

BS"D



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From: [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON **MATOS MASEI** - 5766

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S P E C I A L S - For the week ending 22 July 2006 / 26 Tammuz 5766  
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-- **While the Missiles Fly**

by **Rabbi Mendel Weinbach** <http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2686>

What does a Jew in Israel think as the missiles shot by terrorists in Lebanon keep coming closer to the center of the country?

First of all there is profound sympathy for the families whose loved ones have already been victims of these barbaric attacks upon innocent civilians. There is sincere empathy with those recovering from wounds suffered in those bombings and for all the people whose normal routine has been radically disturbed because of the need to seek shelter.

But as murderous missiles fly in the direction of one Israeli community after another there are other life-saving missiles flying in the direction of Heaven. These are the prayers which are being said in synagogues and yeshivot throughout Israel and the world. Prayers for the success of our brothers in their heroic efforts to defeat the enemies pledged to the destruction of the Jewish State. Prayers for the quick and complete recovery of all the wounded. Prayers for the speedy return home of our kidnapped soldiers.

This is the truly Jewish way of responding to danger. When war comes to your land, says the Torah, you must cry out to G-d so that you will be remembered by Him and be saved from your enemies. (Bamidbar 9:9)

The purpose of crying out to G-d in prayer when danger faces us, explains Rambam, is to demonstrate our belief that everything that happens is determined by G-d and not the result of circumstances or coincidences. Attributing our perils to natural causes alone, he adds, is an exercise in masochism for ignoring the early warning from Heaven to improve our ways and invites further tragedy.

All of us who live in the holy land of Eretz Yisrael and who have lived through several wars have been privileged to see the merciful Hand of G-d save us from our enemies time and again. We feel a powerful debt of gratitude to the soldiers risking and sometimes giving their lives to defend our homes and families. But we are fully aware that their success will also be determined by what is done on the home front. The courage of people resisting the natural desire to flee from their communities is certainly to be admired. Even more important, however, is our response of sending missiles

Heavenward in the form of teshuva resolutions to become better Jews and in our prayers and increased Torah study.

On this last note, we must recall the words of the Talmud commenting on the passage (Tehillim 122:2) "Our feet stood in the gates of Jerusalem." King David, the author of the statement who was an expert on warfare thus explained his military success:

"What made it possible for our feet to stand victorious in war — the Torah, which was studied in Jerusalem!"

As I look upon my hundreds of students in their Beit Midrash, their "gates of Jerusalem," studying without interruption as the missiles fly all over the country, I am comforted. For it is the missiles of Torah study along with prayer and a resolution to become better Jews which they send heavenward, together with the heroic military efforts of the Israel Defense Forces that will surely bring a satisfactory end to this hour of crisis.

We conclude with the traditional prayer said at such times.

"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land — may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, who resides in Jerusalem with his family, is a founder and Dean of Ohr Somayach Institutions. He is the author of the critically acclaimed "Love of the Land," book on Israel and Judaism (Targum/Feldheim) and other works. He is a world-renowned speaker and educator.

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**Parashas Mattos from Kol Dodi On Torah**

Comments, insights and ideas on the weekly sidrah, adapted from the shiurim of Rabbi David Feinstein.

By **Rabbi David Feinstein**

Parashas Mattos

Take the vengeance of the Children of Israel from the Children of Israel from the Midianites (Numbers 31:2)

In this verse, Hashem refers to the vengeance of the Children of Israel. In the next verse, however, when Moshe passes Hashem's instructions on to the Jews, he speaks of HASHEM's vengeance against Midian. Indeed, since Moshe uses a different expression, the Torah does not say that Moshe was quoting Hashem's word; it says only that Moshe spoke to the people, saying, which implies that his words were his own rephrasing of the Divine command. Why did Moshe paraphrase Hashem's words and what right did he have to do so?

Rashi says that whenever someone stands up against Israel, it is as if he stood against Hashem. Thus Moshe was merely restating Hashem's words in a way that would be more compelling to the people. If Moshe had ordered the Jews to extract vengeance for transgressions against them, they might have been willing to forgive any wrongs done them and forgo taking vengeance. However, they had no right to forgive offenses against Hashem. Therefore, once Moshe said that HASHEM's honor was involved, the people had no choice but to follow his orders.

<http://www.anshe.org/parsha.htm#parsha> Parsha Page

by **Fred Toczek** - A Service of Anshe Emes

MATOS 5757

I. Summary

A. Vows to Hashem. A vow (either positive [e.g., to give charity] or negative [e.g., to abstain from a certain act]) was binding. A vow could be annulled in certain limited circumstances.

B. Attack on the Midianites. 12,000 Israelite warriors (i.e., 1,000 from each tribe), accompanied by Pinchas, attacked the Midianites, slaying every male Midianite (including Bilam and the five kings of Midian). The women, children, cattle and other possessions of the Midianites were taken as spoils, although Moshe reprimanded them for keeping the women (who were the cause of the plague on the Jews) alive. The soldiers, unclean by contact with the dead, were required to stay outside the camp for seven days to undergo a purification ceremony. All of their garments and utensils were cleansed per Elazar's instructions. Spoils were divided equally between the warriors on the one hand, and entire congregation on the other hand. The soldiers contributed 1/50th of their spoils to the Levi'im and, thankful that they didn't suffer even one casualty, made an additional free-will offering to the Mishkon.

C. Reuven and Gad's Request. The tribes of Reuven and Gad, who had large herds of cattle, asked permission to settle in the pasture land of Gilad (on the east of the Jordan). Moshe at first disapproved of this plan, fearing that the other tribes might lose heart if these two tribes stayed behind during the conquest of Canaan. However, when Reuven and Gad promised that they intended to join the fight while their families remained in Gilad, Moshe agreed (charging Yehoshua with making sure that they kept their promise, failing which they would forfeit any claim to settle in Gilad).

## II. Divrei Torah

### A. Lil'Mode Ulilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

1. Keeping your word. The Parsha discusses the laws of vows respecting voluntary service to Hashem or one's fellow man. Koheles teaches that "it is better for one not to vow at all than for him to vow and then not fulfill".

This certainly has practical application -- if we make a promise to Hashem or to another person, we must be careful not to go back on our own word. The same is equally true of pledges we make to ourselves.

2. Priorities. When Reuven and Gad assured Moshe that they would join the battle to conquer Canaan, they told him "we'll build sheepfolds for our cattle and cities for our children here, but we will be armed to go before the Children of Israel until we have brought them to their place". While Moshe was pleased with their intention to join the other tribes in battle, he saw disturbing signs in their priorities -- they mentioned the building of homes for their cattle before homes for their children. Thus, Moshe instructed them to "build your cities for your little ones, and [then] folds for your sheep", reminding them that the well-being of one's children must come before the well-being of one's material possessions.

### B. Peninim on the Torah (Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum)

Priorities. As noted above, the material desires of the tribes of Reuven and Gad (i.e., to reside in the pasture land of Gilad) led them to be the first tribes to be exiled. We must be careful not to place our material pursuits above Torah, Torah education and our families.

### C. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

Your good deeds are an everlasting spiritual monument. "And Novach captured Kenas and its surrounding villages and he called it Novach after his name". Rashi cites Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan that this means that Novach's name didn't last. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh said that this teaches us an important principle -- monuments of statutes and buildings named after a person can be modified or destroyed; however, good deeds and spiritual attainments are true everlasting monuments. (It is interesting to note that the souls of the deceased still come before the "Beis Din" to be judged. On what basis can souls be subject to judgment?! They are judged for and by the mitzvos and good deeds done by their descendants -- this is one's true "legacy".)

