

# Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1379 JULY 18<sup>TH</sup> '20 כ"ו תמוז תש"פ

פרשת מטות - מסעי

PARSHAT MATOT - MAS'EI • SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

AVOT 2



PIRKEI AVOT  
SPECIAL  
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Featuring Rabbi  
Reuven Tradburks  
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WHAT TO DO  
WHEN YOU'RE  
NOT BEING  
VALUED

By Margot Botwinick,  
OU JLIC  
page 70



אלה מסעי  
בני ישראל

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT MATOT - MAS'EI

Candles 7:10PM • Earliest 6:18PM • Havdala 8:26PM • Rabbeinu Tam 9:02PM

# PARSHAPIX

PPexplanations on p.68  
and at [www.ttidbits.com](http://www.ttidbits.com)  
Click on the ParshaPix & explanations link



## WORD OF THE MONTH



We bench Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av this Shabbat (M&M).

It is on YOM R'VI'I, WED July 22.

One day, because Tamuz has 29 days. R"Ch thru noon of 10th, the month is called Av. 10-30 it is Menachem Av. (1 minhag)

ראש חדש מנחם אב יהיה ביום רביעי הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה:

The molad of Menachem Av is Mon 13h 10m 15p (1:49pm Israel Summer time)

המולד יהיה ביום שני, עשר דקות וחמישה עשר חלקים אחר אחר אחת בצדדים.

In Rambam notation: ב' יט:קצה • **Actual molad: Mon, July 20 - 8:33pm IST**

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	EARLIEST	MATOT - MAS'EI (MEVARCHIM)	HAVDALA	DEVARIM- CHAZON		
				CANDLES	EARLIEST	HAVDALA
<b>7:10</b>	6:18	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	<b>8:26</b>	7:06	6:15	8:21
<b>7:26</b>	6:20	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot et al)	<b>8:27</b>	7:22	6:17	8:23
<b>7:25</b>	6:19	Beit Shemesh / RBS	<b>8:27</b>	7:21	6:16	8:22
<b>7:24</b>	6:18	Gush Etzion	<b>8:26</b>	7:21	6:15	8:21
<b>7:27</b>	6:20	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	<b>8:28</b>	7:23	6:17	8:24
<b>7:25</b>	6:19	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	<b>8:27</b>	7:22	6:16	8:22
<b>7:27</b>	6:20	Netanya	<b>8:29</b>	7:23	6:17	8:24
<b>7:23</b>	6:19	Be'er Sheva	<b>8:26</b>	7:19	6:16	8:22
<b>7:26</b>	6:20	Rehovot	<b>8:28</b>	7:22	6:16	8:23
<b>7:10</b>	6:20	Petach Tikva	<b>8:28</b>	7:06	6:17	8:23
<b>7:26</b>	6:19	Ginot Shomron	<b>8:27</b>	7:22	6:16	8:23
<b>7:18</b>	6:21	Haifa / Zichron	<b>8:30</b>	7:14	6:18	8:24
<b>7:25</b>	6:18	Gush Shiloh	<b>8:26</b>	7:21	6:15	8:22
<b>7:25</b>	6:20	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	<b>8:28</b>	7:21	6:17	8:24
<b>7:25</b>	6:18	Giv'at Ze'ev	<b>8:26</b>	7:21	6:15	8:22
<b>7:24</b>	6:18	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	<b>8:26</b>	7:21	6:15	8:21
<b>7:27</b>	6:20	Ashkelon	<b>8:28</b>	7:23	6:17	8:23
<b>7:26</b>	6:19	Yad Binyamin	<b>8:27</b>	7:22	6:17	8:23
<b>7:16</b>	6:19	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	<b>8:28</b>	7:12	6:16	8:23
<b>7:25</b>	6:18	Golan	<b>8:27</b>	7:21	6:15	8:22

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 9:02pm • next week - 8:58pm



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# OTHER Z'MANIM



## JERUSALEM

RANGES ARE 11 DAYS, WED-SHABBAT  
23 TAMUZ - 4 AV (JULY 15-25)

Earliest Talit & T'filin 4:47-4:54am  
Sunrise 5:44½-5:50½am  
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma 9:14-9:17am  
(Magen Avraham: 8:32-8:36am)  
Sof Z'man T'fila 10:24-10:27am  
(Magen Avraham: 9:48-9:52am)  
Chatzot (Halachic noon) 12:45-12:45½pm  
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) 1:21-1:21pm  
Plag Mincha 6:18-6:14pm  
Sunset (counting elevation) 7:51-7:45½pm  
(based on sea level: 7:45½-7:40½pm)

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## WEEKLY INSPIRATION

It is impossible to identify the particular sanctity of the Land of Israel, to explain her cherished nature in a rational, human way. It derives from the Divine spirit that rests on the entire nation, on the sanctified nature of the Jewish collective soul.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt"l, Orot, p.9

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# MATOT-MAS'EI



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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

(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 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]. A girl (12-12½ yrs. old - officially called a NAARA) who makes a vow can have her vows nullified by her father (only

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## STATS

	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
<b>Mitzvot</b>	2	6	8
positive	1	2	3
prohibitions	1	4	5

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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 can be nullified by him.)

---

## MITZVAWATCH

---

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 this mitzva, 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 considered Torah law, although there is no clear 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,



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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 probable involvement is due to the fact that the war was NOT for the purpose of conquest of territory; had it been, Levi would not be directly involved. If so, Menashe and

Efrayim probably fought as the tribe of Yosef in this war against Midyan.

## 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. 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.

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 turned over to Elazar HaKohen. Detailed itemization takes up many more p'sukim.



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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 "spies" 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"

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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 property. 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 in the Torah 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.

---

## TRAVEL LOG

---

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

From (0) Ra-m'ses to (1) Sukkot to (2) Eitam to (3) Pi HaCherot to (4) Mara to (5) Eilim to (6) Yam Suf to (7) Midbar Sin to (8) Dafka to (9) Alush to (10) R'fidim to (11) Midbar Sinai to (12) Kivrot HaTaava to (13) Chatzeirot to (14) Ritma to (15) Rimon Peretz to (16) Livna to (17) Risa to (18) K'heilata to (19) Har Shefer to (20) Charada to (21) Mak'heilot to (22) Tachat to (23) Terach to (24) Mitka to (25) Chashmona to (26) Moseirot to (27) Bnei Yaakan to (28) Chor HaGidgad to (29)

Yotvata to (30) Avrona to (31) Etzion Gever to (32) Midbar Tzin (a.k.a. Kadesh) to (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 - this year, the day following Rosh Chodesh.

[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...

to (34) Tzalmona to (35) Punon to (36) Ovot to (37) I'yei HaAvarim to (38) Divon Gad to (39) Almon Divlataima to (40) Harei HaAvarim to (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

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

G'matriya of RA-M'SES = 430, the number of years from the original prophecy to Avraham Avinu in the BRIT BEIN HAB'TARIM until the EXODUS (as in Sh'mot 12:40-41).

The first stop out of Raamses 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 our mother Sarah, who was asked by Avraham to knead and bake cakes for the angels/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.

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## **CHAMISHI 5TH ALIYA**

**22 P'SUKIM - 33:50-34:15**

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

(Perhaps - no, no perhaps - it’s a definite!) Do you believe that G-d created the world?

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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 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.

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**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. Kislon.

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 (even though the Torah's T'chum is much greater).

👉 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

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 On her second yahrzeit  
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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

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[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.

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## MITZVAWATCH

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Mitzvot 412 and 413 basically command us to follow other mitzvot in the Torah

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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 Sanhedrins 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.

[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 case. 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."

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## HAFTARA 28 P'SUKIM

### YIRMIYAHU 2:4-28, 3:4

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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. ■

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

IN THE PARSHA

## Honesty and Integrity

Every so often, I come across a sentence of another person's writing which expresses one of my own thoughts in a language far superior to my own. Over the years, I have contemplated and written about the concepts of "honesty" and "integrity" and the difference between the two.

But never was I able to articulate their precise definitions and the difference between them as cogently and as concisely as in the following passage from Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Integrity includes but goes beyond honesty. Honesty is...*conforming our words to reality*. Integrity is *conforming reality to our words*—in other words, keeping promises and fulfilling expectations. This requires an integrated character, a oneness, primarily with self but also with life."

Honesty for Covey, and I for one, heartily agree, is the virtue describing reality exactly as it is, of telling the truth. In this day and age, when there is so much confusion as to whether or not there even *is* such a thing as truth, it is refreshing to see the place of honesty restored to the list of im-

portant human virtues.

For Judaism, truth, *emet*, is more than just a virtue. It is one of the three fundamental principles, along with justice and peace, upon which the world stands. In the words of the Talmud, "The signature of the Holy one, blessed be He, is truth."

So rare is the man of truth that legend has the aged Diogenes searching for him with lanterns. But as rare as the trait of honesty is, the trait of integrity is even more difficult to find.

Integrity is the ability not only to say what you mean, but to mean what you say. Following Covey, it is the quality of conforming one's actions to one's words, of reliably following through on one's commitment. It is more than the ability to make things happen. It is making your own promises happen!

This week's double Torah portion, *Matot-Masei*, opens with a lengthy and intricate discussion of the concepts of "the vow." Biblical teachings insist that the words we express must be taken very seriously; indeed, we are taught that our words are sacred. Once a person, man or woman, young or old, simpleton or scholar, utters a commitment, he or she is duty-bound to honor that commitment. "*Motza sefatecha tishmor ve'asita*. That which your lips ex-

press must be honored and performed.”

As helpful as is Covey’s succinct definition of “integrity,” it is also deceptively simple. There is so much more that we need to know about integrity. And about “honesty,” for that matter.

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## Sometimes, we overextend ourselves and make promises that we cannot possibly keep

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For one thing, honesty and integrity are not just descriptors of individual persons’ characters. Rather, they are social values, which ideally should define the essence of human communities and entire societies. From a Jewish perspective, “honesty” and “integrity” cannot be restricted to individual paragons of virtue, saints and holy men, but must become universal cultural norms.

This is why the laws of vows, unlike all the other laws of the Torah, are explicitly given to *rashei hamatot*, the chieftains of the tribes. It is to emphasize that the sanctity of speech is not just a goal for a few spiritually-gifted individuals. It must be enunciated as one of the essential mores of the entire tribe.

The Talmud relates the story of an immortal community, a legendary village that knew not death. This was because no one there ever lied. This idyllic existence came to an abrupt end, however, when a young person, eager to protect the privacy of his parent, told an inquiring visitor that his parent was not home. A harmless and well-intentioned remark, common to

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us all. A white lie, perhaps, but a lie nevertheless, and one which ruined forever the eternal life of that fabled village.

Yet another lesson about keeping our word is taught in the opening verses of this week's Torah portion (Bamidbar 30:1-17). Sometimes, we overextend ourselves and make promises that we cannot possibly keep. In moments of extreme urgency, or sublime inspiration, we are wont to express commitments that are beyond our capacity to fulfill.

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**We ask that the Almighty release us from these impossible and often no longer relevant commitments, and begin with Divine help a new slate**

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Can a vow thus expressed be annulled? The Torah, ever practical, answers “yes!” and describes some of the procedures designed to release a person from his or her vows. The Talmud, in an entire tractate devoted to this topic, specifies the circumstances and conditions under which such a release can be obtained.

Most well-known among the “ceremonies” releasing us from our personal vows and promises is the *Kol Nidrei* prayer which ushers in our most hallowed day, Yom Kippur. Not really a prayer in the ordinary sense, *Kol Nidrei* is a statement in which we declare our past vows null and void. This custom is experienced by many as

strange and as an offense to the value of integrity. But I personally have always found that it reinforces the role of integrity in my life and in the lives of all of us who live in the “real world.”

During the entire year, you and I make many commitments and resolutions. With the noblest of motives, we promise things to our loved ones, verbally establish objectives to improve the world around us, or simply vow to lose weight, stop smoking, or start exercising.

As the year wears on, situations change, priorities shift, and we ourselves become different. At least one time each year, on Yom Kippur, we realize how unrealistic we were and that we erred in our assessment of what we could accomplish. And so, we ask that the Almighty release us from these impossible and often no longer relevant commitments, and begin with Divine help a new slate, hoping that the next time we make a promise, it will be one that we will be able to keep.

Judaism teaches us the primary importance of keeping our word. But it does not lose sight of our human frailties and limitations and recognizes that often it is not moral failure that explains our lack of integrity, but simple human weakness, hopefully rare and surely forgiven by God.

