

Home Weekly Parsha MATOT – MAASEI
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The narrative of the experiences of the people of Israel in the desert of Sinai concludes with the parshiyot of this week. All of the occurrences, successes and failures that marked this forty year trek in a wasteland wilderness are alluded to in the count of Israel in last week's parsha - and in the listing of all of the way stations of that excursion.

The Torah seems to be determined to remind all later generations of Jews of the experiences in the desert. Moshe, in his final oration in the book of Dvarim, will once again review the events of the desert for a new generation of Jews distanced in time and circumstance from Egyptian bondage. The Torah is aware of human forgetfulness.

It will take only one generation to forget Egypt and even Mount Sinai. History is boring and quite irrelevant to new generations. Yet forgetting the Jewish past is the ultimate betrayal of Judaism and Jewish hopes. All of us, as we become older, begin to feel a psychological and spiritual need growing within us to be remembered.

The Baal Shem Tov is reputed to have said: "Forgetting is the true exile." Of course it is obvious that ignorance is the true partner of forgetfulness. In fact, if one never knew anything then one cannot be accused of having forgotten it. The Torah emphasizes the repetition of all the facts and experiences of Jewish life in the desert of Sinai so that this knowledge will enable and strengthen the powers of national remembrance.

Much of the Jewish world today suffers from a severe case of, hopefully temporary but nevertheless intense, amnesia. In spite of all of the efforts of the survivors, the museums, the academic courses and books relating to the Holocaust, this event is rapidly disappearing from world and even Jewish memory.

Religious Jewry has found no way, as of yet, to ritually remember the Holocaust. Without ritual and holiness, it tragically will continue to fade from the memory of the coming generation. In distributing films and audio lectures about the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel to Jewish schools worldwide I am already encountering apathy if not sometimes even outright opposition to the insertion of the subject into the curriculum of schools.

One principal asked me: "Will it help my students to be admitted to Harvard or Yale?" And on the other end of the spectrum of Jewish education another principal told me: "Will it increase their ability to study Talmud properly?" I responded that the Torah listed all of the desert way stations even though knowing them would also not guarantee Talmudic proficiency or admission to Harvard or Yale.

It is not only the amnesia regarding even our very recent past that afflicts us. It is our inability to grasp that the knowledge of this immediate past is vitally essential to our

present and to our future. Without knowledge of the events of the past, dating back all of the way to the events of the desert of Sinai, we are creating for our descendants a new desert, a wasteland of ignorance, falsehoods and disillusion. It is not too late to correct this. If our schools won't do so, let our homes and families attempt to do so.

Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik.

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Complexity of Human Rights
MATOT, MASEI

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ZTL
MATOT, MASEI • 5776, 5783

The book of Bamidbar comes to a close that is very strange indeed. Earlier in the parsha of Pinchas we read of how the five daughters of Tzelophehad came to Moses with a claim based on justice and human rights.[1] Their father had died without sons. Inheritance – in this case, of a share in the land – passes through the male line, but here there was no male line. Surely their father was entitled to his share, and they were his only heirs. By rights that share should come to them:

"Why should our father's name be disadvantaged in his family merely because he did not have a son? Give us a portion of land along with our father's brothers."

Num. 27:4

Moses had received no instruction about such an eventuality, so he asked God directly. God found in favour of the women.

"The daughters of Tzelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them."

He gave Moses further instructions about the disposition of inheritance, and the narrative then passes on to other matters.

Only now, right at the end of the book, does the Torah report on an event that arose directly from that case. Leaders of Tzelophehad's tribe, Menasheh, son of Joseph, came and made the following complaint. If the land were to pass to Tzelophehad's daughters and they married men from another tribe, the land would eventually pass to their husbands, and thus to their husband's tribes. Thus land that had initially been granted to the tribe of Menasheh might be lost to it in perpetuity.

Again, Moses took the case to God, who offered a simple solution. The daughters of Tzelophehad were entitled to the land, but so too was the tribe. Therefore, if they wish to take possession of the land, they must marry men from within their own tribe. That way both claims could be honoured. The daughters did not lose their right to the land

but they did lose some freedom in choosing a marriage partner.