MASSEI 5757

#### I. Summary

A. The Jews' Itinerary. Moshe recorded the Israelites' itinerary from the Exodus until their arrival at the plains of Moav. In all, the Israelites had

encamped in forty-two separate places during their forty years of wandering.

B. Division of land. After conquering Canaan, the Jews were told to destroy any remnant of idol worship in the country. Ten leaders (one from each of the tribes other than Reuven and Gad), plus Yehoshua and Elazar were appointed to administer the equitable division of the land (which was distributed by lots in proportion to each tribe's size). The Levi'im, who were not given separate land, were granted forty-eight cities on both sides of the Jordan.

C. Cities of Refuge/Laws of Murder. Six of the Levite cities (i.e., three on each side of the Jordan) were designated as Orei Miklot ("Cities of Refuge"), in addition to the other forty-two minor Orei Miklot. The Orei Miklot provided asylum for an accidental murderer, allowing him to escape the vengeance of the victim's relatives. (A murderer could flee to the Orei Miklot, where he'd come before a judicial tribunal. If he was ruled an intentional murderer, he was handed over to the victim's relative and anyone who committed a pre-meditated murder was put to death. If, however, the murder was unplanned and without evil intent, he could stay in the Orei Miklot until the High Priest's death, at which time he was free to go home.) Even a willful murderer couldn't be condemned to death unless two witnesses incriminated him. The willful murderer couldn't commute his death sentence nor could the accidental murderer escape the Orei Miklot by monetary payments.

D. Inheritance Rights. Leaders from the family of Gilad (from the tribe of Menasseh) raised the problem of land inherited by daughters, such as the Zelophchad's daughters -- i.e., if they married into another tribe, the property rights would go to the other tribe, reducing her former tribe's holdings. This was solved by the ruling that during that generation only, an heiress should marry within her own tribe (which was, in fact, the case of Zelophchad's daughters, who married their own cousins).

## II. Divrei Torah

### A. Lil'Mode U'ililamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

1. Road signs. Chazal tell us that signs with directions to the Orei Miklot appeared on every cross-road in settled territories, whereas there were no signs directing one to Jerusalem (i.e., to where Jews traveled for the Festivals). Why? If the accidental murderer on route to the Orei Miklot was forced to ask directions, it would lead to gossip and make him a "marked man". On the other hand, if Jews journeying to Jerusalem asked for directions, it would lead to discussion of the Festivals and perhaps their uniting for the journey. Thus, the Torah encourages public discussion of mitzvos and good deeds, while discouraging potentially harmful gossip.

2. Enumerating the Stages. No detail in the Torah is superfluous. Why then does the Torah list in such detail all of the various stages and stops in the Jews' journey? Now that the Jews were to enter Israel, Hashem reminded them of their difficult journey, and that each stop along the way held its own unique memories and lessons for them to remember. The people had come a long way and shouldn't forget Hashem's assistance and the experiences that helped forge their national development.

### B. Kol Dodi on the Torah (Rabbi David Feinstein)

1. The Road Away From Egypt. The Torah speaks of the "road away" from Egypt, rather than the road "to Israel". This suggests that the Torah views the Exodus as more than just a physical or geographical re-location -- it was (and, by analogy, is for us today) a spiritual process, involving the weaning of the "slave mentality" and the instilling of a commitment to Torah and Hashem.

2. "And these cities [Orei Miklot] shall be a refuge for you". To whom does the Torah refer with the words "for you"? At first glance, it appears to refer to the Beis Din (religious courts) who were responsible for enforcing the Torah; yet, the Beis Din surely wasn't composed of killers. As Pirke Avos teaches, bloodshed leads to exile of the Jews from their land. If the Beis Din didn't take adequate steps to protect accidental killers from the vengeance of their victim's relatives, innocent blood would be spilled, ultimately leading to exile. Additionally, the Beis Din must show everyone the value of human life. Rabbi Nathan Cardozo notes that the "you" refers

to all of us -- we are all responsible for the loss of human life; we must all be careful to prevent accidents; we must all work to ensure that there is not a cheapening of the value of human life.

### C. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

Awareness of others' suffering is a partial consolation. Rambam explains why the High Priest's death brought about the release of an accidental murderer from the Orei Miklot. One who is suffering is often relieved to learn that others have also suffered. The death of the High Priest was felt strongly by the entire Jewish people and was thus a partial consolation to the victim's relatives, reducing their passion for revenge. This is relevant to us when we suffer -- if we open our eyes to other's suffering, we gain a more realistic perspective on our suffering, no longer feel "singled out" and are better able to cope with our plight.

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From: [ravfrand-owner@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand-owner@torah.org) on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [[ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org)] Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2006 2:55 PM To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Mattos-Massai "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Mattos-Massai

Note: This is the last shiur prior to the summer break. The next shiur will be Parshas Shoftim.

### Do We Repeat The Mistake of Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain?

This week's parsha contains the story of the Tribes of Gad and Reuvain, who asked to settle on the Eastern bank of the Jordan in lieu of having a portion on the Western part of Eretz Yisrael. They requested their portion in Trans-Jordan because of the abundance of grazing land there and the abundance of cattle that they possessed.

Moshe Rabbeinu's original interpretation of their request was that they were refusing to participate in the conquest of Eretz Yisrael proper. However, they corrected this interpretation and promised him: "Enclosures for the flock we shall build here for our livestock and cities for our children. We shall arm ourselves swiftly before the Children of Israel, until we will have brought them to their place, and our children will dwell in the fortified cities in face of the inhabitants of the land." [Bamidbar 32:17]

Moshe Rabbeinu responded positively to their proposal clarification, however he instructed: "Build for yourselves cities for your children and enclosures for your cattle, and what has come from your mouth you shall do." [Bamidbar 32:24]

If we pay careful attention to these pasukim [verses] we notice a vast difference between their original proposal and the final instructions Moshe issues to them. The Children of Gad and Reuvain proposed that they would first build enclosures for their flocks and only then would they build cities for their children to live in. Moshe Rabbeinu reversed the order and insisted that they first build the cities for their children and only afterwards worry about building enclosures for the flocks.

Moshe sensed that their first preoccupation was their money and property. The first thing that came out of their mouths was "let us build barns and corrals for our cattle!" The children were an afterthought. He promptly corrected them: "First take care of your children, and then worry about your cattle."

In connection with this incident, the Medrash expounds on the pasuk in Koheles [10:2]: "The heart of the wise man is on his right, the heart of the fool is on his left." The Medrash says that "the heart of the wise man" refers to Moshe and the "heart of the fool" refers to the Children of Gad and Reuvain, who made the primary subordinate and the subordinate primary. They gave priority to their money over their children.

When we consider this incident of Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain, we say to ourselves, "How foolish can people be! How can anybody put the welfare of their cattle before the welfare of their children?"

Unfortunately, this is not something that only occurred thousands of years ago with Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain. It re-occurs throughout the centuries of history and up until today. We make sacrifices for earning our livelihood and sometimes our children get lost in the shuffle.

When we put in hours and hours to build a business or establish a practice or whatever it may be, and our children get the short end of the stick we don't see that we are making the same mistake as did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain. But it is true. It happens all too often.