Integrity is a cherished value for the society at large. The acknowledgement of human limitations in maintaining integrity must be accepted. These are two important and timely lessons from this week's Torah portion. ■

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## My Teacher: In Memoriam

There are moments when Divine Providence touches you on the shoulder and makes you see a certain truth with blazing clarity. Let me share with you such a moment that happened to me this morning.

For technical reasons, I have to write my essays for the *Covenant & Conversation* series many weeks in advance. I had come to Matot-Masei, and had decided to write about the cities of refuge, but I wasn't sure which aspect to focus on. Suddenly, overwhelmingly, I felt an instinct to write about one very unusual law.

The cities were set aside for the protection of those found guilty of manslaughter, that is, of killing someone accidentally without malice aforethought. Because of the then universal practise of blood vengeance, that protection was necessary.

The purpose of the cities was to make sure that someone judged innocent of murder was safe from being killed. As Shoftim puts it: "And he shall flee to one of these cities and live" (Deut. 19:5). This apparently simple concept was given a remarkable interpretation by the Talmud:

The Sages taught: *If a student was exiled, his teacher was exiled with him*, as it is said: "(And he shall flee to one of these cities) and live," meaning do the things for him that will enable him to live.<sup>1</sup>

Maimonides explains: "Life without study is like death for scholars who seek wisdom."<sup>2</sup> In Judaism, study is life itself, and study without a teacher is impossible. *Teachers give us more than knowledge; they give us life*. Note that this is not an aggadic passage, a moralising text not meant to be taken literally. It is a halachic ruling, codified as such. Teachers are like parents only more so. Parents give us physical life; teachers give us spiritual life.<sup>3</sup> Physical life is mortal, transient. Spiritual life is eternal. Therefore, we owe our teacher life in its deepest sense.

I had just written the text above when the phone went. It was my brother in

1 *Makkot 10a.*

2 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Rotze'ach, 7:1.*

3 *Mishneh Torah, Ralmud Torah 5:1.*

Jerusalem to tell me that my teacher, Rabbi Nachum Eliezer Rabinovitch, *zecher tzaddik livracha*, had just died. Only rarely in this “world of concealment”<sup>4</sup> do we feel the touch of Providence, but this was unmistakable. For me, and I suspect everyone who had the privilege of studying with him, he was the greatest teacher of our generation.

He was a master posek, as those who have read his Responsa will know. He knew the entire rabbinic literature, Bavli, Yerushalmi, Midrash Halachah and Aggadah, biblical commentaries, philosophy, codes and responsa. His creativity, halachic and aggadic, knew no bounds. He was a master of almost every secular discipline, especially the sciences. He had been a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Toronto and had written a book about probability and statistical inference. His supreme passion was the Rambam in all his guises, especially the Mishneh Torah, to which he devoted some fifty years of his life to writing the multi-volume commentary *Yad Peshutah*.

By the time I came to study with the Rav I had already studied at Cambridge and Oxford with some of the greatest intellects of the time, among them Sir Roger Scruton and Sir Bernard Williams. Rabbi Rabinovitch was more demanding than either of them. Only when I became his student did I learn the true meaning of intellectual rigour, *shetihyu amelim ba-Torah*, “laboring” in the Torah. To survive his scrutiny, you had to do three things:

---

4 The phrase comes from the Zohar.





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first to read everything ever written on the subject; second to analyze it with complete lucidity, searching for *omek ha-peshat*, the deep plain sense; and third, to think independently and critically. I remember writing an essay for him in which I quoted one of the most famous of nineteenth century Talmudic scholars. He read what I had written, then turned to me and said, "But you didn't criticize what he wrote!" He thought that in this case the scholar had not given the correct interpretation, and I should have seen and said this. For him, intellectual honesty and independence of mind were inseparable from the quest for truth which is what Talmud Torah must always be.

---

## He explained to me that the fastest and best way of learning anything is to teach it

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Some of the most important lessons I learned from him were almost accidental. I remember on one occasion his car was being serviced, so I had the privilege of driving him home. It was a hot day, and at a busy junction in Hampstead, my car broke down and would not start up again. Unfazed, Rabbi Rabinovich said to me, "Let's use the time to learn Torah." He then proceeded to give me a shiur on Rambam's *Hilchot Shemittah ve-Yovel*. Around us, cars were hooting their horns. We were holding up traffic and a considerable queue had developed. The Rav remained completely calm, came to the end of his exposition,

turned to me and said, "Now turn the key." I turned the key, the car started, and we went on our way.

On another occasion, I told him about my problem getting to sleep. I had become an insomniac. He said to me, enthusiastically, "Could you teach me how to do that?" He quoted the Rambam who ruled that one acquires most of one's wisdom at night, based on the Talmudic statement that the night was created for study.<sup>5</sup>

He and the late Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l were the *Gedolei ha-Dor*, the leaders and role models of their generation. They were very different, one scientific, the other artistic, one direct, the other oblique, one bold, the other cautious, but they were giants, intellectually, morally and spiritually. Happy the generation that is blessed by people like these.

It is hard to convey what having a teacher like Rabbi Rabinovitch meant. He knew, for example, that I had to learn fast because I was coming to the rabbinate late, after a career in academic philosophy. What he did was very bold. He explained to me that the fastest and best way of learning anything is to teach it. So the day I entered Jews' College as a student, I also entered it as a lecturer. How many people would have had that idea and taken that risk?

He also understood how lonely it could be if you lived by the principles of intellectual integrity and independence. Early on,

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5 *Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:13; based on (a slightly different text of) Eruvin 65a.*

he said to me, “Don’t be surprised if only six people in the world understand what you are trying to do.” When I asked him whether I should accept the position of Chief Rabbi, he said, in his laconic way: “Why not? After all, maybe you can teach some Torah.”

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## Power forces us. Wealth induces us. But teachers develop us

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He himself, in his early thirties, had been offered the job of Chief Rabbi of Johannesburg, but turned it down on the grounds that he refused to live in an apartheid state. He told me how he was visited in Toronto by Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz who had held the Johannesburg position until then. Looking at the Rav’s modest home and thinking of his more palatial accommodation in South Africa, he said, “You turned down that for this?” But the Rav would never compromise his integrity and never cared for material things.

In the end, he found great happiness in the 37 years he served as head of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe in Maale Adumim. The yeshiva had been founded six years earlier by Rabbi Haim Sabato and Yitzhak Sheilat. It is said that when Rabbi Sabato heard the Rav give a shiur, he immediately asked him to become the Rosh Yeshiva. It is hard to describe the pride with which he spoke to me about his students, all of whom served in the Israel Defense Force. Likewise it is hard to describe the awe in

which his students held him. Not everyone in the Jewish world knew his greatness, but everyone who studied with him did.

**I believe that Judaism made an extraordinarily wise decision when it made teachers its heroes and lifelong education its passion. We don’t worship power or wealth. These things have their place, but not at the top of the hierarchy of values. Power forces us. Wealth induces us. But teachers develop us. They open us to the wisdom of the ages, helping us to see the world more clearly, think more deeply, argue more cogently and decide more wisely.**

“Let the reverence for your teacher be like the reverence for Heaven,” said the Sages.<sup>6</sup> In other words: if you want to come close to Heaven, don’t search for kings, priests, saints or even prophets. They may be great, but a fine teacher helps *you* to become great, and that is a different thing altogether. I was blessed by having one of the greatest teachers of our generation. The best advice I can give anyone is: find a teacher, then make yourself a disciple.

Shabbat Shalom ■

*Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z”l.*

*These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks are part of the ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah reading. Read more on [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).*

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6 Avot 4:12.



## PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
Faculty, OU Israel Center

## THE PROPHETS

This haftarah, the second of the three pre-Tish'a B'Av readings (tilta d'pur'anuta"), begins in the middle of the second perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu. This should not surprise us since we read the first three verses of this perek as the closing psukim of last week's haftarah. As was mentioned in the last d'var Torah, Chazal wished to close the prophecies of destruction that Yirmiyahu told the people with a message of hope, of comfort and of love. And, indeed, those opening/closing psukim express exactly that.

But, were we to study Sefer Yirmiyahu as it was written, we would realize that these verses were actually part of the message delivered in the second perek and really did not connect to the first chapter. Moreover, they were not meant to be a message of comfort and warmth at all! The navi Yirmiyahu begins the second chapter describing the once positive and warm relationship that Hashem had with the nation simply to underscore the difference between then and the relationship that existed in his time, the final years of Bayit Rishon (the First Temple). And it is this opening that sets the basis for G-d's condemnation of Israel for having forgotten those early years and, instead, having abandoned Hashem Who had done so much for

them throughout time.

And the navi points out that Israel's abandonment of Hashem was a doubly perfidious act for they did not leave Him due to the rejection of a divine being but because they chose other powers, others' "gods", to worship, "gods" who, as the prophet reminds them, have no power and no abilities at all. As Yirmiyahu declares: "They say to the wood: 'You are my father' and to the stone: 'You bore us' ". The nation had shown a preference for nothing in place of an allegiance to Everything!

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**It is a love for G-d that fascinates and that attracts people - for G-d pulls them closer to Him**

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In furthering this very idea, HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik comments on G-d's words from this haftarah, "Oti Azvu," saying of His people: "They have abandoned Me, the spring of living waters, to dig for themselves cisterns - broken cisterns - that do not hold water." The Rav, quoting from Sefer Tehillim (42:3) "Tzamah nafshi leilokim" "My soul thirsts for G-d, the living G-d," explains how man is fascinated by G-d. As one thirsts for water

so does man thirst for Hashem. For that reason G-d, in this haftarah is portrayed as a wellspring - water keeps on flowing and man remains thirsty. So too, does man thirst for a connection to the Immortal. It is a love for G-d that fascinates and that attracts people - for G-d pulls them closer to Him. The relationship between man and G-d, said Rav Soloveitchik, is a magnetic one.

In light of this approach, the abandonment of G-d by the Jews of Yimiyahu's time would seem to be an act of even more severity: to actively pull away from the irresistible pull that attracts one to Hashem! However, I feel that would be an unfair conclusion.

In truth, there certainly is a thirst that man has for the divine. But that same pull, a pull that would move a finite being to search for the infinite, can also bring one to be attracted to false gods, false powers, false divinities. The seriousness of the "crime" of our people in that time was their search for He Who was right in front of them, because they simply ignored the history of G-d's kindnesses.

And that is precisely why the perek begins with recalling the era of "betrothal" between Hashem and Israel, reminding the nation of how they placed their trust in G-d after He took them out of Egypt but even before they had years of history from which to learn of Hashem and His love for them. I have often said that if one does not believe in G-d, let him/her study Jewish history.

If we but look to our past we would gain confidence in our future. ■

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# The Significance of Listing All the Journeys

אלה מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים  
לצבאתם ביד משה ואהרן. (במדבר לג:א)

These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael who left the land of Egypt in their legions, under the charge of Moshe and Aharon. (*Bamidbar* 33:1).

The word “*mas’ei*”, from which Parshat *Mas’ei* draws its name, means “journeys”. The Torah lists 42 stations where Am Yisrael encamped after leaving Egypt, on their way to Eretz Yisrael. Why is it necessary to specify all these locations? We are not even aware of what transpired in each location. The Torah could have easily just listed the first and last places? What is the reason that the Torah articulates these 42 locations?

We will explore several approaches:

## **Rashi – Hashem’s Kindness**

Rashi posits that the purpose of explicitly listing each of the 42 encampments is

to highlight Hashem’s kindness and compassion. Even though we were wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years, we were not constantly on the move. During the first year alone there were 14 stops. Following Aharon’s death, which was in the fortieth year, there were eight stops. That leaves twenty stops in 38 years, so they remained at the same location for at least a year or two. Hashem did not make Bnei Yisrael pack up and travel on a daily or monthly basis.

**We must remember our downfalls in order to avoid a recurrence. This message is pertinent today**

## **Ramban – So That We Do Not Discount Miracles**

The Ramban cites the Rambam who explains that sometimes, generations after a miracle occurs, there are those who try to downplay and minimize it. We have seen this in our own generation. There are those who say that in the 1991 Gulf War there were no miracles, even though 39 Scud missiles hit Israel, and not one person was killed directly. In 1967, there were miracles and wonders, but over time,

people try to downplay them. All the travels were listed so that nobody could downplay the miracle of taking two million people through the desert. The Torah lists the locations where Am Yisrael encamped, so it is clear they remained in the desert and survived due to the miraculous provision of the manna and the wells.

### **The Lubavitcher Rebbe – Constant Growth**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe notes that the first *pasuk*, cited above, specifies: “These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael who left the land of Egypt.” The *pasuk* links the journeys to the exodus from Egypt, yet only the stop was reached directly from Egypt.