The two passages are intimately related. They use the same terminology. Both Tzelophehad's daughters and the leaders of the clan "draw near". They use the same verb to describe their potential loss: yigara, "disadvantaged, diminished". God replies in both cases with the same locution, "kein ... dovrot/dovrim," rightly do they speak.[2] Why then are the two episodes separated in the text? Why does the book of Numbers end on this seemingly anticlimactic note? And does it have any relevance today?

Bamidbar is a book about individuals. It begins with a census, whose purpose is less to tell us the actual number of Israelites than to "lift" their "heads", the unusual locution the Torah uses to convey the idea that when God orders a census it is to tell the people that they each count. The book also focuses on the psychology of individuals. We read of Moses' despair, of Aaron and Miriam's criticism of him, of the spies who lacked the courage to come back with a positive report, and of the malcontents, led by Korach, who challenged Moses' leadership. We read of Joshua and Caleb, Eldad and Medad, Dathan and Aviram, Zimri and Pinchas, Balak and Bilam and others. This emphasis on individuals reaches a climax in Moses' prayer to "God of the spirits of all flesh" to appoint a successor (Bamidbar 27:16) – understood by the Sages and Rashi to mean, appoint a leader who will deal with each individual as an individual, who will relate to people in their uniqueness and singularity.

That is the context of the claim of Tzelophehad's daughters. They were claiming their rights as individuals. Justly so. As many of the commentators pointed out, the behaviour of the women throughout the wilderness years was exemplary while that of the men was the opposite. The men, not the women, gave gold for the golden calf. The spies were men: a famous comment by the Kli Yakar (R. Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 1550 –1619) suggests that had Moses sent women instead, they would have come back with a positive report.[3] Recognising the justice of their cause, God affirmed their rights as individuals.

But society is not built on individuals alone. As the book of Judges points out, individualism is another name for chaos: "In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Hence the insistence, throughout Bamidbar, on the central role of the tribes as the organising principle of Jewish life. The Israelites were numbered tribe by tribe. The Torah sets out their precise encampment around the Mishkan and the order in which they were to journey. In Naso, at inordinate length, the Torah repeats the gifts of each tribe at the inauguration of the Mishkan, despite the fact that they each gave exactly the same. The tribes were not accidental to the structure of Israel as a society. Like the United States of America, whose basic political structure is that of a federation of

(originally thirteen, now fifty) states, so Israel was (until the appointment of a king) a federation of tribes.

The existence of something like tribes is fundamental to a free society.[4] The modern state of Israel is built on a vast panoply of ethnicities – Ashkenazi, Sefardi, Jews from Eastern, Central and Western Europe, Spain and Portugal, Arab lands, Russia and Ethiopia, America, South Africa, Australia and other places, some Hassidic, some Yeshivish, others "Modern", others "Traditional", yet others secular and cultural.

We each have a series of identities, based partly on family background, partly on occupation, partly on locality and community. These "mediating structures", larger than the individual but smaller than the state, are where we develop our complex, vivid, face-to-face interactions and identities. They are the domain of family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, and they make up what is collectively known as civil society. A strong civil society is essential to freedom.[5]

That is why, alongside individual rights, a society must make space for group identities. The classic instance of the opposite came in the wake of the French revolution. In the course of the debate in the French Revolutionary Assembly in 1789, the Count of Clermont-Tonnerre made his famous declaration, "To the Jews as individuals, everything. To the Jews as a nation, nothing." If they insisted on defining themselves as a nation, that is, as a distinct subgroup within the republic, said the Count, "we shall be compelled to expel them."

Initially, this sounded reasonable. Jews were being offered civil rights in the new secular nation state. However, it was anything but. It meant that Jews would have to give up their identity as Jews in the public domain. Nothing – not religious or ethnic identity – should stand between the individual and the state. It was no accident that a century later, France became one of the epicentres of European antisemitism, beginning with Édouard Drumont's vicious *La France Juive*, 1886, and culminating in the Dreyfus trial. Hearing the Parisian crowd shout "Mort aux Juifs", Theodor Herzl realised that Jews had still not been accepted as citizens of Europe, despite all the protestations to the contrary. Jews found themselves regarded as a tribe in a Europe that claimed to have abolished tribes. European emancipation recognised individual rights but not collective ones.