Chazal say that Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain did not only stay for the seven years of conquest, they stayed for the additional seven years of settling Eretz Yisrael as well. When they came back after 14 years the children who they left as little toddlers were teen-agers, young adults. Chazal say that they found that their children had long hair (which was the custom of the Gentiles) and they were not able to differentiate between the Jewish children and the non-Jewish children. They were shocked. They could not believe it. That is what happens when one put the emphasis on "enclosures for our cattle" before "cities for our children".

Rav Tzadok HaKohen from Lublin notes that there are many pleasures (tayvos) in this world that people continuously seek. The biggest tayvah in the world is the passion for money. Every other tayvah -- for food, for women, for other sensual pleasures -- has a point of satiation. One can only eat so much before he becomes full. Only the tayvah for money has no limit. There is no mechanism in our bodies that says "I have enough money already." As King Solomon wrote: "One who loves money will never be satiated from money." [Koheles 5:9]

Therefore, we should not point the finger at Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain and shout "Idiots! Idiots!" There are times when we all have the problem of putting our children secondary.

The Kesav Sofer focuses in on the last charge of Moshe Rabbeinu to Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain. After reversing the order of their pledge by telling them to build cities for their children and then build enclosures for their cattle, Moshe added "and that which came out of your mouth, you shall do." What is Moshe adding with that last phrase?

The Kesav Sofer answers that Moshe knew whom he was dealing with. People who are so lustful for their money that they can give priority to it over their children would sell their grandmother down the river. Normally, such people cannot be trusted. They promise, but do not deliver. Therefore Moshe had to warn them explicitly -- keep your word!

### The Joy Of Mussar

The Sefas Emes' father died when the Sefas Emes was young. The Chiddushei haRim, who was the Sefas Emes' grandfather raised the young orphan, who was a child prodigy. At a very young age, the Sefas Emes once stayed up almost the whole night learning Torah with a study partner.

The Sefas Emes fell asleep right before morning prayers and came into Shacharis late. The Chiddushei haRim approached his grandson after davening and laced into him. He told him, "If the Rebbe's grandson comes late to davening, what type of impression does that make on the people?" He told him his actions were a Desecration of G-d's Name. He went on and on, cutting the young boy to pieces.

The Sefas Emes kept totally quiet. He did not offer the obvious excuse that he was up all night learning. His chavrusa, who was up with him and knew what had happened, approached his young study partner and asked, "Why didn't you just tell your grandfather you were up all night studying?"

The Sefas Emes answered, "To hear mussar from a great person is a wonderful experience. It was worth it to hear the admonitions and chastisement of the Zeida' even though I am 100 percent innocent."

We can't relate to this idea. When we are right and someone accuses us falsely, we are the first to jump and correct the misimpression. The Sefas Emes wanted to hear the chastisement.

The Sefas Emes brought a proof to the correctness of his position (of listening silently to the unjustified rebuke of a great person) from the Tribes of Gad and Reuvain.

When they came to Moshe Rabbeinu and asked to live in Trans-Jordan, Moshe Rabbeinu jumped at them. He accuses them of being cowards, of refusing to fight, of repeating the sin of the Meraglim, and on and on. Then they clarified their original position. However, in the meantime, they sat there and listened to Moshe Rabbeinu's whole tirade. They patiently took in all the mussar that he was giving them, before they corrected his misimpression of their proposal.

It is worthwhile to hear mussar from a great teacher. It is worthwhile to hear oneself being cut up and put in one's place by a great individual... even if the criticism is not correct. The Sefas Emes explained that it was worth hearing his grandfather's mussar, whether or not he was at fault.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA [DavidATwersky@aol.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@aol.com)  
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD  
[dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org)

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Guidance Suggested

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### **Rabbi Benjamin Yudin Parental Guidance Suggested**

In Parshas Matos, the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe approach Moshe with the following proposal, "The land that Hashem smote before the assembly of Israel, it is a land of livestock, and your servants have livestock. If we found favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a heritage, do not bring us across the Jordan" (Bamidbar 32:4-5).

In responding to Moshe, the two and a half tribes said that they would build pens for their livestock and cities for their children. Rashi (32:16) cites the Medrash Tanchuma that Moshe criticized them for having misplaced priorities, as is evidenced by their placing the livestock before their children - their children should have taken precedence over their business ventures. Yet, our rabbis in the Medrash Hagadol teach a significant positive character trait of the tribe of Reuven. They were concerned that due to their large quantity of cattle, and perhaps insufficient grazing land in the Land of Israel, they would come to trespass and steal pasture lands from others. Rather than violate the biblical prohibition of theft, they preferred to remain on the other side of the Jordan River.

The rabbis further note (Beraishis Rabba 72:2) that this great sensitivity towards theft came from the founder of the tribe of Reuven. In Braishis (30:14) we are taught that Reuven brought dudaim (mandrakes) to his

mother Leah. The Medrash (ibid) notes in praise of Reuven that he was careful not to take any flowers or grain from private property, only from that which was open to the public and ownerless. The medrash continues and cites the passuk (Mishlei 22:6), "Educate the child in his youth, for even in his years of maturity he will not deviate there from." The rabbis attribute the sensitivity of Bnei Reuven to their ancestor Reuven. We thus see that a great deal more than DNA is transmitted to our children and grandchildren. While each person and generation has their own free will, they are given a greater propensity towards either a virtuous or other direction from their parents and indeed ancestors.

While this aspect of the value system of Bnei Reuven was most praiseworthy, a careful analysis of the text, as presented by Sforono, points to another deficiency on the part of Bnei Reuven. Moshe (32:22) sites the condition of their acquiring the land in Ever HaYarden that it will become theirs after they successfully fulfill their mission of helping the other shevatim conquer the Land of Israel. They say no, and insist "We shall cross over to the Land of Canaan, and our land shall be ours immediately, and moreover we will stay not only for the years of conquest but also for the years of settlement as well" (32:34). Moshe, explains Sforono, (32:28) reluctantly acquiesces for the sake of peace and harmony.

Rav Shalom Shapera zt"l notes in his Hamaor SheBaTorah that this exchange between Moshe and Bnei Reuven is a further indication of Bnei Reuven's skewed priorities. Their primary concern for their land and business, even if conducted honestly, is not to supersede their responsibilities to their children. Bnei Reuven transmitted skewed priorities to their children, and it is no coincidence that the two and a half tribes were exiled before the other ten tribes by Sancherev (as found in Divrei Hayamim I:5): "She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tear is on her cheek" (Eicha 1:2). The Nesivos in his commentary on Eicha understands this to mean that the sin of neglect and disdain for Eretz Yisroel which was at the root of the sin of the meraglim on that very first Tisha B'av is still present in our midst. As Bnei Reuven favored another land over the Land of Israel, in order to have an easier more affluent livelihood, too many families reject aliyah and a higher living standard for fear of a significant decline in their standard of living.

Often they are consciously or subconsciously emulating Bnei Reuven by choosing materialism over a better environment for their children. While it is understandable that the post-war (WWI and WWII) immigrants to America, who had nothing, wanted a better and easier life for their children, unfortunately, while they proudly extolled the virtues of this land, they neglected to incorporate a love for our land.

Tisha B'av summons us not only to recollect and mourn the past, but to reevaluate the values we are currently transmitting to our children.

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Psalm 43: Fight Against A Merciless Nation

[The first ever aerial bombardment of civilians took place on January 19, 1915, when German Zeppelins dropped 24 high-explosive bombs over several English towns. Over the next three years, the Germans would drop 5,800 bombs over England, killing 557 people and injuring 1,358.

