

RED ALERT!

MATOT-MAS'EI

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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