The primatologist Frans de Waal, whose work among the chimpanzees we mentioned in this year's *Covenant & Conversation* on Korach, makes the point powerfully. Almost the whole of modern Western culture, he says, was built on the idea of autonomous, choosing individuals. But that is not who we are. We are people with strong attachments to family, friends, neighbours, allies, co-religionists and people of the same ethnicity. He continues: A morality exclusively concerned with individual rights tends to ignore the ties, needs and interdependencies that

have marked our existence from the very beginning. It is a cold morality that puts space between people, assigning each person to his or her own little corner of the universe. How this caricature of a society arose in the minds of eminent thinkers is a mystery.[6]

That is precisely the point the Torah is making when it divides the story of the daughters of Tzelophehad into two. The first part, in parshat Pinchas, is about individual rights, the rights of Tzelophehad's daughters to a share in the land. The second, at the end of the book, is about group rights, in this case the right of the tribe of Menasheh to its territory. The Torah affirms both, because both are necessary to a free society.

Many of the most seemingly intractable issues in contemporary Jewish life have appeared because Jews, especially in the West, are used to a culture in which individual rights are held to override all others. We should be free to live as we choose, worship as we choose, and identify as we choose. But a culture based solely on individual rights will undermine families, communities, traditions, loyalties, and shared codes of reverence and restraint.

Despite its enormous emphasis on the value of the individual, Judaism also insists on the value of those institutions that preserve and protect our identities as members of groups that make them up. We have rights as individuals but identities only as members of tribes. Honouring both is delicate, difficult and necessary. Bamidbar ends by showing us how.

[1] The word "rights" is, of course, an anachronism here. The concept was not born until the seventeenth century. Nonetheless it is not absurd to suggest that this is what is implied in the daughters' claim, "Why should our father's name be disadvantaged?"

[2] These two passages may well be the source of the story of the rabbi who hears both sides of a marital dispute, and says to both husband and wife, "You are right." The rabbi's disciple asks, "How can they both be right?" to which the rabbi replies, "You too are right."

[3] Kli Yakar to Num. 13:2.

[4] See most recently Sebastian Junger: *Tribe: On homecoming and belonging*, Fourth Estate, 2016.

[5] This is the argument made most powerfully by Edmond Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville.

[6] Frans de Waal, *Good Natured*, Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 167.

Customs of the Three Weeks

Revivim

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

When listening to music from an electric device, a distinction should be made between happy music, which is prohibited from the 17th of Tammuz, and regular music that has no special joy, which is only prohibited from Rosh

Chodesh Av * When holding an educational-cultural event, it is permissible to play music that fits the nature of the event * At se'udat mitzvah meals, singing and dancing in a circle are permitted as is customary, and even after Rosh Chodesh Av * From Rosh Chodesh Av, recreational swimming is forbidden, but if the swimming is for health purposes, as is the custom of people used to swimming every day for about half an hour in the pool, it is permitted until Shabbat Chazon

The Three Weeks, which begin on the night of the 17th of Tammuz and continue through Tisha Be-Av, are a painful time. This period is often known as 'Bein Ha-metzarim', recalling the verse, "All her pursuers overtook her in the narrow places [bein ha-metzarim]" (Eicha 1:3). And although our Sages did not make any special enactments to mark the suffering and mourning of the Three Weeks, the Jewish people adopted some mourning customs, and therefore refrain from music and dancing (Magen Avraham 551:10).

Included in this, it is customary to avoid playing musical instruments. Therefore, dance classes, concerts, and happy sing-alongs should not be held during the Three Weeks, and one should not participate in them.