Rav Kook spent several of the war years in London, when he was unable to return to Eretz Yisrael due to the outbreak of World War I. He temporarily accepted a position as rabbi of the Machzikei HaDas synagogue

of London. His private secretary, Rabbi Shimon Glitzenstein, recorded his experiences with Rav Kook in a booklet called "Mazkir HaRav," including the following description of a sleepless night in a London bomb shelter.]

During the aerial bombardment over London during the First World War, the residents of the city chose various shelters. The Jews who lived near Rav Kook took shelter in the cellar of the Machzikei HaDas synagogue. Against his will, Rav Kook would also go there, but only to alleviate the fears of his family.

The cellar was crowded and suffocating; the children wailed and the mothers complained. Some of the men gathered around Rav Kook and began reciting psalms together. As the noise and explosions increased, they stopped saying psalms. Those musically-inclined began to sing loudly in order to drown out the terrifying sounds from outside. Some people protested, but the Rav encouraged the singers to sing even more loudly.

After several hours of a long, sleepless night in the shelter, most people had fallen asleep. Only Rav Kook remained calmly in his spot, without a sign of fatigue or distress. In his hand he held his small "Tanach" (Bible), and he recited chapter 43 of Psalms, which opens with the request:

"Judge me, God, and fight on my behalf against a merciless nation."

I was accustomed to the Rav's recital of psalms when he was alone in his room. He would say them loudly, with bitter weeping and an outpouring of the soul. This recital of psalms, however, was much different. I did not listen to the words, which were said quietly, but to the unique melody which accompanied them. The tune was full of soul, permeated with a spiritual sweetness.

>From the depth of his soul, Rav Kook poured forth his petitions before his Father in heaven. It was as if, through his voice, the entire Jewish nation was pleading for compassion. "Send Your light and Your truth; they will guide me. They will bring me to Your holy mountain and to Your dwelling place" [Ps. 43:3].

The Rav was completely focused on his recitation. Even when it was announced that the danger had passed, he remained oblivious to the commotion of those gathered there, and continued reciting the chapter to the end.

[from Shivchei HaRe'iyah by Prof. Chaim Lifshitz, pp. 129-130.

Background information from Wikipedia, 'Aerial bombing of cities.')

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Parshat Masei "The Land that shall Fall to You"

Rosh Hayeshiva **Rav Mordechai Greenberg** shlita

The book of Bamidbar concludes the period of exile in the desert. At the end of the forty years, Am Yisrael stands at the entrance to Eretz Yisrael, conquers the east-bank of the Jordan River, delineates the borders of Israel and prepares for war.

This is a commandment for generations, as the Ramban writes: "You shall possess the land and settle in it" – that we shall not leave it in the hands of a nation other than us or allow it to become barren." (Bamidbar 33:53) Despising the precious land brought about the long exile. However, many people still ask: Why did Hashem "lock us" us in this particular tract of land?

The Ramban writes at length on this subject in Parshat Acharei-Mot. Rav Kook encapsulates the idea succinctly in his opening to Orot: "Eretz Yisrael is not something external, an external possession of the nation, merely as a

means to the goal of collective joining and of maintaining its material or even spiritual existence. Eretz Yisrael is connected by a bond of life to the nation."

Every means has a substitute. When Eretz Yisrael is seen as a means towards the security of Am Yisrael, as a national or even cultural center, it is possible in times of distress to find a substitute. However, Eretz Yisrael is a land of life: "I shall walk before Hashem in the lands of the living." (Tehillim 116:9) Chazal teach that this is Eretz Yisrael. The Torah writes several times: "That you may live, and you will come and possess the land." (Devarim 4:1) Since Am Yisrael is characterized by: "You who cling to Hashem, your G-d – you are all alive today," (Devarim 4:4) it is impossible to maintain this kind of life and attachment anywhere but in the land of life. Just as a person does not seek explanations for life itself, there also should be no need to look for reasons to live in Eretz Yisrael, because that is where life really is. Am Yisrael can only find a full life in this place. Chazal teach that the pasuk: "The dove could not find a resting place for the sole of its foot" (Bereishit 8:9), alludes to Knesset Yisrael, which is compared to a dove. For this it says: "Among those nations you will not be tranquil, there will be no rest for the sole of your foot." (Devarim 28:65)

On the other hand, gentiles cannot find peace in Eretz Yisrael. The Ramban writes about Eretz Yisrael: "They are unworthy of you, and you are not appropriate for them."

Eretz Yisrael is not just a place that people live in. It is the "Sanctuary of Hashem," as the Ramban writes. The Torah writes about it: "Cain left the presence of Hashem" (Bereishit 4:16), "Yonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Hashem." (Yonah 1:3) Therefore, the Ramban writes: "It is impossible to comment any more on the subject of the Land, but if you are worthy of understanding the first [mention in the Torah of] "land," you will understand a great and hidden secret, and you will understand what our rabbis meant that the Temple above corresponds to the temple below." His intention is that the pasuk: "In the beginning of G-d's creating the Heavens and the land" (Bereishit 1:1) should be interpreted that Hashem first created the upper and only then did he create the parallel land below.

This is what the Torah means when it states in the Parsha: "This is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance." (Bamidbar 34:2) Chazal ask: "Can the land fall?"

The Sfat Emet explains Chazal's answer, that so long as the Canaanites were in Eretz Yisrael, the necessary vessels to contain the land above were not yet formed. However, when Am Yisrael enter the land, the land above drops and connects with the land below, thus creating compatibility between Heaven and earth.

The war over Eretz Yisrael is not about territories and other national rights. This is a global war over Hashem's Throne in the world. "For the Hand is on the Throne (kes) of G-d" (Shemot 17:16) – Hashem's name is incomplete and His Throne is incomplete. Therefore, the war in the end will focus on Yerushalayim because: "At that time people will call Yerushalayim 'the Throne (kisei) of Hashem'" (Yirmiyahu 3:17) and the nations wish to prevent this. Otherwise, it is impossible to understand this great interest of all the nations in such a small place.

However, we are sure of: "Not one of Your words is turned back to its origin unfulfilled" (Haftarah blessings), and, "May our eyes behold your return to Zion in compassion." (Shemoneh Esrei prayer)

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**Peninim on the Torah**  
**by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum -**  
ParshasMattos/Massei

And Moshe was angry with the commanders of the army. (31:14)

The soldiers returned from the front. Their battle with the Midyanim was successful. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu became angry with the army's leadership for preserving the lives of the Midyanite women who were responsible for luring the Jewish men into sins of immorality and idolatry. These sins brought about a plague that claimed the lives of 24,000 Jews. Moshe's anger spurs a strong comment by Chazal. In the Talmud Pesachim 66b, they say, "Whoever becomes angry, if he is a wise man, his wisdom departs from him." Because Moshe became angry, the laws concerning the guidelines on how to kosher any utensil that absorbed a forbidden food were "forgotten" by him, so that they had to be transmitted instead by Elazar HaKohen. Chazal add that this applies equally to a prophet who loses his prophecy as a result of anger. They go so far as to posit that even if it was decreed by Heaven that he would achieve distinction, such as Eliav, the brother of David HaMelech, he will lose it as a result of anger.

We should add that the anger the Torah attributes to Moshe Rabbeinu is not the loss of control of emotions that is common with us. Moshe had a lapse, and Chazal derive a lesson from this isolated instance. We, however, suffer terribly from this character flaw. It destroys marriages, families and friendships. Relationships of all kinds are not safe from its devastating and far-reaching consequences. It is the result of a lack of self-control. It strikes everyone unless he takes great care to work on himself.

