Bamidbar 31:50)

Why did the soldiers bring this odd offering to the Mishkan? The Talmud (Shabbat 64a) explains that they felt a need for atonement – not for improper actions – but for improper thoughts when they came in contact with the Midianite women.

Still, why not bring a more conventional offering? And why does the Torah list all of the various types of Midianite ornaments?

Some of the jewelry was of the normal variety, worn in full view, such as rings and bracelets. Other pieces, however, were of an intimate nature, worn underneath the clothes, like the kumaz, a suggestive body ornament. From the association that the Torah makes between ordinary jewelry and intimate ornaments, the Talmud derives the moral lesson that “to gaze at a woman’s little finger [for

enjoyment] is like staring at her undressed.”

What is so terrible about enjoying a woman’s natural aesthetic beauty?

### **The Snare of Superficial Beauty**

On its own accord, beauty has intrinsic worth, and can make a positive impression on the soul. The soul gains a wonderful sense of expansiveness when it experiences aesthetic pleasures that are pure.

However, if the beauty is covering up that which is ethically repulsive, this attractiveness becomes a spiritual hazard. The external charm is but a snare, entrapping in its inner ugliness those caught in its net. In general, we only succumb to that which is morally repugnant when it is cloaked in a veneer of superficial beauty.

This was precisely the *casus belli* for the war against Midyan. The young women of Moav and Midyan enticed the men with their outer beauty, leading them to perform the vile idolatrous practices of Pe'or. The Midrash describes their method:

When [the Israelite man] was overcome by lust and asked her to submit to him, she pulled out a statue of Pe'or from her bosom and demanded: ‘First, prostrate yourself before this!’ (Sifrei 25:1; Rashi on Bamidbar 25:2)

This phenomenon encompasses an even greater pitfall. The simple act of

staring at that which is prohibited undermines the soul’s healthy sense of moral rectitude and purity. If we are attracted to that which is morally repugnant, we become desensitized to the ugliness of the sin. The superficial beauty not only conceals the inner sordidness, it diminishes our loathing for it.

Even if the soul has not been sufficiently corrupted to be actually ensnared in the net of immorality, its purity has nevertheless been tainted by an attraction to that which is forbidden. For this reason, the Israelite soldiers who fought against Midyan required atonement. To make amends for their spiritual deterioration, they brought a particularly appropriate offering: gold jewelry, whose shiny and glittery exterior concealed its corrupt inner core. The officers donated jewelry that is worn openly, as well as ornaments worn intimately. They recognized that both types of jewelry share the potential to desensitize the soul and damage its integrity.

*Sapphire from the Land of Israel.  
Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 116*

# The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

## What is your Korban Tamid?

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

“What is your Korban Tamid?”, I asked in the weekly Zoom gathering of "Mitchadshot".

In Parashat Pinchas, we read about the Korban Tamid (daily, perpetual sacrifice), the lamb offering that was brought twice a day in the Beit HaMikdash and was significant precisely because of its routine nature.

Our sages teach that consistency and devotion to a daily routine is the holy foundation of our lives, more than all kinds of peak moments and one-time experiences.

The women gave amazing answers to the question: “What is your Korban Tamid?” They spoke about daily learning, daily prayer, and a regular act of kindness that they had incorporated into their schedule.

One woman from abroad maintains steady ties with Israel. Another spoke about a support network for reservists that she has continued operating for nearly two years. Many shared that they are constantly trying to add a little more “tamid” to their

day: a little more quality time with the children or adhering to a new resolution.

And here are two especially deep answers: A single woman who has been searching for her other half for many years wrote in the chat that her Korban Tamid is continuing to go on dates – to believe, to make an effort, to trust, and to try again.

And a mother of young children said that her Korban Tamid is preparing sandwiches for school every morning, year after year. This can be done with boredom and irritation, or it can be done with a sense of joy, meaning, and connection – sending a small piece of home and of mother’s love to nourish her children each day.

So what is your "Tamid"?

Send your friends this link so that they can receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's content too: [tiny.cc/DailyPortion](https://tiny.cc/DailyPortion)



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

MATOT-MAS'EI

## Taking Your Own Words Seriously

Moshe warns the leaders of the

tribes, "Whatever comes out of one's mouth he shall do" (Bamidbar 30:1-3).

Rashbam and others take this as a command not to delay the fulfilment of a vow or oath. If you promise something to the Almighty you should carry it out promptly.

This interpretation has a great deal to commend it. It recalls the recommendation, "When a mitzva comes into your hand, don't let it get stale" (Mechilta, Parshat Bo).