Listening to Music on Personal Electronic Devices

The poskim of the previous generation were divided on whether it is permissible to listen to musical instruments by way of personal electronic devices during the Three Weeks. It seems that in practice, according to the lenient view, we should divide all songs into three categories: 1) joyous songs, like those played at weddings; 2) songs that are neither especially joyous nor especially sad, which includes most contemporary music and most classical compositions; 3) sad songs, like those played or sung when mourning a death or the destruction of the Temple, which are permitted to be heard even during the Nine Days.

Lower the Volume

It also seems that when one listens to loud music, even if it is a neutral song, the force of the sound makes it more festive and practically transforms it into a joyous song. Thus, one may not listen to loud music even if it is the type of music that is permitted during the Three Weeks.

Furthermore, it seems that one may not attend a concert featuring sad music (requiems) during the Three Weeks. Even though the music is mournful, concerts are festive and joyous events.

Music in an Educational Context

When holding an educational-cultural event, it is permitted to play music that fits the nature of the event. And even during the Nine Days it is permissible to play sad songs that express sorrow for the destruction of the Temple, and songs of longing for the building of the Torah, the Nation, and the Land (see, Peninei Halakha: Zemanim 8:4-5).

Aerobics Class

One may hold or attend an aerobics class, whose main purpose is exercise, until the end of Tammuz, but should try to play appropriate music that is not happy.

Playing Music for the Purpose of Learning

Since the reason music is prohibited is that it brings people joy, music teachers may continue giving lessons until the week of Tisha Be-Av, because neither the teacher nor the students experience joy through music lessons. In addition, canceling the lessons will cause the teacher financial loss, and the students will have to expend extra effort afterward to return to their normal learning pace, possibly even requiring extra classes. It is best to learn sad melodies during the Three Weeks. If the teacher and students usually take a break from their lessons at some point in any event, it is preferable, if possible, to schedule the break for the Three Weeks. (Peninei Halakha: Zemanim 8:3).

Playing and Singing at a Se'udat Mitzvah

During the Three Weeks, one may sing happy songs at a se'udat mitzvah, like the meal at a brit mila, pidyon ha-ben, or sheva berakhot, and until the end of the month of Tammuz it is also permitted to play music as is customary throughout the year.

When the month of Av arrives, one should not play happy songs from an electronic device, and only the songs that relate to the joy of a mitzvah are permitted to be sung, and even dancing in a circle is permitted, as many people do to celebrate the joy of a brit mila.

Playing Music at Havdala and Melave Malka

Families customary to play shirey kodesh (Jewish religious songs) on Motzei Shabbat can continue to do so until Rosh Chodesh Av, because the atmosphere of Shabbat, in which mourning customs are absent, still applies during the adjacent hours intended for a se'udat Melave Malka. In addition to that, the songs played are shirey kodesh.

Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah

Until Rosh Chodesh Av, one may also celebrate a bar or bat mitzvah during this period, but only on the actual day that the child comes of age, and it is also permissible to hire musicians, provided that this is their custom throughout the year.

When it is difficult to hold the party on the day the boy or girl come of age, and want to hold it on one of the close days, it is appropriate for the bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah to make a siyum on an important religious book at the beginning of the event, and thus be able to hold the simcha with music or musicians, as usual all year round. And if they cannot make a siyum, bediavad, they can rely on a siyum done by one of their relatives. When there is no such possibility, with no other choice, they can rely on the Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah drasha (speech) which is an important drasha with divrei Torah, and from which the joy of a mitzvah is derived.

However, during the Nine Days it is not possible to hold a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah as is customary all year round, since it is customary to hold it with a lot of people and with

music, and this is forbidden during the Nine Days. Therefore, it is correct to postpone the big party until after Tisha B'Av, and on the day of coming of age, one may hold a se'udah at home, with meat and wine, and a limited number of guests.

Excursions and Vacation in a Hotel

Some poskim maintain that one must refrain from hiking and swimming or bathing in the sea or a swimming pool during the Three Weeks, in order to limit our enjoyment during this mournful period. Furthermore, since these days are prone to calamity, one must avoid potentially dangerous activities.