The life lesson, according to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is that we must never be complacent. Often, we feel good after we accomplish certain goals that we set for ourselves. This leads us to complacency and relief that we have completed our task. The pressure is off; we can relax. It is then that we must establish new goals and challenges. That is what life is about. It is a continuous journey, from one station to the next. After reaching one destination, we must seek a new way to grow and improve.

In this sense, each of the 42 journeys was from *mitzrayim*. This refers not only

to the geographic Mitzrayim – Egypt – but also to *meitzarim* – limitations and constraints. In our journey through life, we must act as though there are no limits to what we can accomplish.

### **Limudei Nisayon – Learn From Past Experience**

In life, we experience ups and downs, and it is important to internalize and learn from all our experiences. At times we are embarrassed by our mistakes. At other times, we are proud of our achievements. Either way, we need to remember our experiences so that we can learn from them and either correct or improve our past actions. Often, we try to forget a bad experience or justify a problematic act. It is not pleasant remembering a past mistake. The Torah reminds us of all the 42 stations to stress that we cannot rewrite history. Many of the locations mentioned were places where Am Yisrael sinned. We must remember our downfalls in order to avoid a recurrence. This message is pertinent today. We must learn lessons from the current pandemic. Both with respect to our health and safety as well as our priorities.

The listing of the journeys teaches us valuable lessons. May we always recognize Hashem’s miracles, and learn lessons from and grow and improve from our experiences. ■

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# Marvelous Movement

Every word of Torah is precious, every phrase teaches us multiple lessons we can implement in our lives. What is the message in the continuous repetition of the words ‘*vayisu*’ - they travelled, and ‘*vayachanu*’ - they encamped?

The Slonimer Rebbe in *Netivot Shalom* offers a powerful insight here that is applicable to each of us. Life is one long journey with multiple stops along the way. Our task as we come to each of these stops is to secure and succeed at each one. We all encounter different scenarios throughout life which force us to go beyond our comfort level. These are the experiences in which we grow and get a glimpse into the depths of our being. It is often in our greatest challenges that when we overcome, we discover multiple levels of self. This represents the ‘*vayisu*’ aspect of our lives.

Often, however, we tend to be so preoccupied that we don’t stop to appreciate what we have gained and how we have personally grown. Therefore, we have an imperative to engage the

‘*vayachanu*’ aspect in which we take time to reflect, to observe, to implement change before moving on.

One must take time to introspect on what has been accomplished, to see areas of improvement before beginning the next day

This yin-yang dynamic – moving forward and holding still —occurs on a daily basis, not only at monumental points in life. Hashem recreates the world each day modeling for us a continuous state of creating and pausing. Every day has daytime hours of work and evening hours of rest. One must take time to introspect on what has been accomplished, to see areas of improvement before beginning the next day. Every week one ought to introspect on *erev* Shabbat to approach Shabbat with a renewed sense of vision and direction thus impacting the week ahead.

It is crucial to note that the *parsha is called Masei*, travels. There is a natural human tendency to just stay put in a state of passivity. The first words to Avraham Avinu, which are directed equally to us, are *Lech Lecha*, a mandate to keep

moving forward. Rav Dessler, in *Michtav MeEliayhu*, teaches that everything we encounter in life, everything we hear, see and experience is meant to teach us a lesson. Life is meant to be a living laboratory for growth and personal development.

Rav Tzadok writes that Hashem created everything in this world with a rounded shape connoting movement and progress. It is man who has created corners and angles which imply stops and standstills. The depth behind this reminds us to continuously be moving in life, never to be completely at rest. As we conclude *Sefer Bamidbar*, we must remember to keep our growth and development in motion, only pausing to crystallize our progress before taking steps forward once again. ■

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## Word is Bond

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt'l, beloved Rosh Yeshiva of Torah VoDaas and one of the *Gedolei haDor*, was respected for his wisdom, sensitivity and *yashrus*, unwavering commitment to honesty and truth. When he was 90 years old, during his last visit to Eretz Yisrael, relatives were surprised to see the Rav taking off his tefillin at the end of davening and then putting on tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam (today worn mostly by Chasidim and Kabbalists in addition to the 'standard' tefillin of Rashi).

R' Yaakov's family members knew that it had never been his custom to wear Rabbeinu Tam tefillin, and wondered aloud why the Rosh Yeshiva was doing so now. "You see," he said, "about fifty years ago, Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zy'a, (the founder of Torah VoDaas) encouraged me to add the donning of Rabbeinu Tam tefillin, and to strengthen his case, he mentioned that the Chofetz Chaim had also added this practice in his later years. During the conversation,

I told Reb Shraga Feivel, 'The Chofetz Chaim started donning Rabbeinu Tam tefillin when he turned 90... when I reach 90 I'll put them on.' That was a long time ago... 50 years. But since I gave my word to Reb Shraga Feivel, on my 90th birthday I started putting them on."

### THE POWER OF SPEECH

Our double *sedra* begins with the parsha of *Nedarim*, 'Vows', referring to a voluntary verbal declaration of an intention to make an additional offering to Hashem. This declaration not only expresses a desire to do something 'more' to draw close to Hashem, but creates an obligation to perform that action:

"*Ish ki yidor neder*, if a person makes a vow to Hashem or makes an oath to prohibit himself something that the Torah permits, *lo yachel devar*, he may not violate his word, *k'chol hayotzei m'piv, yaaseh* — and whatever has come out of his mouth he must do" (30:3).

Rashi clarifies: through speech, we have the opportunity to draw down *kedushah*, holiness, to illuminate and sanctify... *Lo yachel devar* — our words shouldn't be *chulin*, mundane... *Lo yechaleil devar* — we must not profane our words, nor treat our words as being 'unholy'.

Through our speech we are empowered to create new realities. We have the ability *le'esor issar*, to make an object or activity which is permitted into one that is forbidden. We can also elevate a mundane act into a holy act.

From the phrase in our pasuk, *k'chol hayotzei m'piv, yaaseh* — “and whatever has come out of his mouth he must do,” Chazal deduced that there is both a *mitzvas aseh*, a ‘positive commandment’ to fulfill what one has said, and a ‘negative commandment’ to not desecrate one’s word.

In *Yiddishkeit* the power of speech is paramount. The legally binding power of *nedarim* is considered so strong that many have the practice of saying *b’li neder*, ‘without a promise’, after stating their intention to do something. This is to ensure that if, in the event of unforeseen circumstances one is not able to fulfill their pledge, one’s words did not constitute a *halachic* vow.

This week marks Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av, and the loss of our Temple and exile is at the forefront of our thoughts and practice. The Sefas Emes, Rebbe Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Gur zy’a points out that the *semichas haparshios*, the juxtaposition of the end of the previous parshah and the beginning of our parshah, is significant. The previous parshah (Pinchas) concludes with a discussion of the *Korbanos*, the sacrificial offerings and libations of the Yamim Tovim, and our parsha begins with the *sugyah*, the topic, of *nedarim*. This is to

show that a Jew’s speech, when reciting the Torah’s verses of the *Korbanos* in prayer has the power to bring *re’ach nicho’ach*, “a pleasing fragrance” to the Creator, even in times when the Temple is destroyed.

Indeed, our words of Torah and tefillah are the highest manifestation of elevated speech: *K’chu imachem devarim, v’shuvu el Hashem...* “take words with you and return to Hashem... *v’neshalma parim sefaseinu...* “and let us render for bulls, the offering of our lips” (Hoshea, 14:3).

May we be *zoche* to honor our commitments and fulfill all that we pronounce, and to believe in the power of our words and prayers. And may Hashem fulfill His promise that the Beis haMikdash be rebuilt, speedily in our days. ■

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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

**P**arshat Maasei recalls for a second time, the passing of *Aharon HaKohen*, and tells us that the date of his passing is *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

*And Aharon died there, during the fortieth year after Bnei Yisrael went forth from the land of Egypt, in the fifth month on the first of the month.*

So, we must ask, why does the Torah specify the exact date of Aharon's passing, a detail that is not elaborated upon for any of the *Avot* or *Imahot*, or for *Moshe Rabbeinu*? Why is the date of Aharon's passing mentioned here in this second account which we read of a few weeks ago in *Parshat Chukat*? Why is the date of his passing specified now, in the midst of describing the journeys of the Jewish people in the wilderness?

## Whose legacy we must work to emulate, which will form the foundation to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz, the Patiker Rav zy'a, suggests that there is an eternal message to be gleaned from the date of Aharon's passing being both revealed during the

verses which describe the extended wanderings of the Jewish People in the wilderness, as well as the actual date of *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

*Aharon*, as we know, represents the ultimate *Ish Shalom*, the great peacemaker and unifier of the Jewish People. The Jewish People will experience an extended reality of wandering that will occur following the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, which of course we commemorate, during the nine days, beginning with *Rosh Chodesh Av*. As we begin these days of reflection of the destruction and absence of the *Beit HaMikdash*, we also recall the life of *Aharon HaKohen*, whose legacy we must work to emulate, which will form the foundation to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash*.

*Yehi Ratson*, that as we recall the date that *Aharon HaKohein* left this world, that indeed we merit to emulate his ways, to love one another, to come together in unity and harmony, and to usher in an era of tranquility with the *Binyan Beit HaMikdash*. ■

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Phil's page



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*A new feature - found only on [ttidbits.com](http://ttidbits.com) (not in the hard copy) - a work-in-progress with new GMs from the sedra each week. New GMs are added to the top of the file, with older ones being further down. Check it out, whether you know what a GM is or not. And check out [ttidbits.com](http://ttidbits.com) in general for many links including articles not in the hard copy.*

## The Nine Days are Coming

IY"H, in next week's Torah Tidbits, there will be a full review of the laws and practices of Shabbat Chazon and Tish'a b'Av.

For now, just a brief review for the approaching Nine Days, since R"Ch is this coming Wednesday, before most TTreaders get to read TT.

The mishna in Taanit states: When Av enters, we diminish our joy. For Ashkenazim, this is marked by

additional restrictions - more than the first part of the Three Weeks. (S'fardim begin some mournful practices either on R"Ch Av or the following day.) The week in which Tish'a b'Av falls will be in next week's Tish'a b'Av review.

The accepted practice is not to eat meat or drink wine from R"Ch Av until after noon on YUD AV - except for Shabbat, when it is permitted.

Officially, doing laundry and wearing freshly laundered clothes are forbidden during the Nine Days. Many people will 'unfreshen' their outerwear (shirts, pants, dresses) before the onset of R"Ch - i.e. before Tuesday evening.

The meat/wine practice should be seen as both a diminishing of joy, as is appropriate for MISHENICHNAS AV... and also as a reminder of the loss of the Beit HaMikdash, which featured meat and wine prominently in its Avoda.

The haircutting, shaving, and then also the laundry issue can be understood as a diminishing of one's attention to his/her concern for personal grooming in light of the focus on Aveilut HaChurban.

Bathing of the pleasurable type, as apposed to for hygiene, is restricted during the Nine Days. Bathing for Shabbat Chazon will IY"H be presented in next week's Review.

Adherence to the 'rules' of the Nine Days is important, but pondering the Churban and its causes are essential.