L'shem Shomayim, anger for the sake of Heaven, is not justifiable, claims Horav Chaim Vital, zl, in the name of his rebbe, the Arizal. Anger is never the correct path to choose. Even when one must admonish congregants, the Shulchan Aruch cautions that this be done with an external expression of anger, but, in his heart, the Rav should remain calm and collected.

In his commentary on Chumash, anthologized by Rabbi Sholom Smith, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, notes the tragedy of the lifelong emotional scars inflicted by parents who lose self control and berate their children with derogatory and demeaning names. While these parents certainly do not want to hurt their children, little do they realize the long term effects of their words and the damage is regrettably done.

Rav Pam notes that it is especially during the pressure-filled hours of Erev Shabbos and Erev Yom Tov that the anxiety level is increased and people are more prone to outbursts of anger. He cites an incident when a husband's unthinking, but no-less unpardonable, outburst at his wife destroyed the tranquility of a Pesach Seder and severely shook up the family's harmony. Had the husband exerted just a little self control and *mentchlichkeit*, humaneness, his wife's error could have easily been glossed over.

When a person allows anger to take control of his emotions, he is certain to err and often overlooks the obvious solutions to his problems. Learning to suppress anger can save one much heartache and grief, ultimately benefitting him at times when a clear head is necessary. This alone should be one's greatest motivation for correcting a serious character flaw.

Bnei Reuven and Bnei Gad had abundant livestock - very great. Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven came... They said, "If we have found favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a heritage. (32:1,3,5)

There is much to be learned from the dialogue that ensued between Moshe Rabbeinu and Bnei Gad and the Bnei Reuven. Let us examine the conversation that took place and address some of the issues that surfaced. First, we find two tribes who, due to their abundance of livestock, expressed a desire to remain in Ever HaYarden. The Torah does not tell how and why these tribes had more livestock than everyone else. The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh attributes it to their military skills in being able to plunder more effectively than the other tribes. The Midrash HaGadol asserts that, in fact, they did not have a greater share of livestock. It is just that they attributed greater significance to their herds than the other tribes did. In any event, they wanted to stay in Trans Jordan. Moshe understandably was very disappointed with their attitude, and he criticized them for forsaking their brother tribes during a time of crisis. They were all in this together. Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven quickly responded that they had no intention of reneging their responsibilities. They would fight side by side with their

brethren. They just wanted to return and settle in this land after the war. First, however, they wanted to build shelter for their livestock and cities for their children.

Upon reviewing the text, we note that the Torah begins by saying that Bnei Reuven, the oldest son, and Bnei Gad had abundant livestock. It then continues by relating that Bnei Gad, the younger son, came forward and addressed Moshe. Why did Bnei Gad speak before Bnei Reuven? Where was their respect for their older brother? Second, the entire dialogue that took place seems to have involved only Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven, while, in truth, the Trans Jordan was settled by another tribe - half of the tribe of Menashe joined them. What happened? We do not find them asking for land in Eiver HaYarden.

The Kli Yakar explains that Bnei Gad had more livestock than Bnei Reuven. Their enormous wealth went to their heads. In the ensuing arrogance, they denied the respect they should have rightfully given to their older brother. As far as the second question is concerned, in his commentary to the beginning of Sefer Devarim, the Netziv, zl, explains that specifically because of a deficiency in the spiritual character and values of these two tribes, it was necessary that another tribe be sent along to offer a positive influence. Menashe had no desire to live in Trans Jordan. They were sent to assist in maintaining the spiritual status quo among the two tribes that chose to live there.

Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven were guilty of misplacing their priorities. They were concerned for their livelihood more than for their children; they placed their present before their future. Furthermore, the effect of their behavior hurt their present and had a far-reaching effect on their future. Children respond to the way in which they are raised. The values they see imparted in their home remains with them for a long time. When children grow up in a home in which the priorities are misplaced, it influences the way they view life. On the other hand, if children see true commitment and *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, for their values, it will accompany them throughout life.

I recently had occasion to read an incredible story about a young boy and his mother in Rabbi Yechiel Spero's, *Touched By A Story*. The story clearly affected the child as he grew up to become one of America's gedolim, Torah giants, a Rosh Yeshivah who, during his life, inspired thousands and whose legacy continues its impact even after his passing. The story goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century when most Jews subsisted on an income slightly above the poverty level. While materialistic needs were not a high priority, every once in awhile a person would take some of his hard-earned money and use it for material goods that had a connection to a spiritual principle. A young boy by the name of Yitzchak learned the value of spirituality from his parents.

One year, shortly before Pesach, Yitzchak's father decided to buy his wife a new dress *lkavod* Yom Tov, in honor of the approaching festival. His wife toiled throughout the year. She never asked for anything. The least he could do is give her the opportunity to honor the festival in a manner that would also engender personal enjoyment for her. Buying a dress in those days was not as simple a task as entering a store and picking one off the rack. It meant picking out material and paying a number of visits to the seamstress. Finally, the dress was finished. It was an expensive proposition, but well worth it. The whole family waited excitedly for the mother to don her new dress, but she said that she was waiting for Pesach. Disappointed, the children began to count the days until they would see their mother in her new dress.

Yitzchak was a precocious eleven year old. He studied diligently in the yeshivah where he was one of the most outstanding students. His humility matched his scholarship. Thus, he rarely called attention to himself. That year, a few days prior to Pesach, he came home and excitedly shared with his family that he was about to make a *siyum* on *Meseches Bava Kama*. His mother was so proud of him, but Yitzchak simply shrugged it off.

The next evening, Yitzchak went home and was greeted by an incredible sight. The table was set with the finest dishes, the candles were lit, and his

mother was wearing her new dress! What was happening? he wondered. It was not yet Yom Tov. "Mama! Why are you wearing the new dress? It is not yet Yom Tov!" young Yitzchak blurted out.

His mother smiled at him and said, "Yes, I was saving the dress for Yom Tov, but you told me yesterday that you had completed a Mesechta and were about to make a siyum. This might be a simple feat for you, but, for me, this is the greatest Yom Tov. There is nothing more important to me than my son learning Torah!"

This was a mother's lesson to her young son. Torah study reigned supreme. A siyum was likened to Pesach. Gadlus ba'Torah, achieving greatness in Torah knowledge, was a major accomplishment that overshadowed and outshined everything else. Yitzchak remembered his mother's lesson well throughout his life, as he grew in Torah, as he achieved the pinnacle in Torah knowledge and leadership. As Yitzchak became the venerable Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, Rosh HaYeshivah of Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, legendary rebbe and mentor to thousands, his mother's lesson became his legacy.

#### Parashas Masei

They traveled from Marah and came to Eilim, and in Eilim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palms. (33:9)

When you think about it, seventy palm trees and a few springs of water do not comprise a tremendous amount of nourishment, enough to sustain a nation the size of Klal Yisrael. Why then does the Torah emphasize the features of Eilim? One would think that the Torah is distinguishing between Marah, where the water was bitter and Eilim whose food was plentiful. It is not, however, so. The Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh explains that actually the water in Marah was not bitter. Rather, it was the people who were bitter. Their negativity and sense of dejection are what gave the water a bitter after-taste. When someone is down, if everything he looks at he views through a lens of bitterness, then everything he sees and tastes will smack of rancor. When "Vayisu miMarah," they traveled away from Marah; when they experienced a release from their bitterness, they were able to accept the features of Eilim, whatever it may have been, and they appreciated it.