From a halakhic standpoint, however, these activities are not prohibited. After all, our Sages only instructed us to curtail our joy from the first day of Av. They did not prohibit engaging in pleasurable and enjoyable activities before then. The only thing one should avoid is special celebrations, like parties, concerts, and dances. Therefore, one may go hiking and swimming and one may vacation in a hotel until the end of Tammuz. In addition, the concern about engaging in potentially dangerous activities is not so serious that one must be more cautious than one generally should be throughout the year. Thus, one may go hiking and engage in similar activities during the Three Weeks, while taking particular care to follow the safety precautions that apply to such activities throughout the year.

“When Av arrives, we curtail our joy” (Ta’anit 26b). Therefore, one must refrain from outings and recreational activities that are mainly designed to provide pleasure and joy. However, one may go on a trip or vacation that is designed primarily for educational or therapeutic purposes during the Nine Days.

Swimming

From the first day of the month of Av, one must refrain from recreational swimming. However, if the swimming is for a health purpose, such as those who swim every day for about half an hour in the pool, it is permitted until Shabbat Chazon, and after Shabbat Chazon, it is correct to be machmir (stringent). One who needs to swim for medical purposes, may swim until erev Tisha B'av (see, Peninei Halakha: Zemanim 8:6).

Reciting She-heḥeyanu During the Three Weeks

It is customary to refrain from reciting the She-heḥeyanu blessing during the Three Weeks, for how can we say, “Blessed are You, Lord... Who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time” during a period of such misfortune? And although some poskim are machmir about it even on Shabbat, in practice, on Shabbat, one may recite the blessing.

One who is presented the opportunity to perform a mitzvah that requires one to recite She-heḥeyanu, like a brit mila or a pidyon ha-ben, recites the berakha, because he did not determine the timing of the berakha. Rather, God granted him the opportunity to perform a mitzvah that requires one to recite She-heḥeyanu during the Three Weeks.

Similarly, one who sees a close friend after not seeing him for thirty days, and is happy to see him, should recite Shehecheyanu, since if he does not recite it immediately, he loses the opportunity to recite the berakha.

Marriage

It is customary in most Jewish communities that weddings are not held during the Three Weeks. This is the custom of all Ashkenazi communities, and most Sephardic communities, including communities from Turkey, Morocco, Babylon, and Yemen.

And there are communities of Sephardic origin who are customary to refrain from marriage only during the Nine Days, and so wrote the Shulchan Aruch (551:2; Yibi'ah Omer 6:43).

Grooms from communities that are customary to hold weddings until the end of the month of Tammuz are permitted to hire a regular orchestra for their wedding, as there is no joy of a bride and groom without musical instruments. And even those whose custom is not to marry on these days, may participate and dance in their joy, for it is the joy of a mitzvah.

Engagement

Until the first of Av, one may hold a modest, small-scale engagement party. Since such a party is a celebration of the couple's agreement to get married, the event contains a mitzvah component and is thus permitted. One may not, however, hold a large-scale engagement party during the Three Weeks. During the Nine Days, when we must curtail our joy, one may not hold even a modest, small-scale party. However, the parents of the couple may meet, even during the Nine Days, in order to decide on the details of the wedding, and refreshments may be served at this meeting. Even though this, too, involves joy, it is permissible because such a meeting transforms the couple's relationship into an accomplished fact, which brings them closer to the mitzvah of marriage. It is also permissible for singles to date for the sake of marriage during the Nine Days (ibid. 8:9).

Haircut during the Three Weeks and Nine Days

Our Sages instituted prohibitions against cutting one's hair and washing one's clothes during the week of Tisha Be-Av (Ta'anit 26b). Accordingly, Shulchan Arukh (551:3) rules that one may not cut one's hair from the beginning of the week in which Tisha Be-Av falls, and many Sephardim follow this practice.

However, in many Jewish communities it is customary to be machmir, and not cut their hair during the Three Weeks. This is the custom of Ashkenazim and some Sephardim – including Jews from Morocco and Djerba, and those who follow Arizal's customs – to be stringent and avoid haircuts during the entirety of the Three Weeks (Rema 551:4; Kaf Ha-hayim 551:80; Kitzur SA [Toledano] 387:8; Brit Kehuna 2:12).