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Thursday, July 30, 10:30 AM-12:30 PM



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OU Israel Faculty



**11:00-11:30AM** **Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**  
Editor, Torah Tidbits



**11:30AM-12:00PM** **Rabbi Ezra Friedman**  
Director, OU Israel's Gustave and  
Carol Jacobs Center for  
Kashrut Education



**12:00-12:30PM** **Rabbi Sam Shor**  
Program Director, OU Israel Center

- We will be reciting a selection of Kinot
- We recommend following along with us in the Koren/OU Press Mesorat HaRav Kinot

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81331760055>**

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**Wednesday, July 22, Av 1, 9:00AM - 1:00PM**

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מרת חיה סאשא בת ר' יוסף הלל



**9:00 – 9:15** Opening Remarks

**Mrs. Zemira Ozarowski**

**11:15-12:15** Life Overlooking

Har Habayit: Personal Story

**Mrs. Tziporah Piltz**

**9:15 -10:10** Virtual Tour of the Beit

Hamikdash **Mrs. Raphaella Tabak,**

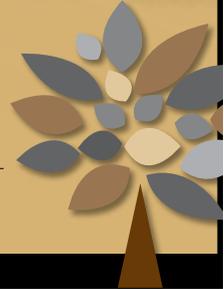
Machon Hamikdash

**12:15 -1:00** Rebuilding our Future

**Rabbi Itiel Goldvicht**

**10:15 – 11:15** Who Needs a Beit Hamikdash

Anyway? **Mrs. Shprintzee Rappaport**



For more information and to register: [www.ouisrael.org/av2020](http://www.ouisrael.org/av2020)

Join us at: <https://zoom.us/j/84885928072>

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**Tues. 10:30am- Begins July 14**

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84083193142>

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# The OU Israel VIRTUAL Center-Online and

**SUN, JULY 19**

**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi David Walk**

Tehillim – Divine Poetry

[https://zoom.](https://zoom.us/j/92253147141)

[us/j/92253147141](https://zoom.us/j/92253147141)

**10:15 AM**

**Rabbi Aharon Adler**

[https://zoom.](https://zoom.us/j/403831319)

[us/j/403831319](https://zoom.us/j/403831319)

**11:30 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak  
Breitowitz**

Mishlei: Wisdom for Life

(L'Ayla). [https://us02web.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82280847618)

[zoom.us/j/82280847618](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82280847618)

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

Men's Gemara Chabura

[https://zoom.](https://zoom.us/j/887981820)

[us/j/887981820](https://zoom.us/j/887981820)

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video-library](http://www.ouisrael.org/video-library)

**MON, JULY 20**

**9:15 AM**

**Mrs. Pearl Borow**

Sefer Daniel (L'Ayla)

<https://zoom.us/j/144986284>

**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**

Chasidut on the Parsha

<https://zoom.us/j/700303855>

**11:45 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Herschler**

Ethics, Family and Society  
in the writings of

Rav Hirsch, Rav Kook

and Rav Soloveitchik

<https://zoom.us/j/81925157325>

**5:00 PM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

Parshat HaShavua

<https://zoom.us/j/195174554>

**7:00 PM**

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Parshat HaShavua

<https://zoom.us/j/888974573>

**9:00 PM**

**Rabbi Sam Shor**

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**TUE, JULY 21**

**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak  
Breitowitz**

Minchat Chinuch. [https://](https://zoom.us/j/89983298537)

[zoom.us/j/89983298537](https://zoom.us/j/89983298537)

**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Avi Herzog**

Sefer HaKuzari

[https://us02web.zoom.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84083193142)

[us/j/84083193142](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84083193142)

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

Men's Gemara Chabura

[https://zoom.](https://zoom.us/j/887981820)

[us/j/887981820](https://zoom.us/j/887981820)

**5:00 PM**

**Mrs. Sylvie Schatz** (L'Ayla)

The 13 Attributes: From  
Moshe to Micha

[https://zoom.](https://zoom.us/j/85177782268)

[us/j/85177782268](https://zoom.us/j/85177782268)

## **Special Event 8:30 PM**

### **Food for Thought:**

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with Torah Insights (L'Ayla)

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# Digital Shiurim



WED, JULY 22

9:00 AM

**Rabbi Shimshon Nadel**

Halacha and Medina

<https://zoom.us/j/6878683646>

10:15 AM

**Rabbi Anthony Manning**

Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa. <https://zoom.us/j/460662359>

<https://zoom.us/j/460662359>

11:30 AM

**Rabbi Alan Kimche**

Great Jewish Thinkers

<https://zoom.us/j/772450422>

7:00 PM

**Rabbi Baruch Taub** Halacha

<https://zoom.us/j/709706986>

8:30 PM

**Rabbi Ezra Friedman**

Practical Kashrut

<https://zoom.us/j/698124792>

## Special Event

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Rosh Chodesh Av Women's Learning Seminar (L'Ayla) The Beit HaMikdash in Our Lives

<https://zoom.us/j/84885928072>

<https://zoom.us/j/84885928072>

THURS, JULY 23

10:15 AM

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Parshat HaShavua

<https://zoom.us/j/615813416>

<https://zoom.us/j/615813416>

2:00 PM

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

Men's Gemara Chabura

<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

8:00 PM

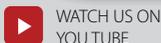
**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

Parshat HaShavua

<https://zoom.us/j/2624570009>

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# Immersion of Disposable Pans and Glass Bottles

Disposable pans are commonly used in many households. There is a dispute whether aluminum pans require immersion in a *mikvah* (Chazon Ovadia Shabbat 2 p.54). According to many authorities, it is accepted that a pan or plate that is designed to be thrown away does not require immersion (*Igrot Moshe* YD 3:23, *Sefer Tevilat Keilim* 1:8). The Torah only requires immersion of utensils that are meant to be used on a long term basis Rav Yitzchak Weiss (*Minchat Yitzchak* 5:32) brings proof from the Rambam (*Keilim* 5:7) that utensils which can only be used once are not considered a “*kli*” (utensil). In addition, even if we consider a disposable pan a utensil, Torah law only requires “*Kli Seuda*” (meal utensils) to be immersed in a *mikvah*. *Kli seuda* are any and all tableware and preparatory equipment that comes into contact with edible food. If the utensil was never meant to serve for long term use, it

would seem not to classify as a *Kli Seuda*.

What is the halacha regarding a disposable pan that is reused? This question is applicable when washing out aluminum pans or disposable aluminum cutlery for repeated use. In *Sefer Hakashrut* (4:23), Rav Yitzchak Fuchs writes that if an aluminum pan is reused, immersion is required before using it a second time. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Ibid*) agrees that immersion is necessary as the utensils are used for eating purposes.

The assumption could be made that glass, being more durable than aluminum pans, may serve for long-term use

This claim can be disputed, as the intention of the owner is to eventually throw away the disposable item. Disposable pans or cutlery are not purchased to be used for long term. Once the pan or cutlery is no longer fit for use, it will be tossed.

Another halachic argument can be made to exempt disposable dishes that are reused from the requirement of immersion. The manufacturer distributes and produces



the product for one-time use. If the Jewish owner decides to reuse the product, it is considered as if the Jew is “recreating” the disposable utensil, repurposing it from a one-time product to a long-term product. Halachically, a utensil made or finished by a Jew is exempt from immersion in a *mikvah*.

This same logic can be applied to reusing glass coffee jars and grape juice bottles. Leftover jars and bottles lend themselves to storage or to serve drinks. The assumption could be made that glass, being more durable than aluminum pans, may serve for long-term use and would, therefore require immersion. In practice, reused glassware is also exempt from immersion as the manufacturer intended them for single use. Even though they may be reused, it remains the decision of the Jewish owner rather than the non-Jewish manufacturer. This seems to be the opinion of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata* p.118). An additional reason to be lenient not to *toveil* reused glassware is although *Tevilat Kelim* is based in Torah law all agree that the obligation to immerse glassware is rabbinic. We have a general rule that when there is a *safek* (doubt) regarding a rabbinic obligation we can be lenient. The dispute amongst authorities

regarding immersing reusable utensils is enough of a doubt to be lenient even if the owner plans to use the glassware for a long period of time (see *Pri Chadash* YD 120:21 and *Shevet Halevi* 4:91).

In conclusion, reused disposable aluminum pans, glass jars, and bottles do not require immersion. ■

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**RABBI AARON** Editor, Torah Tidbits

**GOLDSCHIEDER**

# Navigating Life's Circuitous Route

“Just as the Israelites wandered from place to place before they reached the promised land, so too every person journeys from place to place until he reaches the sublime Land of Life,” said the *Baal Shem Tov*, founder of the Chassidic movement (*Netivot Shalom, Sefer Bemidbar* p.176)

This week's parsha of *Masei* summarizes the Jewish nation's journey from Egypt up to the border of the Land of Israel, listing the places that the Jewish people camped throughout its forty years of wandering in the desert. The forty-two stops along the way represent the multiple hurdles and challenges, disappointments and successes, that each of us encounter in life.

The Chassidic holy masters, however, were not the first to perceive multilayered meaning embedded in the parsha. Almost eight hundred years ago the classic commentator Rabbeinu Bachye (1255-1340) points out that the list of journeys

seems redundant, since all have already been recorded previously in the Torah. Therefore, he proposes multiple levels of understanding:

On a *peshat* level (based upon the Rambam), the list corroborates the earlier account of the Israelites' trek through the desert, preempting future scoffers and non-believers. On a deeper level, the list indicates God's continual love and concern for the Jewish people. This idea is expressed in the midrash, cited by Rashi, which cites a parable of a king who has taken his ailing son far away to obtain medical treatment: at each stop on the way back home, the king points out where the child fell ill, where they slept, etc. Thirdly, and even more profoundly, the itinerary alludes to the future Redemption, whose stages will parallel the Exodus from Egypt. (רבנו בחיי במדבר לג:א)

What is unique and captivating about the Chassidic approach is the notion of personalizing the lessons found in this parsha and applying it to the routes we take in life.

The great Rebbe of Ger, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847-1905) in his classic work, *Sfat Emet* offered three pieces of practical advice:

1. In our lives we need to ascertain what

we need to distance ourselves from and when we need to withdraw. One way to perceive the Israelites travel is that their goal was to distance themselves from Egypt. This type of travel is alluded to in the phrase *'Motzaihem le'maseihem'* (*Bemidbar 33:2*), going forth (from Egypt) on their journeys. This is similar to the language in the verse regarding the Exodus: *"Hamotzi etchem me'erez Mitzrayim"* (*Vayikra 22:33*). Moving from one location to another indicates the need to detach oneself from that setting. Certain distinctions are obvious. Others require a sensitive heart and soul to identify what to pursue and what to leave behind. This notion is summed up in a memorable statement of King David: *"Sur Me'rah Vesah tov"*, "Depart from evil and do that which is good" (*Tehillim 37:27*).

"...שיש מקומות שאין להם קיום, רק על ידי שמתרחק האדם מהם, ככל עניני עולם הזה, שבטולם זה קיומם. ונקראו 'מסעות', שהמסע משם הוא המעלה" (שפת אמת תרל"ב ד"ה המסעות)

2. A second lesson says the *Sfat Emet* relates to the soul, or the inner-life of man. Our lives are filled with challenges. We must learn to persevere; never to despair. The travel log of the Israelites symbolizes life's high and low points. The parsha's continual refrain of *ויסעו ויחזרו* reflects the 'ups and downs', the 'fits and starts' that are all part of life. Although at times the route may feel circuitous and even overbearing, the Jewish people's ancient trek teaches that we must persist and push on.

"ונכתבו כל המסעות, להודיע לעם ה' כי כל עובד ה' לא יפול לבו עליו מכל הנפילות שיש לו, כי כך הוא המדה



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3. The *Sfat Emet* derives his third lesson from the opening midrash on the parsha:

"The greatest men in the world, when afraid, fled from their enemies. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'During all the forty years that you spent in the wilderness I did not make it necessary for you to escape, but I cast your enemies down before you by merely being with you...For this reason the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: "Write down the stages by which Israel journeyed in the wilderness, in order that they shall know what miracles I wrought for them.'" (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 23:1)

---

## The messages he shared each Shabbat with his followers were intended to help them cope with life under impossible conditions in the ghetto

---

This rabbinic passage spotlights the notion that in our own personal journeys, we can find strength when we affirm that Hashem is with us. We discover a path through the painful times knowing that the Almighty is at our side. The *Sfat Emet* concluded this teaching saying that this *parsha* is always read during the period of mourning of *bein hameitzarim*. Especially during trying times like these we need to cling to Hashem. We are reminded during these days that the journey took an

unfortunate and painful detour. We have been scattered throughout the globe, away from our Homeland and our holy center in Jerusalem; and yet Hashem has been our guide and eternal source of strength.

"...ובכל עת שנסגר הדרך בפני איש ישראל הכל הוא רק כדי שיסתכל האדם כלפי מעלה לשעבד את הלב לאביו שבשמים" (שפת אמת תרס"א ד"ה במדרש גדולי עולם)

The *Sfat Emet's* three empowering messages offer us points of reference that can be assimilated into our own thinking and perspective as we engage in our own individual journeys.

However, a challenging point still remains. What is our response when we encounter pain that is so great and overwhelming that the journey seems insurmountable and holding fast to faith appears to be nearly impossible?

One particular Rebbe comes to mind who is arguably most suited to address this question. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira Hy"ד, the Rebbe of the Warsaw ghetto, addresses precisely this issue in *Parshat Masei* (*Aish Kodesh, Parshat Masei*, 1941). The messages he shared each Shabbat with his followers were intended to help them cope with life under impossible conditions in the ghetto and he endeavored to add a spiritual component to the hardships and tragedies that enveloped them constantly. In a word, he tackles the issue of how we cope when our faith is being tested.

The Rebbe focuses on the second verse in the *parsha* that is difficult to translate: The word מוצאייהם, '*motza'eihem*' translates

here, “going forth”, it can also mean occurrences. The Rebbe suggested a third meaning, the word literally means, “came out of” or “that which was gained.” Only after the journey was complete Moshe could look back, ponder, and in hindsight “write” all that he understood regarding its significance and purpose. As they were going through the process its meaning was indecipherable.