It happens all of the time. A person is unhappy with his personal life. He is plagued by issues which are not being resolved quickly enough, and he becomes depressed. It suddenly becomes everybody's fault - especially G-d's. The first institution that becomes a punching bag is religion. I recently had occasion to meet a young man who, in the short span of one hour, spewed forth a venom against everything religious - beginning with rabbis and concluding with Hashem. After virtually denying the validity of the Torah and the veracity of the mitzvos, he finally intimated that he was angry because of a personal situation that was making his life miserable. After sharing his problem with me and releasing the burden that had been weighing him down, he conceded that he did not really believe all of the negative statements he was making. He was miserable, and this was his reaction to his misery. After all, he had to blame someone.

How does one deal with such a problem? Vayisu miMarah - travel away from Marah. Separate yourself from the issue. Do not let the bitterness become a part of you. No one is denying that there are bitter situations, but one should not let the bitterness envelop him and take control of his life. By distancing oneself from the problem, thereby allowing for an objective approach, he will invariably be able to view the situation more realistically and without prejudice.

Happiness plays a pivotal role in mitzvah observance. An unhappy person is rarely a happy Jew. Accordingly, an unhappy Jew is likely to be deficient in his shemiras ha'mitzvos, mitzvah observance. A person who has a jaundiced perspective on life has a difficult time maintaining relationships. Unhappy with himself, he has little tolerance for others. After awhile, he even begins to search for faults in others. Young people who are unhappy tend to be less forgiving of their parents and teachers or of any individual who might serve as a role model for them. This, of course, causes a

negative feeling toward the Yiddishkeit these role models represent. All too often these same individuals place their focus on the young person's attitude toward religion, while ignoring the real reason for their discontent - themselves.

Of course, this does not mean that the problem is always within the person. Quite often, parents or teachers can--and do--err. When mentors demonstrate love and sensitivity towards their charges, they set the tone for emotional security, which is intrinsic to emotional well-being. When mentors act thoughtlessly, or if their exalted ego interferes with their common sense, the student is sacrificed.

Moreover, when children are taught to believe that frum people are happy, and when someone is not happy, it is due to his lack of observance, the child may begin to question Judaism's effectiveness when he sees an observant person in pain. This will cause him to lose faith in Judaism and its disseminators. One must be taught that Judaism gives us a certain perspective on life, one that adds depth and meaning. It does not create happiness when it has to overcome one's unhealthy emotional depression. Torah teaches us how to cope with the problems, how to deal with the issues as it engenders hope and increases faith.

Because he must remain in his city of refuge, until the death of the Kohen Gadol. (36:28)

Rashi explains that the release of the one who commits an act of inadvertent manslaughter is dependent upon the death of the Kohen Gadol, because the Kohen Gadol regrettably shares some of the responsibility of this tragedy. He should have prayed that such a mishap not occur during his tenure. It seems a bit much to expect that a person be blamed for the sins of these inadvertent murderers--just because he did not pray that they not sin. This seems a bit unrealistic. That his death be the subject of their prayers seems to be an excessive punishment.

Yet, we find a similar halachah with regard to the Eglah Arufah, the calf whose neck is broken as part of the ritual carried out when a corpse is found with no known assailant. At the end of the procedure, the zekeinim, elders, declare, "Yadeinu lo shafchah es ha'dam ha'zeh," "our hands have not shed this blood." What did they - or did they not-- do that places such culpability upon them?

Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, explains that the spiritual leadership has the ability to create an environment that is spiritually correct, whereby there is a spirit of respect and mutual cooperation among the populace. They can and should entreat Hashem's Divine assistance, so that brotherhood and tranquility reign in their community in order that such tragedies that send the unintentional murderer to the city of refuge, will be averted. The mere fact that such a tragic occurrence has taken place during their "watch" reflects poorly upon their leadership in creating a mood of calm and peace. The Kohen Gadol did no wrong, but he should have prayed that others also not do wrong. The welfare of the people of his generation is his responsibility.

I must add that this responsibility does not apply only to the Kohen Gadol. It applies to all of us. Each and every one of us has a moral obligation to pray for the welfare and peace of our community. Our success will correspond with our input.

Since we have come this far, I think we might tread a bit further and address the responsibility we all have towards our less observant and non-observant brethren. While there are many outreach professionals working tirelessly to reach out to the unaffiliated, regrettably there are still so many unaffiliated Jews who are just waiting for the opportunity to be invited to return home. Each of us knows a nonobservant neighbor, coworker, or relative. Rather than wait for them to contact an outreach organization, why do we not personally reach out to them?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, exhorted the observant community to "maaser," take a tithe, of their time and use it for kiruv, outreach. Fifty years earlier, the Chafetz Chaim, zl, emphasized the need and obligation for frum, observant, Jews to reach out to their non-observant brethren. We are one people with one destiny, each of us responsible for one another. By burying

our collective heads in the ground and attempting to ignore the problem, we are adding to the flames of assimilation that are destroying so many of our brethren. On the other hand, if we own up to our responsibility, we can turn the tide and impact the future of our nation.

Peninim mailing list [Peninim@shemayisrael.com](mailto:Peninim@shemayisrael.com)  
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From: Weekly Sedra United Synagogue London [DAF-HASHAVUA@SHAMASH.ORG] on behalf of Rafael Salasnik [rafi@BRIJNET.ORG] Sent: Wednesday, July 19, 2006 7:00 PM To: DAF-HASHAVUA@SHAMASH.ORG Subject: daf-hashavua Mattot-Massei 5766/2006

Understanding Jewish Prayer

**Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**

The Hymn of Glory

Anim zemirot, otherwise known as Shir Hakavod, the Hymn of Glory, is one of the most glorious poems of the siddur, as well as one of the most tantalising. It was composed, in the view of most scholars, by Rabbi Judah ben Shmuel he-Chassid (c.1150-1217), a leader of the pietist movement in northern Europe in the age of the Crusades, known as the Hassidei Ashkenaz.

R. Judah lived in Speyer and later in Regensburg. He was a mystic and a man of extreme humility, so much so that many of his works were published anonymously. Anim zemirot is no exception. Unlike many medieval poems, which carried the names of their authors in the first letters of each line, Anim zemirot is an alphabetical acrostic, with a four-line (non-alphabetic) introduction and epilogue.

The poem's theme is the problem addressed by Maimonides - a contemporary of R. Judah - in his Guide for the Perplexed, namely, how can we use language to speak of G-d who is, by definition, beyond the reach of human understanding? The answer given by both, though in utterly different styles, is that the language used by Judaism's prophets and mystics is not to be taken literally. It is metaphor, allegory or symbol: the use of words to point to that which lies beyond words.

So Daniel (7: 9) saw G-d as a judge on the throne of justice, His hair white as lamb's wool ("aged in the day of judgment") while Zechariah (14: 3) saw Him as a mighty warrior ("youthful on the day of battle"). Phrases like "right hand and holy arm", "his locks with drops of the night", "His head is like fine pure gold" are taken from Psalms, Isaiah and the Song of Songs. The images are many, but G-d is One.

The most daring of all images was that given by the sages (Berakhot 6a, 7a), that just as we wear tefillin proclaiming the oneness of G-d so G-d, as it were, wears tefillin proclaiming the uniqueness of Israel. Hence the idea that when Moses saw G-d's "back" (Shemot 33: 23), what he saw was the knot of G-d's tefillin. Tefillin are a symbol of the love that binds G-d and His people.