There are those who are lenient until the end of the month of Tammuz, and machmir from Rosh Chodesh, including Jews from Tunisia, Algeria and Libya.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Shabbat Shalom: Matot-Masei (Numbers 30:1-36:13)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

RSR Head Shot Gershon Ellinson creditEfrat, Israel – This week's double portion records how the Jews finally cross the Jordan River on their way to conquer the Promised Land. The tribes of Gad and Reuven and half the tribe of Menashe possess a great multitude of cattle, and "paradise" for cattle is good grazing land, which happens to be what these two and a half tribes find in their present location of Trans-Jordan. They then petition Moses with a special request. "If you would grant us a favor, let this land be given to us as our permanent property, and do not bring us across the Jordan." (Numbers 32:5)

Moses' response is sharp. "Why should your brothers go out and fight while you stay here? Why are you trying to discourage the Israelites from crossing over to the land that God has given them? This is the same thing your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land" (Numbers 32:6-8). Moses' reference is an especially damning one: just as the scouts decided to remain in the desert because they lacked the courage and will to fight for the Promised Land, you are acting similar to them by your desire to stay where you are, saving yourselves from the harrowing experience of war. And Moses makes this comparison even though Trans-Jordan is considered to be part of the holy land (Mishnah Kelim 1,10).

What moved these two and a half tribes to remain in Trans-Jordan? According to Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm, they petitioned not to have to cross the Jordan because of their cattle, which expresses a certain degree of materialistic greed on their part; it doesn't take a great flight of the imagination to see the correspondence between cattle and grazing lands in those days to economic opportunities in the work place today.

Why do Jews continue to live outside of Israel, further away than the other side of the Jordan – on the other side of the Atlantic? Because they've found good grazing lands for their cattle and it's a shame to give that up, especially since our present-day descendants of Gad and Menashe rarely question a contemporary Rabbinic authority about their choice. If they did, he would more than likely repeat Moses' message "Why should your brothers go out and fight while you stay here?" (Numbers 32:61).

After all, world Jewry has certainly benefited from the State of Israel, ever since its inception and to this very day. After the Holocaust, which resulted in the tragic loss of 1/3 of our people and 4/5 of our religious, intellectual and cultural leadership, it seemed as if Judaism had finally faded from the world stage of viable "peoples", nations and

religions. The renowned historian Alfred Toynbee called the Jews a “fossil” in the history he published in 1946, the Chief Rabbi of Rome converted to Christianity and immediately following the Holocaust, conversion was rampant on every campus in America.

Not only did world Jewry experience a miraculous renaissance after the declaration of Israeli statehood – and then again with the liberation of Jerusalem after the Six Day War in 1967 – but Israel is now the greatest provider of religious and educational leadership for Jewish communities throughout the world as well as the most effective fount of inspiration for searching and struggling assimilated Jews whose lives become significantly transformed through programs like Birthright Israel. All of the successful diaspora Jewish communities today owe their development in no small measure to the Jewish State.

Rabbi Yitzchak Arama gives a slightly different interpretation. The author of the Akedat Yitzchak describes the two and a half tribes as practical materialists who nevertheless are planning to eventually join their siblings in Israel’s heartland – but only eventually, not right now. At present, the personal needs of the family and the tribe must come first – until the leader of the family can amass sufficient material goods to make the big move to the middle east a less risky venture. Their personal needs – and not historic Israel’s national needs – must come first. Therefore, Moses took them to task.

The Ohr Hachayim approaches the situation in its simplest, most “religious” terms: suggesting that the two and a half tribes built their argument around Divine intervention: “The land which God conquered on behalf of the congregation of Israel is a land for cattle, and your ser-vants have cattle.” (32:41). In other words, this is the land that God conquered for us and therefore this is the land we wish to remain in. If God wants us somewhere else, let Him take us there, let Him conquer that land too. Until then, this is where we’re going to stay and this is where our cattle will stay. It is good for our cattle and therefore it is good for us.