A particular example which is part of daily living has to do with saying one's prayers. When it is time to daven one should not find every possible excuse to delay and to keep God waiting.

There is another way of understanding Moshe's warning. "Whatever comes out of one's mouth he shall do" can also be telling a leader to listen to his own words and heed his own message.

The Mishna lays down something similar in the laws of saying the Sh'ma: "He who says the Sh'ma but does not make it audible to his ears has not carried out his duty" (B'rachot 2:3). *Ed. note: This is the opinion of R' Yosi. The Tana Kama says that one is yotzei and that is the halacha. However, saying Sh'ma audible enough for you to hear it is definitely the proper way to say Sh'ma.*

There is a rabbinic saying that a person who speaks well but does not take his own advice is like someone who does the washing but remains unwashed himself (Tosefta Yevamot 8:4).

Unfortunately it sometimes happens that a leader, even a rabbi, is a genius at preaching values and ideals but is no role model. No wonder his audience says, "Why should we listen to you? You are no better than we are!"

## End of Story

The end of Bamidbar is not yet the end of the Torah, but it is more or less the end of the story. The wanderings are almost over and the people are on the verge of the Promised Land.

It now remains only for Moshe to prepare the Israelites for life on their own soil, but first comes, in this week's reading, a detailed listing of where they had been and what had befallen them.

The purpose of the list is not so much historical and geographical as spiritual. "Write the stages of Israel's journeys in the wilderness", God says to Moshe according to the Midrash, "so that they will know the miracles I performed for them."

Some of the miracles we know about already, dramatic events that impressed themselves on that

generation and those that would follow. The biggest miracle, however, is not spelled out. It happened so regularly, day by day, that it was like a constant backdrop - the miracle of sheer survival.

Here was a people facing an unfriendly environment that in all logic should have defeated them and brought an end to their history. Here was a people that normally would have been overcome by the ruthless heat, hunger, thirst and lack of shelter.

The miracle was that they lived, and this was the beginning of their history. -OZ

## Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

### MATOT-MAS'EI

*You shall not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is worthy of death... You shall not bring guilt upon the Land in which you are; the blood will indeed bring guilt upon the Land. And the Land will not effect atonement... You shall not contaminate the Land in which you dwell... for I am G-d who dwells among the Children of Israel (35:31-34).*

Though the Torah provides for a

person who caused the accidental death of another through the AREI MIKLAT, cities of refuge, it makes it quite clear that a murderer with intent cannot escape the ultimate consequences of what he did by offering to pay compensation to the victim's family. It is not one law for those who can pay and another law for those who cannot pay.


Rashi translates the words V'LO TACHANIFU ET HA'ARETZ as "You shall not (in this way) bring guilt on the Land." The Ramban explains this to mean that the Land's high level of k'dusha will subtly act in guilty way. It will give the farmland the appearance of being fertile and demand a lot of input, but it will yield meager harvests as the produce will be blighted by worms, locusts, and premature over-ripening, as Moshe warned the Israelites before his death (D'varim 28:38-40).

But unlike Rashi, Chizkuni translates V'LO TACHANIFU ET HA'ARETZ literally, as "You shall not flatter the land." The simple meaning of CHANIFUT is flattery, where a person dishonestly openly attributes good things to people who are unworthy. Where a person praises when he should condemn. Chizkuni implies that this is a statement about the Land that is patently false: that it tolerates guilty people pleading to a lesser charge so that they can evade

the due penalty in favor of buying their way out. Quite on the contrary. Israel's presence on the Land works on the principle of "Justice, justice you shall pursue" (D'varim 16:20), that the same law applies to rich and poor alike.

It may be worth applying this principle of the Chizkuni to the way that some people erroneously view their being in Eretz Yisrael. They had been observant or were at least connected with observance in Chutz La'aretz, outside Israel. They belonged to communities, they followed some traditional practices on Shabbat and Chagim, and they kept a modicum of kashrut. They then made Aliya. Despite feeling considerable uncertainties about how they would fit in, they continued to personal fulfillment in just being here, working here, and sharing the burdens of Israeli society. They thus felt they were doing their bit by being here. In so being, they slowly jettisoned many of the practices that they kept "in the home country". In the mind-frame they "flatter the Land", holding that being here and involved in Israeli society compensates for their abandoning the practices of their faith.