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## However, the Rebbe’s reference to the Kaddish also served as a testament to his faith

---

The same is true for our suffering, suggested the Rebbe. Only at a later time will we comprehend what transpired. The Rebbe wrote that he believed that even within the darkness of his day, there is a great light that was gradually being revealed. Although it cannot be detected, it exists. He compared it to the excruciating pain of a woman in labor. The closer she is towards giving birth the more intense the pain.

We can only imagine the scene in which the Rebbe, surrounded by his students in the atrocious setting of the ghetto, passionately shared with them that Moshe had the prophetic intuition to perceive the hidden benefits in the languishing steps that the people endured in the journey. “Moshe will lead us once again in the days of Mashiach”, he said.”And he will teach us once again

why all the torment and pain had to occur.”

The Rebbe concluded these moving words with a desperate hope that the day would come when: “There would be no more preliminary hardships and journeys, but that they would immediately be revealed as the word of God, whose name would be sanctified with the redemption of Israel.” Finally the Rebbe uttered a short excerpt from the mourner’s Kaddish. With these words he gave expression to the destruction and loss surrounding him and his students. However, the Rebbe’s reference to the Kaddish also served as a testament to his faith and a declaration of God’s direct providence and His truth.

The holy Chassidic Masters throughout the generations would often refer to *Masei* as one of the Torah’s loftiest *parshiot* (*Netivot Shalom, Bemidbar* p.176). We can now see why. It contains layers of meaning. When we return each year to the travels of our people we are reminded to make our own life’s journey worthwhile every stop of the way; to make each stop on the journey truly significant and turn even the hardships into the revelation of God’s light. ■

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## DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center  
mpersoff@ou.org

# A Case of [In]Gratitude?

In the Parsha, Hashem commands Moshe with these words: “You shall avenge the people of Israel of the Midianites.” This command was straightforward, coming as it did in the aftermath of the plague that afflicted the people because of their wanton behavior with the Midianites.

The Midrash Tanchuma, however, raises a very pertinent question in the light of this directive to Moshe. Why did he, Moshe, send Pinchas to lead the battle against Midian rather than go to war with them directly? For, after all, Hashem commanded Moshe in the singular tense, as if to say that he (Moshe) personally should take revenge.

As the leader of the people, Moshe must surely have been in a dilemma. He owed the Midianites because when he ran away from Egypt as a young man, the Midianites took him into their fold. How could Moshe now abandon them and not show his appreciation? More so, how could he now wage war on Midian? Was it not Moshe who was spared of initiating three of the ten plagues in Egypt on

account of his gratitude to the elements, namely, the river that saved him and the dust, and the sand, that hid the Egyptian that he killed?

## Hashem did not mention Pinchas by name so as not to undermine Moshe

On the other hand, notes Daniel Halevy Ginzberg, Moshe so loved to heed Hashem’s word; he so longed to enter Eretz Yisrael, only so that he could keep yet more mitzvot. Wasn’t it Moshe who rushed to appoint three cities of refuge in Ever HaYarden long before it was necessary, bearing out the adage, as it were, that if a mitzvah comes to hand, you run to fulfill it?

The Or Hachayim explains that Moshe interpreted the call to battle in the sense

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that he, as the Commander-in-Chief, should set the retribution in motion. Moreover, Moshe probably realized that if he, personally, went out to the war, it could be interpreted as if he was taking revenge on his initiative, rather than by Hashem's command. Lastly, there was always the possibility that because of his debt to Midian, in the height of battle, Moshe would be soft on his enemies.

Moshe sent Pinchas to the front lines because in the latter's merit, the people were saved from Hashem's wrath. Notably, our rabbis tell us, Hashem did not mention Pinchas by name so as not to undermine Moshe.

Paraphrasing the Midrash, Rav Nevenzal points out that Moshe is said to have declared that "not so much is it unbecoming that I should persecute Midian, but rather on halachic grounds I should not trouble them." In the last analysis, this statement appears to underscore a major principle in Jewish life, namely, that the mitzvot of Hashem cannot be fulfilled under circumstances of ingratitude. No wonder that every day we thank Hashem for His kindness and all that He does for us. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

*Menachem Persoff*

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# FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

RAV DANIEL MANN



## Geniza for Parts of a Pasuk

**Question:** I received a bar mitzva invitation containing the words “*Vayehi David maskil*” (in Hebrew). Since this is part of a *pasuk*, does the invitation require *geniza*? (This phenomenon exists in various contexts, so please broaden the picture.)

**Answer:** A crucial source regarding respect for *p’sukim* excerpts is found in the context of *sirtut* (etching lines in a writing surface to help one write straight). The *gemara* (Gittin 6b) tells of one who, in a letter, criticized a situation as comparable to part of a *pasuk* in *Tanach*. The *gemara* indicates that the writer should have done *sirtut* and cites two opinions as to whether the requirement is for a minimum of three or of four words. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 284:2) *paskens* that three words require *sirtut*. *Poskim* posit that the guidelines for what is holy enough to require *sirtut* apply to what must not be disgraced and must be discarded in *geniza* (see *Ginzei Hakodesh* 9:3). So, it might appear that the three words you refer to require *geniza*.

But we will look deeper. First, while the words are reminiscent of and inspired by a *pasuk* (Shmuel I, 18:14), the *navi* uses two words that are missing in the invitation (between David and “*maskil*”). *Tosafot* (Gittin 6b) posits that only when the words are in the order found in the *pasuk* do they require *sirtut*, and certainly then if words are skipped it is not a *pasuk* segment. Even if one put in “...” to indicate that words are missing, still there is an insufficient section of the *pasuk* to be significant. This is logically so even according to those (Shut Harashbash 482) who say that three words is not the determinant, as two words that create a whole idea (e.g., “*Lo tirtzach*”) count while three words that do not form an idea (e.g., “*el Moshe v’el*”) do not. Some also say that when one leaves out a letter from the word, it is as if the word does not exist, although this is less clear when this is the normal way of writing, e.g. if one writes *yud yud* or *heh* instead of Hashem’s Name (see *machloket* cited in *Ginzei Hakodesh* 9:(23)).

There is another reason that the invitation does not require *geniza* based on these words. *Tosafot* (*ibid.*), accepted by the Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.*), rule that when the words of a *pasuk* are borrowed as a crisp way of expressing an idea, it is not considered a *pasuk*. This is even stronger when the context differs greatly from that of the

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



*pasuk*, as this case illustrates. The *pasuk* refers to David Hamelech's great success and/or wisdom; the invitation refers to a regular thirteen-year-old named David.

## There they do want you to think about the message behind the *pasuk*

The exact line between a direct reference to a *pasuk* and using *Tanach*'s language to express other ideas (rabbis do this a lot) is difficult to determine. One phenomenon is using a phrase from the weekly *parasha* along with the day of the week to signify a letter's date. (One could argue that this practice is justified because such letters usually contain real *divrei Torah*, so that they anyway require *geniza*, but that is unlikely to be the reason – see *Ginzei Hakodesh* 9:(25)). It is more problematic for an organization to put on its letterhead

a *pasuk* or a statement of *Chazal* that captures their philosophy/activity because there they do want you to think about the message behind the *pasuk* (similar to the use in *Gittin* 6b above). Sometimes a *pasuk* turns into more of a well-known general idea than a quotation of a *pasuk* (e.g., *mipnei seiva takum* on Israeli buses). The use of quotation marks or citing the statement's location are liable to make borderline cases more problematic.

In your case, there is clearly no requirement for *geniza*. In general, since it is forbidden to write *p'sukim* in places where they are likely to get disgraced (*Shut Harambam* 268), one should be careful before using them in invitations, solicitation letters, and various bulletins, which are likely to be thrown out. This is a counterweight to our healthy desire for Torah to be present in our daily lives – left, right and center. If they are used, one has to develop an approach to how to deal with borderline/low-level “*sheimos*.” ■

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## Protection Against Danger

Last week we saw the psak of Rabbi Moshe Isserlis, the Rema, that one cannot annul a rental agreement on the basis that the renter is sick and endangers the landlord. The Rema claims that we have an obligation to visit the sick, without a difference between the contagious or others. The only exception to this rule is someone who has *ra'atan*, which is a disease described by the Talmud (Ketubot 77b) as being highly dangerous and extremely contagious. The Talmud gives the symptoms as someone whose eyes water, has a runny nose and drools, it is often translated as a severe skin disease such as leprosy.

The Gemara warns not to come close to these sick individuals. “Rabbi Yochanan announced that one should be careful of the flies of those sick with *ra'atan* [since they carry the disease]. Rabbi Zeira would not sit downwind from them, Rabbi Elazar would not enter their tent, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi would not eat eggs from their vicinity”. We see that the Rabbis observed a special social distance from people

afflicted with this contagious disease. However, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi would sit near them and learn Torah, believing that the Torah offered protection against contracting the disease.

For example, epilepsy was considered in the past an infectious disease

The Rema implies that the only disease which is considered contagious and, therefore, exempts one from the usual social interaction, is *ra'atan*. Any other disease is not considered by our Sages to be contagious, and therefore is not dangerous and cannot supersede halachic obligations.

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer, Vol. IX, 17:5,3) explains that the Rema limits contagious diseases to *ra'atan* alone since the definition of a contagious disease changes from time to time. In the past there were various diseases that were considered to be contagious, for example, epilepsy was considered in the past an infectious disease. Of course, today we know that you cannot contract epilepsy from coming into contact with another person. In addition, today doctors are less concerned with contact with most contagious diseases, on the condition that people take the appropriate precautions.

The Tzitz Eliezer explains that the Rema is of the opinion that performance of a mitzvah takes precedence over the potential danger of contracting the disease. The doctor who treats a sick patient is involved in two important mitzvot; he is visiting the sick, and is also healing the ill person. If the doctor takes the correct precautions against contracting the disease, he is permitted to place himself in danger, and is also obligated to do so.

More on this next week ■

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# Separating *Terumot* and *Ma'aserot* in Iraq Today Part I

**Question:** Is it still an obligation to separate *terumot* and *ma'aserot* in Iraq?

**Answer:** The Mishnah (*Yadayim* 4:3) implies that the Prophets instituted the obligation of separating *terumot* and *ma'aserot* (t&m) in Babylon (Iraq), while during the times of the Elders this institution was expanded to Egypt and Amon and Moav (Jordan).

**Rambam (Terumot 1:1) states:**

According to Scriptural Law, *terumot* and *ma'aserot* apply only in *Eretz Yisrael* ... The Prophets ordained that these obligations should be observed... in Babylon as well, because it is adjacent to *Eretz Yisrael* and the majority of the Jewish people journey to and from there. The Sages of the early generations ordained that they also be observed in the land of Egypt and the lands of Amon and Moav, because they are on the peripheries of *Eretz Yisrael*.

This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (*YD* 331:1), including after the Temple's destruction.

However, many halachic sources indicate that this is not the *halacha* today.

“Our Sages outside of the Land of Israel separated *terumah* and *ma'aser* until the majority rescinded it.” The Tosafot (*Avodah Zarah* 59a) note we are lenient based on this Yerushalmi not to separate t&m anywhere outside the Land of Israel. At the end of the Geonic period, Rabbi Tzemach b. Paltoy Gaon (Babylon 872–890) writes that there is no obligation to do so.

The Radbaz II §659, (1476–1573, Egypt) writes that the custom is not to separate t&m in Egypt or in other countries. This ruling is echoed later on by Aruch HaShulchan (53:25) and today by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Ma'adanei Eretz* 1:6 §4).

At least from the times of the Geonim, certainly by the time of the Rishonim, the common practice was not to separate t&m.

Next week we will look at the circumstances that led to this ruling. ■



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## Life's Journeys

“These are the journeys of the Jewish People that left Egypt ....” (Bamidbar 33) The Baal Shem Tov taught that these 42 journeys that the People made from the time they left Egypt until they arrived at the Promised Land correspond to the 42 Spiritual Journeys that we make throughout our lives. We begin from birth, just as the Exodus from Egypt is the Jewish Peoples national birth. The final journey is to the spiritual Promised Land and to the life that awaits us in the World to Come.

Although some of the intervening journeys during the trek through the desert were accompanied by setbacks,

also all the stops on our spiritual journey through life has its ups and downs.

If we choose good over evil, we will live through these stages of life as G-d intends. Just like the Jewish People in the desert, if we make some wrong choices, we will experience them as temporary setbacks.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that in every step of the journey of life, we strive to make the right choices. But we should also recognize that even spiritual setbacks can be transformed into positive growth experiences. As the Kabbalah teaches, Yeridah l'Tzorech Aliyah, Sometimes in life You have to go down spiritually in order to ascend higher and higher. On the long and winding road through life, sometimes we descend and sometimes we ascend, just like the Angels going down and up the ladder in Yaakov's dream. ■

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## CHIZUK & IDUD

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BY RABBI YERACHMIEL RONESS

Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Being called up to the Torah is called receiving an ‘Aliyah’, whereas when one hearkens to the divine commandment to live in the Holy Land, and decides to move “up” to the Holy Land this is referred to as Making Aliyah.