In many ways, the Ohr Hachayim’s reading sees the two and a half tribes as being the counterparts of the devotees of Natura Karta. They are waiting for God Himself to bring them to Israel – and if not God, then at least His Messiah! When God is good and ready to redeem Israel completely, He’ll do it in His own time. Everything depends on God, and we are more than happy to wait it out in our pleasant grazing land until then....

The truth is that Gad, Reuven and half of Menashe had forgotten their history. They cannot rest on their grazing laurels while the rest of the nation fights their wars for them. When the Is-raelites reached the Reed Sea chased by the Egyptian hordes they asked Moses to pray to God. “Why are you crying out to me?” God says to Moses. “Speak to the Israelites and let them start moving.”

(Exodus 14:15). The sea does not split until Nachshon ben Aminadav and Caleb ben Yefuna jump in.

Similarly, when Moses tells the two and a half tribes that they have to bear arms and fight, he’s really pointing out that God’s promise to Israel is that everyone has to be partners – God with the nation, and the nation with one another, sharing in a mutual responsibility and privilege. At the end of the day, if our fledgling State proves to be even more vulnerable than we think by dint of less manpower in war and a smaller population than is required, Jews will have only themselves to blame for not rising to the challenge offered by the greatest Jewish adventure in 2000 years.

Shabbat Shalom

[CS - Late breaking - so added it

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>

date: Jul 13, 2023, 10:30 PM

subject: The First Marriage Therapist in History - New Maasei Essay by

Rabbi YY Jacobson

The First Marriage Therapist in History

The Only Yartzeit Mentioned in the Torah is Aaron’s. Why?

Why Aaron?

The Torah never mentions the yartzeit—the day of the passing—of any of its protagonists. We do not know the day when Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Sarah, or Rachel passed away. Even Moses’ day of passing is omitted in the Torah.[1]

There is one single exception: Aaron, the older brother of Moses and the High Priest of Israel. His death is recorded in the weekly portion with a date:

מסעי לג, לח: וַיַּעַל אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-הַר הָהָר עַל-פִּי ה' וַיָּמָת שָׁם בַּשָּׁנָה הָאַרְבָּעִים לְצֵאת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַתְּמִישִׁי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ:

Numbers 33:38: Aaron the priest ascended Mount Hor, at the behest of G-d, and died there, in the fortieth year after the Israelites had left the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.

Why Aaron? Even with his own siblings, Miriam and Moses, we don’t see in the Torah the date of their passing. Why was his passing day enshrined in the biblical text?

What is more, the date of his death is not mentioned in the actual story of his passing (back in Chukas, Numbers ch. 20), where it would seem to belong, but rather in the portion of Massei (Numbers ch. 33), while discussing the forty-two journeys that the Israelites traveled in the desert—en route from Egypt to the Promised Land. It in this context, apparently not relevant to the discussion, that the Torah takes a detour:[2] "They journeyed from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, at the edge of the land of Edom. Aaron the High Priest ascended Mount Hor at G-d's behest and died there..."

The Peacemaker

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once offered a moving insight, demonstrating the eternal relevance of Torah.[3]

Aaron, we know, was the ultimate peace lover and peacemaker among the Jewish people. As Hillel says in the Ethics of the Fathers:[4] “Be of the disciples of Aaron—a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, one who loves the creatures and draws them close to Torah.” Aaron dedicated his life to bringing peace between rivals and quarreling spouses.[5]

When the Torah describes his death, it states:[6] The whole congregation saw that Aaron had expired, and the entire house of Israel wept for Aaron for thirty days.

Why the “entire house of Israel”? When Moses passes away, the Torah states[7] that the “sons of Israel wept for Moses”; but here it was the “entire house.” Why the distinction? Rashi explains: “Both the men and the women, for Aaron had pursued peace; he promoted love between disputing parties and between husbands and wives.”

The Talmud relates[8] that 80,000 young men who were all given the name “Aaron” came to eulogize Aaron after his passing. They were the children born from parents who wanted to get divorced, and Aaron saved their marriages. They named their babies Aaron, in tribute to the person who saved their marriage and allowed these children to be born.