It is then in this spirit that the Torah warns: "The Land will not effect atonement". Do not think that G-d expects less from you just because you moved here. On the contrary, the

Land is spiritually charged: He expects more. He expects us to spiritually and observance-wise to progress, in harmony with: "For I am G-d who dwells among the Children of Israel". 

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

### **MATOT-MAS'EI**

Why does this week's Parsha begin with the teachings of N'darim, Vows?

First, we need to understand that there is no prayer that is as profoundly moving as is Kol Nidrei in our liturgy. Why was the Kol Nidrei, the prayer synonymous with onset of the Day of Awe, chosen to introduce the most moving moments of the Jewish year?

Rabbi E. Goldberg once wrote that the emphasis on Vows (N'darim) serves as a reflection on G-dly qualities that were granted by the Divine to his nation. The Talmud teaches us that a Vow is a prohibition that "we" create in some object around us by consecrating it with our speech. The person who makes the Vow changes the target of his oath into another reality. What was perfectly permissible has now been transformed into a prohibited thing

through his verbal consecration. This is a G-dly quality. One may think that such powers of defining the status of objects in this world, would be reserved for the Divine. However, we see that it's G-d granted us the power of the Vow, the creative capability of speech to consecrate and define the world around us, as if we were actual creators ourselves.

On the Eve of Yom Kippur, the prayer of Kol Nidrei reminds us of the tremendous Divine power at our disposal. The concept of Neder - Vow describes a world of good that we had a share in creating and recognize the force of consecration that we're given. Therefore, Kol Nidrei reminds us of what could have been this past year had we directed our actions and speech correctly.

Parshat Matot begins with Moshe teaching the laws of N'darim - Vows to the princes of the tribes. Why begin a Parsha with such a technical topic? Why specifically given over to the princes of the tribes?

One may answer that N'darim - Vows demonstrates the creative Divine character that was bestowed upon us, granting us power over the objects of our world. This is a Mitzva that speaks of leadership and power. It has within its framework our obligation to use this Divine mastery over our world for the distinct purpose of serving G-d. When we

have failed to focus this control in the proper direction, we recount the theme of Kol Nidrei and beg G-d to pardon the misuse of our power as well as the apathy of its application.

Therefore, this week, it is Moshe alone who is given center stage in this Mitzva as it is the leadership of the Jewish people who are targeted first to hear it. As we near the Fast of Tish'a b'Av, it is clearly an important lesson to learn, how after such destruction of the Temples, it is still up to us to consecrate and sanctify ideas in around us as a people, in rebuilding ourselves. 🏠

## The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

### MATOT-MAS'EI 5785

Let us investigate some of the deeper lessons from the institution of the Cities of Refuge (AREI MIKLAT) in our Parsha (35:9-34).

The first: S'forno (Bamidbar 35:25) writes that there are several degrees of unintentional homicide (manslaughter). Sometimes, it's a complete accident, and there wasn't much that could have been done to prevent it. Other accidents involve an element of negligence. Therefore, the Torah did not set an amount of time of exile for all murderers. Those who were only slightly guilty of the murder would enter the AREI MIKLAT

shortly before the Kohen Gadol died, while others die in the AREI MIKLAT before the demise of the Kohen Gadol. "And this is just, for HaShem knows the degree of punishment each individual deserves." It would therefore seem that each person needs to spend a different amount of time in the AREI MIKLAT to attain his atonement, and through hashgacha p'ratit (Divine Providence), each person gets exactly what he deserves. In other words, no crime goes unpunished, and while we all yearn to witness - right now - how good is vindicated and wicked crushed, the eventual reward and retribution will inevitably be executed. A valuable belief as we struggle against the many evils and malevolent characters who seek to harm us.

The second: One of the halachot of the AREI MIKLAT is the requirement for three arei miklat on the east side of the Jordan and three in Israel proper. The three on the east side would only begin to function as AREI MIKLAT when the corresponding three in Eretz Yisrael are established. What is the reason for this halacha? Why should the AREI MIKLAT on the east side of the Jordan be unable to operate immediately and instead have to wait another fourteen years until the AREI MIKLAT in Eretz Yisrael would be designated and arranged? The Meshech Chochma (Bamidbar

35:28) explains that this ruling was promulgated because we must always give people a glimmer of hope. If the three AREI MIKLAT EIVER LAYARDEIN functioned straightaway, the people who lived there would despair of any quick release. But why?