The poem ends with the same phrase as it began ("My soul yearns for You") - an echo of one of the most heartfelt lines in the Book of Psalms (42: 2),

"As a deer yearns for streams of water, so my soul yearns for You, my G-d".

Early editions of the Singer's Prayer Book printed Anim zemirot at the end of the weekday morning service, because some congregations said it daily. However, many halakhic authorities - among them Maharal of Prague and the Vilna Gaon - held that it was too holy to be said daily. Hence our current custom to say it only on Shabbat and festivals. Its holiness is the reason we open the Ark while it is being sung. Some suggest that this is also why we give it to a child - a figure of innocence - to sing. Vivid, passionate, intricately woven, Anim zemirot is a mystic masterpiece.

Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue. Editor: Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis <mailto:editordaf@brijnet.org> Address: Finchley Synagogue, Kinloss Gardens, London N3 3DU Editorial Board: Rabbi Yisroel Fine, Rabbi Philip Ginsbury, Mr Simon Goulden, Rabbi Emanuel Levy, Rabbi Meir Salasnik, Rabbi Dr Julian Shindler To sponsor Daf Hashavua please contact Anthony Cummings <mailto:Anthony.Cummings@unitedsynagogue.org.uk> Copyright 2006 United Synagogue Publications Ltd. The DAF-HASHAVUA mailing list is hosted by Shamash: The Jewish Network, <http://shamash.org>, a service of Hebrew College, which offers online courses and an online MA in Jewish Studies, <http://hebrewcollege.edu/online/> To unsubscribe email: DAF-HASHAVUA-unsubscribe-request@SHAMASH.ORG

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Weekly Parsha - 25 Tamuz 5766 / 21 July 2006

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MATOT - MASEI

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The conclusion of the book of Bamidbar that these parshiyot mark, to a great extent ends the narrative section of the Torah. The generation of Egypt and Sinai is no more. Moshe's fate that he too will not enter the Land of Israel has been sealed. Yet, in order for the new generation and the new leader of Israel, Yehoshua, to succeed, a review as to what occurred to the previous generation is necessary. It would not be farfetched to suggest that the parsha of Maasei, which details all of the stops and way places of Israel in the desert journey of the Jewish people, can be considered already as part of Dvarim - "Mishneh Torah" - Moshe's repetition of the Torah at the end of his life. Only if one knows where one has been and has learned something valuable from that experience can one confidently continue on one's journey. Even though the future is always an unknown and uncertain commodity, knowledge of the past minimizes the surprises that may yet lie ahead. The Torah goes into great detail to inform us of where we have been, how we got there and what happened to us on that journey. This is all in the hope that something can be gleaned from the past and applied to our current and future situations and challenges. For a people so rich in historic experience and worldly knowledge, the Jews somehow surprisingly are reluctant to incorporate hard-earned lessons

of the past into current attitudes, values and behavior. The past errors of the encouragement of assimilation, of belief in utopian solutions to human and societal problems, of naive pacifism and lack of self-pride, of worshipping strange gods and false idols, all are repeated again in our times. It is as though the long journey of Israel and all of its way stations has been forgotten, misinterpreted and ignored. We could construct our own parshat Maasei from the experiences of the Jewish people over the past three hundred years. We would be wise to remember the debacle of nineteenth century Jewish German assimilation, the destruction that the Jewish left foisted upon us in its blind and foolish belief in Marxist doctrine and the uncaring aloofness of Western civilization, in the main, towards Jewish suffering and persecution. If we remembered our own Maasei, we could easily say: "Been there, done that" to most of the ideas now floated about for solving our problems. We are not doomed to repeat all of the past errors committed on our journey through history. Yet, if we forget or ignore the lessons that those past errors produced, our present and future problems are bound to increase, substantially and intensively.

Thus, it is obvious that every generation writes its own parshat Maasei. The greatness of such a parsha is only realized when it has meaningfully absorbed the lessons of the previous parshiyot Maasei of Jewish life. This guide to the past is the strongest guarantee of the success of our journey into the future. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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In memory of Nathaniel H. Leiderman, Naftali Hertzke ben Mayer Eliezer v'Gitel whose seventh yahrtzeit was on 11 Tammuz.

Dedicated by Ira Leiderman and Mindy Smith and their children Eric and Cara.

This shiur is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Aaron Wise z"l (whose yahrtzeit is Tammuz 21), by the Wise and Etshalom families. Yehi Zikhro Barukh.

Sicha Of **Harav Aharon Lichtenstein** Shlit"a

The Legitimacy of Living Outside the Land of Israel

Adapted by Shaul Barth

Translated by Kaeren Fish

In this week's parasha, we read of the request by the tribes of Gad and Reuven to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. There are two principal stages in this story: the original request, and the elaboration, following Moshe's response.

At first, we read that the two tribes see the eastern bank of the Jordan "and behold, the place was a place for grazing flocks," and therefore they approach Moshe and ask, "If we have found favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not bring us over the Jordan."

Moshe's response is immediate and unequivocal. At first, he reproaches these tribes for even suggesting the idea: "Shall your brethren then go to war while you sit here?!" But then he goes on to rebuke them for the more general influence that they are going to have: "Why do you dishearten Bnei

Yisrael from passing over to the land which G-d has given them?" In the first sentence, he speaks as a prophet and spiritual guide; in the second, he reacts as a political and military leader, who must consider not only the ethical nature of their request, but also its wider national ramifications.

But Moshe does not stop at these two admonitions. He goes on to challenge them in his capacity as Moshe Rabbeinu – the person who has led and accompanied them through the wilderness for forty years, for whom the request by these two tribes comes as a slap in the face in view of all that he has tried to teach and inculcate: "So your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to view the land... and behold, you have risen up in place of your fathers, a gang of sinful people, to stoke up God's anger again against Israel."

Following this first part of the story, we reach the second part, where the tribes of Gad and Reuven respond: "We shall build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our children, but we ourselves shall go up armed before Bnei Yisrael until we have brought them to their place... We shall inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan, for our portion has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan."

The commentaries are divided as to whether this reaction is an elaboration of their original request, where Moshe did not at first understand their intention, or whether this represents an amendment to their original plan in light of Moshe's fierce response. The verses themselves leave both options open. Either way, when Moshe hears their explanation, he accepts their request and declares, "If you will do this thing... you shall be guiltless before G-d and Israel, and this land shall be your possession before God."

But we are left with an unanswered question: is the request by the tribes of Gad and Reuven now acceptable? Was Moshe's sole concern that these tribes would lend a hand in the conquest of the land? Is the very idea of leaving – or relinquishing their part of – the land not in itself problematic?

In Maskehet Bikkurim (1:10), R. Yossi states that bikkurim (first fruits) are not brought from the eastern bank of the Jordan, for it is not called "a land flowing with milk and honey." Here we must ask: is the difference between the two sides of the Jordan so great, in terms of agricultural quality? Is it not possible that excellent produce could be grown on that side, too? The answer must lie on a deeper level, namely, the impurity that the Halakha imputes to "chutza la-aretz," areas outside the Land of Israel.

Now we have a better understanding of Moshe's rebuke, and the problem becomes even more acute: how can these tribes even suggest settling in a land that is spiritually inferior? Does the economic factor – "your servants have cattle" – justify their preference for a land that, while fertile, is impure?