If you were to receive the first Aliya of this week’s parsha you might miss the P’sukkim’s indirect relevance to making Aliyah. In the beginning of Parashat Matot the Torah teaches us the binding character of a person’s own words: “If a man makes a vow (neder) to the Lord or swears an oath (sh’vua) to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth”, Bamidbar 30:3.

If a human oath is related to with such gravity - a divine oath ‘Al Achat Kama V’kama’ – all the more so. In a famous Aggadic passage found in the Gemara in Tractate Ketubot (111a) the Talmud tells us that Hashem made three oaths: Two regarding the Jewish People, and the third regarding the nations of the world. The first oath regarding the Jewish People was “Shelo Ya’alu Ba’choma” that the Jewish People not come-up en-masse -i.e. not make Aliyah forcibly. The second oath was that they not rebel against the nations (-when going up to Eretz Yisrael). The third oath – which was directed towards the nations of the world – was that they not overly burden the People of Israel.

Many - perhaps most - halakhic authorities, categorized this passage as Divrei Aggada, as homiletical ideas from which we cannot derive any binding practical guidance. The Satmar Rebbe, was one of the very few to see this passage as a foundational text upon which he based an entire worldview. The Satmar Chassidim who nevertheless continue to make their homes in Eretz Yisrael, do so as individuals wishing to have no connection to the political entity known as the Modern State of Israel.

In truth, a similar distinction to that touted by the Satmar Chassidim – between the individual and communal Aliyah - was already raised during the Middle Ages. When the question was posed as to the permissibility of making Aliyah, the response put forth by the Rashbash (Rav Shlomo Ben Shimon Duran, was predicated on the distinction between going up as individuals or making Aliyah as a collective. The Rashbash ruled that: “It is incumbent upon each individual to go up and live in the Land of Israel but it is not an all-inclusive commandment for the entire people of Israel living in exile”. (As quoted from an erudite essay by Prof. Aviezer Ravitsky in “Israel and Diaspora in Jewish Law”). This distinction served to restrict the significance of the act of Aliyah; removing any messianic overtones from the individual’s actions.

However, as many have pointed out, even if one were to consider these oaths to have Halakhic significance, nonetheless they are no longer binding today. Were the Rashbash to have witnessed the UN vote approving the establishment of the State of Israel, he would surely agree that the founding of the State can no longer be said to have been an act of rebellion against the collective will of the nations of the world. In addition, if the three oaths are seen as a 'package deal', then every student of history would surely conclude that way before we began returning to Zion, the nations had already abrogated their part of the bargain. One has only to point to the many massacres of Jews down through the ages, culminating with the Holocaust, to realize that they did not keep their oath to not overly burden

the Jewish people. Once they had flouted their side of the deal, we were no longer obligated to keep ours.

Thus, today as we thank G-d for the merit of witnessing Reishit Tzmitat Ge'ulateinu -the beginning of the flourishing of the redemption (-thus emphasizing that the process is only in its first stages), we can embrace the connection between Aliyah and Ge'ulah. We hope to shortly see the Messianic era become a world wide phenomenon enveloping the entire world. In his Principles of Faith, the Rambam codified the necessity to eagerly await the arrival of Mashiach, and: "Even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I will wait for him every day that he shall come".

By coming here you hasten the arrival of Mashiach – and what better place is there to wait for him than in Eretz Yisrael! ■

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BY RABBI SHMUEL GOLDIN  
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## A Tale of Two Fasts

You may not have noticed, but the march towards *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* has already begun...

Our journey started with the fast of *Shiva Assar B'Tamuz*; launching the three mournful weeks preceding *Tisha B'Av*. Seven weeks of consolation will follow; linking *Tisha B'Av* to *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*.

Marking this journey are two extraordinary fast days; *Tisha B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*, powerfully similar, yet vastly different.

*Tisha B'Av* and *Yom Kippur* share fundamental characteristics. They are the only full day fasts in Jewish tradition. They are the only fasts that include the five halachic *inuyim*, afflictions: the prohibitions on eating and drinking, washing, anointing, the wearing of leather shoes and marital relations.

Yet as similar as these days are, they are also poles apart. *Yom Kippur* is a biblical fast day; *Tisha B'Av*, of rabbinic origin. *Tisha B'Av* remains immersed in sorrow while *Yom Kippur* is cautiously,

solemnly optimistic.

By connecting these two fast days, the calendar seems to challenge us: *View these fasts, side by side. What can you learn from the comparison and contrast between Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av?*

The answer may well emerge from the mists of history.

The nation then despairs;  
weeping through the night  
and rising up in rebellion  
against Moshe and Aharon

Intriguingly, the rabbis draw yet another link between *Yom Kippur* and *Tisha B'Av*. Each of these occasions, they say, originates in a seminal sin committed at the dawn of Jewish history.

*Yom Kippur is born as a result of the Chet Ha'egel, the Sin of the Golden Calf...*

In the shadow of Revelation at Mount Sinai, frightened by the specter of abandonment by Moshe, the nation creates and worships a Golden Calf. Moshe, upon descending the mountain, witnesses the nation's backsliding and smashes the divinely given Tablets of Law. God, forgiving the nation at Moshe's

behest, commands Moshe to once again ascend the mountain and receive a second set of Tablets.

The rabbis relate that Moshe descends Mount Sinai with the second tablets on *Yom Kippur*. This biblical fast day, the holiest day of the Jewish year, thus rises out of the forgiveness granted by God for the Sin of the Golden Calf.

*Tisha B'Av emerges as a consequence of the Chet Hameraglim, the Sin of the Spies.*

A short time after their departure from Sinai, the Israelites find themselves at the southern border of the Promised Land of Canaan. Twelve spies are sent to observe the land and its inhabitants preparatory to the nation's entry. Upon their return, ten of the twelve spies deliver an extremely pessimistic report, citing the Israelites' inability to conquer the land through battle. The nation then despairs; weeping through the night and rising up in rebellion against Moshe and Aharon.

The rabbis declare: "That very night was the eve of *Tisha B'Av*. Said the Holy One Blessed Be He to them (the Israelites): 'You have cried for naught-and I shall establish for you- crying across the generations.'"

Rooted in the nation's despair over the report of the spies is the tragedy and sorrow that will visit their descendants, over and over again, throughout the ages, on the mournful day of *Tisha B'Av*.

There are no coincidences on the Jewish calendar. *To the rabbinic mind, concrete philosophical bonds link Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, respectively, to tragic*



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*transgressions deep in our nation's past.* What are these connecting links and how can they help deepen our understanding of two of the most important observances in Jewish tradition?

Based on the Torah text, the Sin of the Golden Calf reflects the Israelites' *desperate desire for distance from the demands of an omnipotent God*

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## We atone for our tendency to pull away from God

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From the outset, the Israelites are unable and/or unwilling to face the new responsibilities thrust upon them at Sinai. They, therefore, respond with immediate retreat:

"And the entire people saw the thunder and lightning and the sound of the shofar and a smoking mountain and they trembled and stood from afar. And they said to Moshe 'You speak with us and we will listen; and let not God speak with us, lest we die.'"

And when, forty days later, Moshe apparently fails to return from the summit of the mountain at the expected time-and the people face the fact that they will now be required to interact with God directly-their desperate desire for *distance from God* becomes an overwhelming fear. The Israelites create a Golden Calf to take Moshe's place, to stand between them and their Creator.

In the aftermath of the sin, after punishing those most directly involved, God moves to educate the nation to the ramifications

of their crime. Threatening to distance himself from the people, as per their expressed desire, He forces them to glimpse the emptiness that would result from such distance. The nation, in response, falls into mourning.

God thus reminds the Israelites of a fundamental truth that courses through all human relationships. While safety can be found in emotional distance, the desire for such distance produces a life of emptiness. Only those willing to risk the pain and heartache that can result from nearness to others will ultimately experience the potential beauty of friendship and love.

We can now understand why the rabbis perceive a fundamental connection between the Sin of the Golden Calf and *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the Jewish year.

*Yom Kippur* is the day when we move to repair the inevitable distance that develops between us and our Creator. We mourn our loss of perspective, explore our missteps and admit our failings. We atone for our tendency to pull away from God through our practice of *comfortable* rather than *confrontational* Judaism. We pledge to move close again; close enough to allow divine law to challenge and enrich our lives.

The message of this holiest of days is clear. *The distance that develops between man and God can be repaired.* Just as God ultimately forgives the Jewish nation at Sinai and invites them, once again, fully into his presence; so, too, through the process of teshuva on *Yom Kippur*, we can

reconnect intimately with our Creator.

At the core of the *Chet Hameraglim* lies a profoundly different failing; yielding a profoundly different Divine response.

*Ultimately, the Spies and the nation are guilty of a loss of faith in themselves.*

Not only do they doubt God's ability to bring them into the land, but, even more importantly, they lose trust in their own capacity for change. They see themselves still as the slaves who toiled under Egyptian rule. They totally negate the transformative impact of all that has occurred during and after the Exodus.

Nothing could be more indicative of this failure than the final, closing words of the spies:

*“We were in our own eyes as insects; and so were we in theirs (the inhabitants of Canaan).”*

When we see ourselves as insects, the Torah testifies, so will we be seen by others....

To this failing, God responds with harsh judgment. The generation of the Exodus is declared irredeemable and will perish in the desert. Only the next generation will enter the land. When man loses sight of his own majestic potential, he simply cannot achieve.

The connection the rabbis draw between the Sin of the Spies and the mournful day of *Tisha B'Av* now becomes clearer.

In stark contrast to the ultimately optimistic, reparative day of *Yom Kippur*,

*Tisha B'Av* remains an occasion rooted in mourning and sorrow. We bemoan our own replication of the sin of the spies; our loss of personal and national vision; our inability to rise above our pettiness and spite; our failure to glimpse the majestic potential in others and in ourselves.

Because of these continued failings, *Tisha B'Av* rings to the Divine decree that was delivered those many years ago:

*When you lose faith in yourselves, you and your generation will fail to achieve your potential. The realization of your dreams will be further delayed.*

The lessons of our calendar journey at this time of the year are now evident...

Before confronting God on *Yom Kippur*, we must first confront ourselves on *Tisha B'Av*.

Only once we recognize how far we have fallen from our ideal selves; only once we move to reclaim a vision of our own majestic potential in our dealings with God and man; can we possibly approach God to repair the distance that has developed between us.

*The road to Yom Kippur must first go through Tisha B'Av.*

One day, when we travel that road successfully, when we finally realize who we can be -as individuals and as a people- we will be fully redeemed. ■

*Rabbi Shmuel Goldin's Dvar Torah is featured each month marking the new Hebrew Month on Shabbat Mevarchim HaChodesh.*



**Rabbi Reuven Tradburks,**  
 Director of  
 RCA Israel Region  
 and Director of Machon  
 Milton, RCA/Shavei Yisrael  
 Ulpan l'Giyur

## Conversion: Digging Deep

The late Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l has an insightful comment on Chapter 2 of Pirkei Avot. Not surprising, as astute comments animate so much of his writing. I would like to use this comment of his in making a comment of my own on my experience with conversion as the Director of the recently reopened RCA Ulpan l'Giyur, Machon Milton.

In a work on Rabbi Lamm's "Thoughts on Pirkei Avot" published by his son in law, Rabbi Mark Dratch, the RCA Executive Vice President, for the Lamm family in 2019, Rabbi Lamm points out a similarity. A similarity that is a difference.

In Pirkei Avot, Chapter 2, Mishna 1, Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi asks the same question that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai will ask of his talmidim later in the perek, Mishna 13.

Rebbe asks, "What is the derech y'shara, the right way that a person shall choose? That which is tiferet, dignified to oneself

and tiferet, dignified in the eyes of others."

Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai asks his 5 students the same question in Mishna 13. "Go and see what is the derech tova, the good path that people cling to." And he likes Rabbi Elazar's answer best: a good heart.

---

**My experience in teaching and interacting with people desiring to convert, is to be with people on a journey for meaning**

---

A similar but different question says Rabbi Lamm. One seeks the **right** way, the other, the **good**. One inquires what a person **shall choose**. The other says "**Go out** and see what **goodness** people **cling** to."