When someone kills through his own negligence (SHOGEG), he must flee and be confined in the AREI MIKLAT. There, while affording him the atonement and protection he needed, he always nurtured the hope to go free. He never despaired because he knew that with the death of the Kohen Gadol, he would leave the AREI MIKLAT (see Bamidbar 35:25), and the Kohen Gadol could die any day. The problem was that Elazar was the Kohen Gadol, and HaShem indicated that Elazar would live another fourteen years until the land of Israel was conquered and divided. As such, if the three AREI MIKLAT cities in EIVER LAYARDEIN were immediately operational, those guilty of manslaughter would lose any hope of freedom for another fourteen years, and it would be simply cruel to allow people to live without such hope for such a long time. Therefore, only after the Land is conquered and divided, and the three AREI MIKLAT are established in Israel, would the three in EIVER LAYARDEIN begin to function as well.

To live without hope is a harsh and merciless fate that is totally foreign to our Jewish world-outlook. Especially during these days prior to Tish'a b'Av which remind us of our woeful exilic existence, it is absolutely essential to remember that our belief in the eventual end of our exile - our hope - springs ever eternal! All of which leads into our final message of the Cities of Refuge.

The Mishna states (Makot 2:6) that "[The death of the Kohen Gadol would] facilitate the return of the murderer [from the city of refuge to his home] ... Therefore, the mothers of the Kohen Gadol would provide [those exiled to the cities of refuge with] sustenance and garments so that they would not pray that their sons would die." In other words, the more comfortable they would be in the city of refuge, the less urgency they would feel to leave, and the less likely it would be that they would pray for the death of the Kohen Gadol. As the Talmud later explains (Makot 11a), the reason why such prayers might prove efficacious was because the Kohen Gadol's behavior might be culpable since he could have prayed that such careless homicides not occur. The Kohen Gadol's seeming abandonment of his solemn religious responsibility to inspire the people to adhere to a more ethically responsible life made him vulnerable to the

prayers of the manslayer.

This explanation, however, raises a serious theological problem. It is one thing to pray that HaShem protect us from those natural disasters that are beyond our control, but to plead with Gd that He intervene to safeguard another human being from their own mistakes would violate the fundamental principle of Free Will. Every person is accountable for their own sins; the choice is his/hers to behave properly. If so, whether the Kohen Gadol deserves to die because of his negligence, should not be influenced by anyone's prayers. To this question, the Chazon Ish draws an extraordinary conclusion. To wit: that earnest and sincere prayer is so incredibly potent that it can actually override the Free Will system!

The Maharsha, in another context (Kiddushin 29b, s.v. EFSHAR), states that the belief that all prayer is heard and answered by HaShem - although not always in the way we would hope - has nothing to do with the miraculous, but is built-in to the very fabric of our this-world reality, no different than any of the other immutable laws of nature. In a word, prayer works! True, at times, HaShem says, "No." Other times, the prayer is applied differently or stored away for someone else. But in all cases, no prayer is ever ignored! HaShem is always: SHOMEI'A T'FILA (He

hearkens to our prayers), and is, The Lord is near to all those who call upon him, to all who call upon Him in truth." (T'hilim 145:18)

This insight is further strengthened by the opening topic in Parshat Matot which deals with the institution of the vow - neder. In introducing this complex subject, the Torah states (30:3): "When a person takes a vow to HaShem... he shall not profane his word..." The Midrash (Sifrei 153), quoted by Rashi, admonishes against desecrating one's speech. Our words are holy; they matter and can make a real difference when they are uttered properly and thoughtfully. Prayer is surely one of the most sublime forms of speech. As such, when we pray sincerely and use our prayerful words to beseech HaShem for His salvation and our redemption, that imploring speech may very well have the power to see our wish fulfilled and thus bring these Three Weeks to a happy ending.

This last message is so very relevant to the often-desolate feeling that the average Jew experiences when contemplating what, if anything, he/she can do to help remedy the current painful and sorry state of affairs that has ensnared and continues to plague us. Certainly, there are acts of charity and chesed, but one must never-ever underestimate the incredible power of prayer!



## MATOT-MAS'EI

**GM** There are seven pairs of sedras that are sometimes combined and sometimes read separately, for a few different reasons. For each pair, one can calculate the percentages for combined and separate. The pairs differ from each other (except for TM and AK with the same numbers) in their two percentages, and there are differences between Israel and chutz la'aretz for three of the seven pairs. With that said (but not fully detailed), the sedra pair that is combined more often than any other pair by far, is Matot-Mas'ei. They are combined 80% of years in Israel and 90% of years in Chutz LaAretz.