The Talmud Yerushalmi offers another reason for the difference between Eretz Yisrael and other nearby areas: the former was given by G-d to Israel, and the latter they took for themselves. This distinction explains why the Torah requires that tithes be brought only from the Land of Israel (even if the rabbis expanded the mitzva to include surrounding areas). According to this understanding, Moshe's rebuke shouts out from the verses: "Are you, for economic reasons, choosing to give up the land that 'God's eyes are upon it,' in favor of a land that you are taking of your own accord? Do you prefer a land where the intensity of God's Presence is incomparable to that of Eretz Yisrael, simply because you have been blessed with much livestock?"

The picture is rounded out by the narrative in Sefer Yehoshua, describing how, following the conquest of the land, the two-and-a-half tribes who settled on the eastern bank build an altar. They declare that, in the event that in future generations people may suggest that the inhabitants of the eastern side of the Jordan have no portion in the G-d of Israel, this altar will be proof that this territory is indeed part of Eretz Yisrael. Once again, the rebuke resounds in full force: if it is clear to these tribes - already in the generation that seeks to settle there - that the choice of the eastern bank of the Jordan may lead to a future situation where their identification and association with Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael will be brought into question,

then why do they want so badly to remain there? Is it only because of the material advantages there?

Once again, we must return to our question: is Moshe now satisfied with the request by the tribes of Gad and Reuven, following their explanation? Is his sole concern that they participate in the war of conquest? We must conclude that this is not the case. The turnaround in Moshe's attitude may be understood in light of the fact that at first, he believed that these tribes sought to sever themselves from the rest of the nation. This aspiration was worthy of the strongest opposition and rebuke. If this was what they were after, then they were indeed a "gang of sinful people."

But after their explanation, Moshe lowers his level of opposition: their proposal is still an unworthy one, but they are no longer sinners. Is their idea of making the eastern side of the Jordan their inheritance, owing to economic considerations, a sinful one? Apparently not. Is their request worthy? Certainly not. Those who abandon Eretz Yisrael – the land that G-d has given – for financial (or other) reasons are not sinning, in the regular sense of the word. But they are undoubtedly missing the mark in terms of the aim towards which Moshe, and all the leaders of Jewish history, have tried to lead and educate!

[This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashot Matot-Masei 5762 (2002).]

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Parshat Matot Matei 26 Taamuz 5766 July 22, 2006 Daf Yomi: Yoma 45

Guest Rabbi: **Rabbi Zvi Ralbag**

Asst. Rabbi, Young Israel of Staten Island, NY

During the three weeks prior to Tisha B'av, our national time of mourning, we commemorate the churban beis hamikdash, the destruction of the holy temple. Our focus, during this time, is on the tragedies that befell us. How do we deal with these calamities? How did Am Yisrael manage to persevere for two thousand years?

With the onset of Rosh Chodesh Av, the mourning intensifies as we approach the saddest day of the Jewish calendar, Tisha B'av. That is when we recite numerous Kinnos, lamentations, bemoaning the destruction of the temple along with all the other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish nation all through history.

During this time period the rabbis have focused on the loss of the beis hamikdash. One such speech was given by the Amora, R. Avimi, as quoted by Rashi in kedushin 31b:

"Darash Avimi," R. Avimi quoted a chapter in tehilim (ch.79), "mizmor le'assaf," "A song of Assaf: O God! The nations have entered into your inheritance; they have defiled the Sanctuary of Your holiness; they have turned Jerusalem into heaps of rubble." Since the verse describes the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, R. Avimi asked "Mizmor le'assaf? Kinah le'assaf!" Why does it say a song of assaf? Is the churban then something to sing about? It should have been "kinnah le'assaf" a lamentation for assaf.

Explained R. Avimi: Assaf sang a song because he correctly understood that "Shofach chamato al ha'eitzim veavanim". HaShem vented his anger on stones and wood, on the Beis Hamikdash, rather than on Jewish people. Had HaShem poured his wrath on the bnei yisrael, the Jews would have ceased to exist as a nation. Instead He only destroyed the Temple, thus sparing the Jewish nation.

This Medrash has bothered me for years. Let's analyze this. HaShem was furious at klal yisrael; He wanted to destroy the Jewish people. Yet He knew that if He would let out his fury on the Jews they would be destroyed. Instead what did HaShem do? He destroyed the Bais Hamikdash. He redirected his wrath from the Jews to the wood and stones of His own home. What does this mean? HaShem had to channel his anger, so to speak, on the bais hamikdash? A person needs to let off some steam, but HaShem? If G-d did not want to annihilate the Jews, then why the Beis Hamikdash? It doesn't make any sense!

I believe the answer is as follows: When visiting a museum housing world-famous paintings, one can only appreciate a true masterpiece by taking a few steps back and enjoying the entire picture. This is especially true for the impressionist painters, such as Monet, Matisse and Manet. Many times they painted by using large

brush strokes or by making dots to form a picture. Close-up, the painting seems to be a series of dots or wild brush strokes but from far the picture comes to life.

There's a story told about an impressionist painting that was displayed at the summit of a mountain. A passerby observed the painting and took a few steps backwards to appreciate it more. The further back he went the more he was able to enjoy its beauty. However the man didn't realize that behind him was a deep cliff. He kept on stepping back, his eyes fixated on the painting, enjoying its every nuance. At the same time, he was slowly inching towards the abyss. His friend passed by, saw what was happening, and yelled out a warning to him, "Stop! You are about to fall off the cliff." However the man did not hear him. He was mesmerized by the painting. His friend motioned to him, jumped up and down frantically raising his arms in the air. It was all to no avail. The man did not stop. Finally as a last resort, the friend took a knife and slashed the painting. This shocked the man and it stopped him in his tracks right before the edge of the cliff.

Explains R. Simshon Pinkus Zt"l, so it was with the Jews at the time of the Churban.

They transgressed all the cardinal sins; murder, idolatry and sin'as chinam were rampant. The Jews were slowly destroying themselves as a nation; they were edging towards the spiritual cliff, towards the abyss. Yet they never felt the need to repent, nor change their evil ways. Why? Because they were fixated on the masterpiece - the Bais Hamikdash. They felt that as long as they had a Beis Hamikdash no harm could befall them. The Beis Hamikdash would atone for their sins. It would protect them. HaShem tried to warn them of the impending doom. He sent messengers - Yeshaya Hanavi, Yirmiyahu Hanavi. They frantically implored the Jewish people to stop, to go back, to do teshuva. HaShem afflicted them with all types of diseases, with hunger, Biryonim-Jewish terrorists and civil war. But all to no avail. The Jewish people kept on going. They did not stop. They were mesmerized by the Bais Hamikdash. Finally as a last resort, HaShem slashed the painting. He destroyed the masterpiece - the Beis Hamikdash. "Shofach chamato al ha'eitzim v'avanim." This stopped the Jews right in their tracks, this woke them up. That is what R. Avimi is telling us. It is Mizmor le'assaf, a song for Assaf, not a kinnah for Assaf. This is because HaShem saved us, klal yisrael, from spiritual ruin before it was too late, by destroying the masterpiece-the beis hamikdash. We sing the song of praise, because yet again HaShem found a way to save his nation, the Jewish people.

This is an important lesson for our generation. Not everything that we perceive to be a calamity is necessarily one. Kol man de'avid Rachmana letav avid. Many times we only understand things later on. Many times we won't understand G-d's ways until the Achrit HaYamim, the End of Days.

However, we can be rest assured, Hakadosh Boruch Hu looks out for our best interest. This is the Hashkafa, the outlook, of a Torah Jew on life; it is this lesson that we must learn during these three weeks.

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