Such, says Rabbi Lamm, is reflective of the difference in their lives. Rebbe lived in a time of plenty, of power, of Torah. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai lived in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple. Destruction, chaos, uncertainty, concern for the future.

In a time of plenty, of success, of peace, the Jew looks to improve, aspire, to live a life of dignity. Rebbe says to pursue the dignified life.

But in a time of destruction, uncertainty and upheaval, man needs to turn inward. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai says to go out, see great people – but not what they say but what they do, wherein lies their goodness.

I would phrase Rabbi Lamm's thought in my own words. We live horizontally. And we live vertically. We live dignified lives in the good times. But in challenging times we turn inward, deeper, dig down into ourselves, discovering the true meaning and stuff of our lives. The good heart.

And that is my experience with conversion. The Rav, Rav Soloveitchik, explained that we are required to pray in moments of crisis. But life itself, he said, is a constant crisis of purpose and of meaning. Hence we need to offer prayer daily.

Conversion in our time is a trigger for politics. But that is not my experience at all. My experience in teaching and interacting with people desiring to convert, is to be with people on a journey for meaning, for deep and rich Jewish living. Confronting the crisis of meaning and purpose in life.

They delight in studying with fabulous teachers. Our RCA Ulpan l'Giyur, which we run in partnership with Shavei Yisrael – has 2 great teachers: Dafna Siegman, a fabulous teacher with years of experience and full, rich lessons and Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider, a warm and sensitive mentor. They both prompt smiles and moments of delight in the students when a truly insightful comment of Rashi or a particular halacha is studied.

Some of our students have a Jewish father

and a non Jewish mother. So, while having grown up as a Jew, they now are coming to embrace mitzvot and learning that is deep, from the heart. Some of our students have no Jewish family ties but have been drawn to the beauty of the life of mitzvot that we enjoy – and they want it too, for themselves. To be with people as they learn and adopt mitzvot with joy and pleasure is truly a humbling and profound privilege.

Rebbe is right. And Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai is right. In the good times, be dignified. And in the existential crises, dig deep into the heart. Dig deep. And live deep.

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REBBETZIN ZEMIRA

OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



## Asher Yatzar

**A**s I sat writing this article, sipping a cup of coffee, a big gulp somehow went down the wrong pipe. What should have happened? It should have continued to go down, interfered with my breathing, and sent me off to the emergency room. What happened instead? My body went into automatic – without me even realizing yet what had happened, my body began coughing up the coffee, instantaneously saving me from serious harm.

Is this story unusual? Not at all, not something I would bother mentioning to anyone the next day or benching gomer on. A regular everyday miraculous occurrence. But this, in essence is what the bracha of Asher Yatzar is all about – *recognizing and appreciating those regular everyday miracles that are constantly occurring in our bodies.*

We recite Asher Yatzar every time we go

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to the bathroom (Gemara Berachot 60b). Additionally, the Rama writes that it is part of our morning blessings. Every morning, after Netilat Yadayim, one must recite Asher Yatzar even if one has not gone to the bathroom, because it's important to start off the day with a recognition of these often-forgotten miracles.

**So we say even if we don't understand the purpose of all of the limbs, Hashem, You know exactly what they're for**

The Mashgiach of Ponevitch used to say that the functioning of all of the body's systems is an even greater miracle than Yetziat Mitzrayim! The more one studies medicine and learns anatomy, the more one can appreciate all of the amazing details found within the human body. Analyzing the digestive system or the reproductive system, or any other aspect of the body should automatically bring us to an overwhelming recognition and love for Hashem.

Let's analyze some of the words of this Tefila -

אשר יצר את האדם החכמה - Hashem created man with wisdom - He provided for every single

detail necessary in order for our bodies to function properly. But you can also learn this phrase a different way – Hashem created man with the innate intuition that keeps us away from things which are harmful to us (eg. – avoiding food that is rotten, blinking when something enters the eye).

Hashem - וברא בו נקבים ונקבים חלולים חלולים Hashem created the body with many openings and with many closed spaces. Rashi (Gemara Berachot) explains that if the mouth or nose (the openings) would get completely stuffed up or if the heart or the intestines (the closed spaces) would open, our bodies would collapse.

It is revealed and known to You - גלוי וידוע - Rav Shaul Ruben (author of Tziyunei Derech) explains that there is so much we don't know about the human body. For example, doctors used to claim that the appendix had no purpose and would routinely remove it during other abdominal surgeries. Only many years later and after much research did they realize what the people were lacking without their appendix. We see from here that when we praise Hashem for the creation of the human body, we have to realize that we don't realize even a fraction of the intricacy and perfection that exists. And so we say even if we don't understand the purpose of all of the limbs, Hashem, You know exactly what they're for.

Before Hashem's "throne of glory". - לפני כסא כבודך One might have thought that it would be inappropriate to mention the *kisei hakavod* in a bracha about

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the bathroom. In general, many think it is irreverent to make a bracha about something as profane as going to the bathroom. The **Gra** maintains that on the contrary, this bracha emphasizes to us the amazing fact that Hashem is involved with every single detail of our lives. Not only is the creation of the body and all of its daily functioning run with Hashgacha Pratit (Divine Providence), but even the removal of waste from the body is overseen in all its details by Hashem.

שׂאם יפתח אחד מהם או יסתם אחד מהם אי אפשר  
להתקיים לעמוד לפניך - If any of these body  
parts were to be ruptured or blocked,  
it would be impossible to survive and  
continue to stand before You.

ברוך אתה ה' רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות  
- Here we recognize not only the intricate details  
found within the bodily systems, but also  
the fact that Hashem created a body which  
in many cases, has the ability to heal itself.  
(My son broke his arm three different  
times this year (!) and miraculously the  
bones are able to reconnect all on their  
own, with just a little help from a cast to

make sure it goes in at the right angle!)

The combination of all the amazing  
functions of the body is really מפליא לעשות  
- unbelievable!

The Chofetz Chaim says that the recitation  
of the bracha of Asher Yatzar is a segula  
for good health. In fact, many stories are  
told to this effect. One such story is of a  
20-year old yeshiva bochur named Yossi  
Hecht who recently underwent a 10-hour  
surgery to remove a spinal tumor and as a  
result was unable to relieve himself on his  
own and needed a catheter. Two hundred  
of his friends took upon themselves to  
stand still while reciting Asher Yatzar and  
to say it with complete concentration.  
Two days later, the catheter was removed  
and he was able to function on his own!  
Given everything that is going on around  
us today, I think it is *k'dai* for us to take  
this on as well, or at least to commit to  
saying Asher Yatzar slowly and properly  
once a day, in this very first Asher Yatzar  
of the morning prayers. In this zchut, may  
we all merit good health for many years  
to come. ■



*Cut and paste into your siddur*

The Mashgiach of Ponevitch used to say that the functioning of all of the body's systems is an even greater miracle than Yetziat Mitzrayim! The more one studies medicine and learns anatomy, the more one can appreciate all of the amazing details found within the human body. Analyzing the digestive system or the reproductive system, or any other aspect of the body should automatically bring us to an overwhelming recognition and love for Hashem.



# THE DAILY BY SIVAN RAHAV-MEIR

## PORTION

# The Side Effects Of Anger

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן אֶל אַנְשֵׁי הַצְּבָא הַבָּיִים לְפָלְחָמָה  
זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה.

And Elazar the priest said to the men of war who went to the battle, “This is the statute of the law which God commanded Moses.” (*Bamidbar 31:21*)

The Torah relates that it was Elazar, the priest, and not Moshe, who taught the people a certain point in Halacha: “And Elazar the priest said to the men of war who went to the battle, ‘This is the statute of the law which God commanded Moshe.’” This seems strange because Moshe, who knew all the laws, was still alive! What happened to him? Our sages direct us back seven p’sukim earlier for the answer. At the end of the battle against Midyan, the Torah says that “Moshe was angry with the officers of the army” and our sages add, “Since he was angry, he forgot the halacha.”

The Talmud is full of statements that anger is more than a bad characteristic. It causes you to lose the spiritual assets you have already gained: “Anger causes a sage to lose his wisdom, a prophet to lose his prophecy, and a person destined for

greatness to forfeit it.” Rambam adds that “One who becomes angry is as though he has worshipped idols.”

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander expands on these statements and explains that losing one’s wisdom is not a punishment for anger but its natural outcome. The Torah cannot dwell in a “vessel” that also contains bad characteristics: The proper vessel for the wisdom of the Torah is a body pure of any negative traits. When such a characteristic is formed, his wisdom disappears immediately, not as a punishment but because of a natural result. A bad characteristic drives wisdom away.

Therefore we should avoid any hint of anger at all costs... we should try not to become confused or lose our peace of mind, and most certainly not become angry because we then lose our spiritual qualities and endanger our material lives, and most importantly we lose our peace of mind. ■

*Sivan Rahav-Meir is an Israeli journalist, currently on shlichut for the World Mizrahi movement to the US. She is the author of #Parasha (Menorah Press) and Reaching to Heaven (Artsroll). She is now offering a new bat mitzvah workshop in Hebrew and English: <https://bm.sivanrahavmeir.com/en/>. To receive her daily insight on the portion of the week, text your name to: 972-58-679-9000*



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 is a significant difference 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 under 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, cows, donkeys represent the even split of the spoils of war from Midyan, 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 <> Pot of gold refers to the

contribution of the officers of the battle in thanks to G-d for the zero casualty rate among them <> Pyramids, the ma`ny arrows, and the outline of Israel, of course, stand for the travels of the people from Exodus to Eretz Yisrael... <> Lulav 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 <> dreidel is for CHASH- MONA - 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 CHANU-KAF-HEI <> Pomegranate with P for Rimon Peretz, another place of encampment <> The quill refers to the Torah's statement that Moshe wrote down the travelog of Bnei Yisrael <> The map above the Pyramids 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 is one). Roads to them must be well-marked to facilitate the escape 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 <> Big rock under the sword is TZUR, the name of one of the Midyanite kings <> The mathematically incorrect statement, that

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a quarter is equal to a fifth. A quarter is REVA, one of the five kings (1/5) killed in the Midyanite battle. <> Another Chatan-Kalla, this times they are with a "x5", representing the daughters of Tz'lolfchad who marry distant cousins to solve the "land going from one tribe to another tribe" problem <> 2K over the U with a little attachment is a partner of the cow with the horns. ALPAYIM (2K=2000) BA'AMA from Bamidbar 35:5 is the phrase with the rarest TROP marks - YERECH BEN YOMO under ALPAYIM and KARNEI PARA over the word BA'AMA <> The M&Ms in the map of Israel (no significance in their being there specifically - it was just a convenient place to put them) are for MATOT-MAS'EI, which, when read together - as they are most often - are affectionately referred to as M&M <> Top-right: The Smiley is wearing a Mexican sombrero, which is covering his eyes - leaving only the smile. 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 known as RISA <> Below Risa is a ballot box with 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 <> below that comes a book-key as in the tribal leader of Dan, BUKI b. YOGLI. (The DAGESH CHAZAK in the KUF allows the word to be broken into BUK and KI or BOOK and KEY) <> Finally, we have a 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 <> One Unexplained



*Gimatriya searches are one of my hobbies. I mainly look for GMs (Gimatriya matches - a.k.a. GT, gimatriya twins). The term refers to two p'sukim (or neat partial p'sukim, and even a word, sometimes) in Torah and Nach whose numeric values are the same. Sometimes the p'sukim that match make a meaningful point together; usually, they don't. Here is one for Matot-Mas'ei. Check ttidbits.com for a file that is a work-in-progress with several GMs so far.*

## MATOT-MAS'EI

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

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־רְאֵשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה':

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

אֵלֶּה מִסְעֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרָיִם לְצִבְעֹתָם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן:

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



**MARGOT  
BOTWINICK**

Director of Jewish Life IDC Herzliya  
Educator, Mizrahi OU-JLIC Herzliya



# What to Do When You're Not Being Valued:

## REUVEN AND GAD'S QUESTIONABLE DECISION

It was our first year in Israel, and we had not yet decided if we would be staying in Israel to make Aliya or returning to America. When our first son, Yoshiyahu Reuven, was born in Haddasah Ein Kerem, can you guess the number one question we were asked? Not whether I had an epidural, or if he was now a sabra, or if he was sleeping through the night yet. The number one question we were asked was, "Does this mean he'll need to serve in the army?"

I was astounded.

Despite every parents' fear of their child serving in the army, Moshe's response to Reuven and Gad's request in this week's parshoit echoed through my ears. במדבר לב:ו... האחיכם יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה "Will your brothers go out to war, while you stay here?" ... Do you not remember the reason we needed to travel 40 years in the first place? Why should your brothers risk their lives while you watch from afar?