The fact is confirmed numerically with a GM. Here's the first pasuk of Matot (Bamidbar 30:2)

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־רָאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת  
לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה':

*Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying: This is the thing that HaShem has commanded.*

And here is the first pasuk of Mas'ei  
(Bamidbar 33:1)

אֵלֶּה מִסְעֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְצִבְאוֹתָם  
בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן:

*These are the journeys of the children of Israel who left the land of Egypt in their legions, under the charge of Moshe and Aharon.*

These two whole p'sukim are GMs (3324). Not meant to prove anything, but interesting, nonetheless.

No other first p'sukim of sedras match except for the ten sedras that begin with VAYDABEIR HASHEM EL MOSHE LEIMOR. And those include Tazri'a and M'tzora. So let's say that Matot and Mas'ei are the only ones that match gimatriya with different wording.

*And just to bring you behind the scenes of my GM searches, there are three other p'sukim in the Torah and three more in Nach that have the same gimatriya. If I had a meaningful way to tie any of them in, I would have.*

## RED ALERT!

MATOT-MAS'EI

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)  
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -  
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

**DIVREI TORAH**

- The opening chapter of Matot is about vows and oaths. Included is the general rule requiring one to keep his vow, the special authority given to a father of a young girl (12-12.5 years old) to nullify her vows and of a husband to do the same to his wife's vows (the ones that affect him). Also included - not in the Written Word, but from the Oral Law, is the issue of HATARAT NEDARIM, nullification of vows.

All Mitzvot were given to Moshe at Sinai, but a different decision had to be made as to when to deliver each Mitzva to the people. The decision to deliver this Mitzva, I believe, was determined by Moshe's impending death. Up until now, anyone who needed his vow nullified took his issue to Moshe directly, and since Moshe was the only expert in the matter, he could take of it by himself. He did not need a Beit Din. But now, when Moshe is literally staring death in the face, he needed to teach the people how to handle each case without Moshe around. Of course it is best not to take a vow, but you felt it was the course of action for you, then you needed to know what to do.

- To defeat Midyan was the next course of business. There were two sins involved with what the Midianites did. Firstly the Midianite women seduced many of the Jewish men. Secondly the seduction included getting them to commit idolatry with

the P'or idol. Two very serious offenses, through which 24,000 Jewish men died. All the people knew that this war would be Moshe's last act of leadership, after which he would die. Sad as it was, the people did not hesitate in performing it. The chosen army was purposefully small, but they were determined to act correctly and fulfill their mission. Moshe became angry with his army because they did not kill all the sinful enemy. Then they were able to correct matters, under Moshe's supervision.

- When we read about the acts of the Moavite and Midyanite women at P'or (beginning of chapter 25, at the very end of Parshat Balak), no mention is made as to whose idea it was to entice the Jewish men. In Matot (31:16), the Torah informs us that it was Bilaam's idea. The fact that the Torah does not mention it earlier is not really that unusual. At the sin of the Spy Mission, the Torah text gives us the impression that it was Hashem's idea to send spies. It's not until the beginning of D'varim that Moshe tells us that it was the people's idea. I believe that the reason is that it really isn't that important. The sinners in the Spy Mission were the spies themselves and not who sent them. The real sinners committing wrong at P'or were the Jewish men, not the women or Bilaam. The Torah tells us in this

way who are the real ultimate ones who sinned in the matter.

- For 40 years, as they travelled through the desert, the people pined for the moment they could enter the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. That was their mission. Every day much thought was given to this goal. What sense does it make to all of a sudden, read about a request from two tribes to abandon their goal for all these years and say that they want to get off the bus. They want to settle east of the Jordan. They are giving up on the Promised Land. I have trouble understanding what happened. Was it that they had so much cattle and sheep that they suddenly changed their minds? This can be compared to many Americans and Israelis who have made a decision to live and prosper financially over living in the higher spiritual environment of Eretz Yisrael.

- Why was it necessary to mention all 42 encampments in the desert? It is a very dry unexciting rendition of a couple of columns in the Torah. Rashi's approach is clear. It was to educate us to the type of travel that Hashem organized for them. The travel schedule afforded the nation a great deal of rest time in between journeys. There were 14 trips in the first year, and 8 in the final year. There were 20 journeys spread out over the 38 years in the middle. The

Rambam also discusses this matter in his Guide for the Perplexed (3:50). The Torah was telling us that the people were never lost or wandering with no order. Everything was arranged and divinely organized. With the well, a divine source of water, and the Manna, and the Clouds of Glory to care for the enormous total of close to 3 million people: this was Hashem's bubble to protect the people.