Reuven and Gad clarified: Of course we

will come fight. This is our nation and our people. Only once everything is conquered will we return to this land. To this, Moshe agreed.

### The Questions:

Despite their explanation, Moshe's challenge still rings true: How could Reuven and Gad so blatantly go against everything for which they've been striving for, and the messages that Moshe and God have been conveying, for 40 years? *What prompted them to make such a brazen request?*

To answer these issues, we need to delve into the personalities of the tribes of Reuven and Gad, in order to understand the complex emotions of their inner world and how their role within their family affects who they are. As Tamar Weissman proposes in her book, *Tribal Lands*, the limited stories in Sefer Breishit about the twelve tribes are *the keys we need to understand regarding their tribal development throughout tanach.*

## The Duo's Unique Connection:

Taking us back to Sefer Breishit, Reuven and Gad may seem like a random duo. But what is the connection between them? What lies beneath their partnership? Quite simply, they are both Leah's eldest sons. Reuven is born to Leah herself, and Gad is the first born to Leah's maidservant. Gad is both named by and considered Leah's son, her *other* first born. These boys are born with all the pressure of biblical first borns; tasked to be leaders and to take responsibility for their younger brothers, the Bnei Yisrael.

And yet, Reuven notoriously makes mistakes throughout his younger years in trying to live up to his position as the first born. In Yaakov's blessing he says Reuven is פרוץ כמים, unstable as water. He impulsively makes poor decisions. Despite his best efforts, he does not receive his brother or father's respect. Gad, too, doesn't seem to take a leadership role at all. Like all people, Reuven and Gad have a basic human need to feel valued - especially by their family. The feelings Leah has of being unloved is passed down to her eldest children.

## Poor Decisions: But from a Good Place

What makes Reuven unique is that the Torah shows us his mistakes are *always* coming from a *place of good intention, frantically trying to establish his mother's status or his own within the family dynamic*. His trademark symbol on his tribal flag is the *dudaim*, the fertility plant which he finds in order to help his mother feel more loved. His stone on the

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breastplate is ruby red, which Rabbeinu Bechaye teaches, is thought to deliver fertility. Whether he sleeps with Bilha or switches the beds, the midrash makes it clear, Reuven's actions are not intended for a romantic relationship but in order to defend his mother's honor and dignity.

---

## They teach us to stop trying to prove ourselves to those who don't respect us

---

While Reuven and Gad both want to be 'The Firstborns', their respect is never gained. Reuven attempts to save Yosef but ultimately fails and regrets his failure his whole life (37:21-22, 29) . When Egypt demands Binyamin, Reuven is first to offer Yaakov a "solution" for his own sons to be killed if they don't bring him back; a suggestion so ridiculous, Yaakov doesn't even respond (42:37-38).

The Yosef story also shows Reuven's attempt to do what's best as the first born. The precedent in the family was that Yitzchak was chosen and Yishmael was not. Yaakov was chosen and Eisav was not. Assuming only one son would be chosen, who should be the *most* threatened by the favoritism towards Yossef, Rachel's first born? Reuven. Like mother, like son, and as clearly seen in the story of the sale of Yosef, these feelings of never fully being chosen are passed on to Leah's children too. This was a struggle he held with him always. Gad, too, as a first born son, *yet the son of a maidservant*, never fully feels part of the family in the first place.

We fast forward, as we continue throughout chumash and we have leaders from the tribe of Levi like Moshe, Aharon, Miriam, from the tribe of Yehuda, like Calev, Chur and Betzalel and from the tribes of Yosef, like Yehoshua. But Reuven and Gad can't find their place amongst the leadership.

*They want to play their role as first borns but, like their mother, continuously feel they are not good enough. Reuven and Gad loved their brothers, yet they were able to see that despite their efforts, their leadership is not heeded.*

### **Their Solution:**

And so, when these tribes see an opening and a space for themselves on the other side of the Jordan, they jump on it. They realize this is their moment. They may not be able to rise as leaders amongst their brothers but they can be big fish in a small pond somewhere else. Without the other tribes surrounding them, they no longer need to feel overshadowed or look over their shoulders. One could view this decision as tragic and desperate. But I'd like to believe it's healthy and honest. The brothers know their worth, have a healthy acceptance of who they are, and make decisions that are right for them and their families.

Reuven himself did not turn into Korach, one who challenges authority around him so much that his ego leads to his death. His descendants, Datan and Aviram, among others, unfortunately did fall into that trap. But as a whole, Reuven and Gad recognize that their skills are simply not needed and accept their role as part of

the Jewish people with grace. Rather than pushing others down, they humbly seek ways to make a difference where they can. Whether it's Hoshea from Reuven, Eliyahu from Gad (Bereishit Raba 71:8), helping David fight or throughout Tanach when leaders are needed, the tribes want to help and step up when they feel they are needed. But they refuse to put their families in positions of feeling like they don't have their place.

Reuven and Gad decide to stay in *Ever Hayarden* and make an impact there. In the smaller, less central part of Israel, they hope to finally find their voice and an inner peace.

### **The Message:**

It's a struggle for many to be able to internalize their role and value: whether in the workplace, in a social group, at home within their family, their extended family or amongst their community. Many spend their lives trying to prove themselves to others or desperately analyzing why they are not appreciated. There are times we try to make a difference and it simply is not working. Despite our best efforts; our contributions are not appreciated.

First of all, the Reuven and Gad's struggle is a reminder to let those around us whom we love and value know how much they mean to us.

Reuven and Gad teach us when to leave that space that continues to undervalue our contributions. They teach us to stop trying to prove ourselves to those who don't respect us and to find our own place

where we can make a difference and reach our potential.

They remind us of the importance of never viewing our own brothers as our enemies but to embrace our presumed competitors and understand they are our family, also trying to do their best.

Reuven and Gad do not create tension, make excuses or accuse others. They do not put others down in order to build themselves up or cry for attention. These two tribes make a difficult decision to work to become the best versions of themselves without looking over their shoulders. They signal to their brothers they will always be right over the river and there for them whenever needed.

I believe this message is a crucial one - sometimes finding a new environment can help us make changes to our lives for the positive.

And yet, one cannot ignore the tragic note that we're left with. Reuven and Gad finally found their place, but was that really the best ending for them? Down the line, for the grandchildren and great grandchildren, was this decision in their best interests?

How do you know when it's time to change environments and when you would have done better staying where you were and being part of something greater?

It's hard to know of course, and so Reuven and Gad's internal struggle is just as meaningful as it ever was.

Shabbat Shalom ■



## THE NEW OLD PATH

BY RABBI BENJI LEVY  
CEO Of Mosaic United

# Running Away From Who We're Not

We are almost at the finish line. We can see it. We can feel it. Just a tiny bit further. But we are tired. Maybe we should just stop right here and get comfortable instead.

The Jewish people endured 210 years of slavery followed by 40 years of wandering through the desert – all for the greater purpose of finally getting to the Land of Israel which was promised to Avraham. We are now standing with the finish line in sight, about to receive our final instructions for this climactic moment of conquering the land. Out of the blue, the tribes of Reuven and Gad approach Moshe. Strangely and unexpectedly, instead of sharing in the palpable excitement of the moment, they declare that they would like to settle down in the land just *outside* of Israel.

They explain that on a practical level the land outside of Israel is better suited for pasture which would benefit their business as shepherds. While this explanation seems logical and teaches

us the importance of priorities, how is it possible that on an emotional and ideological level, the tribes of Gad and Reuven are not swept up at the nation's excitement at the imminent entry into their homeland after so many years of wandering? This is the land promised to them, and their ancestors, by God, as a land flowing with milk and honey (Sh'mot 3:8) – and they're choosing to not take part? Surely there must be more to this choice than simple economics?

Sometimes our vision is shaped by external forces, pressure to enter the profession that our family expects, for example, or to perform like our siblings

Reuven and Gad both happen to be firstborns. Firstborns were expected to be leaders of their families, and as such, have a privileged status. However, for both Reuven and Gad, adopting the responsibilities of leadership does not come naturally. Gad is the firstborn of Zilpah (Leah's handmaid) but he is not actually given firstborn status since he is not born to one of the Matriarchs. Reuven, in contrast, is given firstborn

status but eventually loses it.

Reuven's leadership strategy is not one of teamwork. He tends to take complete control of certain situations without leaving opportunity for others to join him in the task. The most obvious example of this is his plan to save Yosef from the brothers' plot to kill him (B'reishit 37:18-22). Instead of trying to convince his brothers not to kill Yosef, Reuven suggests that they throw him in a pit to die, planning to return alone later in order to take him out. Perhaps if he had encouraged the brothers not to commit fratricide, he may have succeeded and Yosef would not have been sold into slavery from that pit.

Reuven is a classic example of a leader without followers and without a strategy.

We each have ideas of what we are supposed to do with our lives and who we are supposed to be. Sometimes our vision is shaped by external forces, pressure to enter the profession that our family expects, for example, or to perform like our siblings. And sometimes our ideas are formed by our own internal beliefs and dreams.

What happens, though, when we try to be something that we actually are not?

Reuven happens to be a firstborn, and as such his leadership status is somewhat imposed on him. He does not choose to become a leader, and the skill does not come naturally to him. He therefore continues to inadvertently make bad leadership choices. When he finally

realizes that his approach to leadership is not working, he doesn't try to improve his technique, or to look for his own unique style. Rather, he runs away and invites his fellow rejected firstborn, Gad, to join him in a separate geographical location, where together they can be leaders without followers. Such a decision, however, means that they must separate themselves from everyone else. Reuven simply cannot face the public humiliation of failing to fulfill what he sees as the role of the firstborn.

Eventually, the firstborn rights are transferred to the tribe of Levi. The Torah describes how the tribe of Levi does not receive rights to a specific segment of land but rather is dispersed among all of Israel (49:7). This reflects the nature of a true leader – someone who leads from within, from among the people; someone who inspires others to grow with them. Levites may not be the literal firstborn children, but they naturally embrace the leadership role.

*Parshat Matot* reminds us that at times we may have misconceptions about who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to do. Some traits do not come naturally to us. Some are even opposite to our basic natural inclinations. In those instances, we must attempt to focus on our more natural strengths and talents, rather than to artificially hold onto traits that will hold us back from reaching our true destiny. ■

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**Eitan Phillips**  
Modiin  
Chapter Director

## The Journey and Its Details

The long list of travels that opens Parshat Masei is perplexing in that it is hard to learn anything concrete from this list at all. This question troubled all the Rishonim, each finding a reason for this seemingly superfluous list. However, it is possible that the list itself is coming to teach us one of the fundamental lessons of Bamidbar and in fact the Torah itself. Is Sefer Bamidbar not a book of one big failure? The Jews send spies and are punished severely for listening to their negative report. Then there is the episode of Korach's challenge of Moshe's leadership. Moshe himself is punished for his failure in hitting the rock, and then finally when you thought the Jews could do no more wrong they perform acts of sexual immorality. Is this not a story of failure? Perhaps it is, but perhaps it is also the story of a people that time and again try to hear the voice of God and do what is right but just don't manage to get it right. That is why the journey and all its details are so important, because yes the target is to become a perfect nation in the land of Israel but life is often more complex than the ideal and our failings and the

journey we take are just as important as the final goal. We need to appreciate the here and now and the complex failings we have as human beings in order to achieve greatness. The journey is just as important as the happy ending. ■



**Yacov Segal**  
12th Grade,  
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## The Journey of Life

Parshat Ma'asei begins describing the journey of Am Yisrael as they left Mitzrayim for Eretz Yisrael:

”אלה מסעי בני-ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים  
לצבאותם”

“These are the journeys of the children in Israel, who went forth from the land of Egypt according to their legions.”

The following Psukim then go on to describe the very long journey Am Yisrael went on, listing all the 42 places where they stopped and set up camp, and all the different challenges they faced while traveling between their different stops along the way.

Numerous Meforshim (commentators), provide various reasons as to why it was necessary to mention each of the journeys and places they camped. The Ba'al Shem Tov gives a very nice idea on how this

journey can relate to our lives. He says that from the time of our birth, up until the day we leave this world, each of us will undertake a parallel journey with 42 destinations and stops along the way. Each stop and journey bring different positive aspects, and different challenges that we face.

When we look back at our lives, we can no doubt find different events and journeys that we have been through, making us who we are today. I think it's important to look at our experiences in our past and whatever experiences and journeys we embark on in the future. From there we can think about how we can use our experiences and challenges to help better ourselves and bring us closer to Hashem, something the Ba'al Shem Tov highlighted. As we all look forward to this Shabbat Chazak, may we all be strengthened. חזק חזק ונתחזק

■ שבת שלום

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