- The Ramban stands out in stating that one of the 613 Torah Mitzvot is to live and settle within Eretz Yisrael. He takes issue with the Rambam in his Sefer HaMitzvot and says in his commentary on the Rambam that this Mitzva exists throughout time, even today. [Note: in the Rechavia neighborhood of Yerushalayim, there is a Main Street named Ramban Street. Parallel to this street is Ben Maimon Street. When the neighborhood was built some 90 years ago, Ben Maimon St. was called Rambam St. The taxi drivers complained to the municipality that they couldn't hear properly when a passenger asked for Rambam/Ramban Street. The municipality promptly changed Rambam to Ben Maimon. I asked a current fellow Shul goer in the Shul I attended who works for the municipality why they changed the Rambam and not the Ramban. He said it was a simple decision. Both great rabbis came to visit when they fled Spain. The Ramban stayed in Israel, while the

Rambam moved to Cairo.]

- At the end of Mas'ei the leaders of Menashe complained that if the daughters of Tz'lofchad married men from a different tribe, their tribe would lose heritage land to the new family. The divine answer was to tell those women that they should marry men within the tribe, and this was done. This separation of tribes was the Halacha for that generation only. If there was a case that a man had some sisters, and they were all married. If the man dies childless, his sisters would inherit the tribal land. When the women died, the lands would be inherited by heirs within the original family. (Ramban)

- MIDRASH. The Torah specifically stated that in the Midyan War, the soldiers killed Bilaam with the sword. The Midrash points out that Yitzchak had stated that Yaakov's strength was his voice while Esav's strength was the sword. Bilaam came on the scene attempting to hurt Israel with his voice, using our weapon. So when the Israelite soldiers killed Bilaam, they especially used the Goyish weapon, the sword. Ed. note: Look at this: WORDS / SWORD.

## Questions by RED

### From the text

1. A father heard about his young daughter's vow and did not verbally revoke it, but wanted to. Is the vow valid? (30:5)
2. Who led the army in the war against Midyan? (31:6)
3. Why did Moshe become angry with the officers who fought in the Midyan war? (31:15)
4. How do you kasher a metal utensil? (31:23)
5. How many men were drafted into the army to fight Midyan? (31:4)

### From Rashi

6. How old is the girl who made a vow in Chapter 30? (30:4)
7. For how many years did Reuven and Gad consent to be in the vanguard of the conquering army in Canaan before returning to their families? (32:24)
8. Why did the Torah list all the travel stops in the 40-year trek in the desert? (33:1)
9. Why did the accidental murderer have to reside in the City of Refuge until the Kohen Gadol died? (35:25)
10. In what order did the Torah list the daughters of Tz'lofchad at the end of the Parsha? (36:11)

### From the Rabbis

11. Why did Moshe include half of the tribe of Menashe in the Reuven and Gad agreement? (Ramban)
12. According to the Ramban, there is a Mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael. Where is the verse that defines the Ramban's position? (33:53)
13. The northern border of Eretz Yisrael extends as far as the Euphrates River. When will that happen? (Teshu'ot HaAretz)

### Midrash

14. If the husband who can nullify her vow, divorces her - who can nullify her vow?

### Haftara - Yirmiyahu

15. From which direction will the invasion of Yerushalayim come?

### Relationships

- a) Yefet - Na'ama
- b) Avraham - Moav
- c) Yitzchak - Yishmael
- d) Sered - Yissachar
- e) David - Rechav'am

### ANSWERS

1. Yes, it is valid.
2. Pinchas
3. Because they did not kill the Midianite women who participated in

the immoral sin with Bnei Yisrael.

4. If used with water: By dipping the clean utensil in boiling water. If not used with water: with a blowtorch.

5. 12,000 men.

6. 11 years and one day old.

7. 14 years. 7 to fight and 7 to divide up the Land. (The Abravanel disagrees)

8. To show Hashem's Chessed. It included a great deal of time to stop and rest.

9. The Kohen Gadol should pray that an accidental murder not occur during his lifetime.

10. In the order that they married.

11. Ramban: Land was very large, so Moshe asked for volunteers.

Ha'amek Davar: Moshe realized that they needed Torah scholars east of the Jordan.

12. "You shall possess the land and you shall settle it."

13. When the Mashiach comes.

14. No one can. She is on her own.

15. Their idolatrous gods

## **Relationships**

a) Son & Mother

b) Great Uncle & Great Nephew

c) Half Brothers

d) Nephew & Uncle

e) Grandfather & Grandson