This means that over forty years in the wilderness, Aaron restored peace and trust to 80,000 Jewish couples. He must have been a busy marriage therapist!

His efforts were rewarded in kind, with the appearance of Clouds of Glory that served as a unifying force, molding the entire Israelite encampment into a cohesive unit.

The Remedy

Now, we can understand, on a homiletical level, why the yartzeit of Aaron is specified in the Torah—on the first day of the fifth month of the year, which is the Hebrew month of Av.

1500 years after the death of Aaron, the first of Av would usher in a period known in Jewish law as the “Nine Days,” referring to the first nine days of the Hebrew month of Av, a time dedicated to mourning the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples in Jerusalem, which were both burned down on the 9th day of AV (the first by Babylon in 586 BCE, the second by Rome in 70 CE).

The Talmud states:[9] “The second Temple, why was it destroyed? Because the Jews harbored baseless hatred towards each other.” This was also true on a political level: The Romans exploited the in-fighting between the Jewish people to defeat Judea.

During the first Temple era, too, it was the ongoing conflicts between the two kingdoms of Israel that weakened the nation, and the violence among Jews which spelled disaster, as the prophets explicitly warn.

“G-d provides the remedy before the disease,” says the Talmud.[10] Before any challenge in life, G-d provides the energy to deal with it. The yartzeit of a person, the day

when their life-journey is completed, is a day in which their energy and light is manifest in a uniquely potent way in the world.[11] So on the first day of Av, when we usher in the Nine Days of grief over our discord and hatred, the Torah tells us we have the yartzeit of Aaron the great peacemaker and unifier—a day in which can connect with Aaron’s energy and legacy of love and unity, to repair and heal the rifts and mistrust that caused our exile, and usher in a new era of redemptive consciousness.

That is why the Torah places the day of the yartzeit in the portion of Maasei, which according to Jewish tradition is always read on or right before the very day of his yartzeit—the first day (Rosh Chodesh) of the month Av. It is during this time of the year that the Torah wants to empower us with the energy of Aaron to restore cohesion, trust, and love among our people.

On every first day of Av, as one can smell the flames of destruction, Aaron casts upon us his power of love, reminding us that we are capable of transcending our fears and our egos, and creating a revolution of love among our eternal but fragmented people. If baseless hatred was the cause of our destruction, baseless love will create our redemption.

A Healthy Heart

A story:[12]

Moshe Tzur, an Israeli Air Force veteran, who has a skill for activism and leadership, returned to Judaism later in his life, and at a visit to the US in the 1970s he visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe asked him what he was doing to help the Jewish people and the community. Moshe was not that excited about getting involved.

The Rebbe asked him, “Why is the heart of the human being on the left side? Everything important in Judaism is on the right side. We put on tefillin with the right hand, we put the mezuzah on the right side of the door, we shake hands with the right hand, we hold the Torah scroll on our right side, Joseph wanted the blessing of the right arm of his father for his oldest son; in the Temple they always walked to the right, so why is the heart—the organ responsible giving us vitality—on the left?”

The Rebbe shared his vintage answer:

“Your heart is indeed on your right side! Because what is the true function of a heart? To feel and experience the heart of the person standing in front of you; and for the person in front of you, your heart is on the right side. When your heart is linked with others, then indeed your heart is on the “right” side.

Moshe continued to relate his story:

“This message really spoke to me, and I adopted it as the center of my philosophy of life. Since then, my mission in life has been to reach the heart of every Jew that I meet. I returned to Israel, and I established two important yeshivot. One yeshiva is called Aish HaTalmud; it is a yeshiva high school with almost two hundred boys enrolled. The other is called Torat Moshe, with about ninety-five boys. I have

also established four kollelim, study groups for married men, with almost a hundred-twenty enrolled.”

“In addition, I founded an organization to support poor families for Rosh Hashanah and Passover. These are people who don’t have much income, and we help them with food and money. All this because of the words of the Rebbe – that the key is to help others – which changed my perspective on life and shaped my life’s mission.”

[1] The Talmud and the Midrash deduce from the verses which dates they passed on, but it is not explicit in the Torah.

[2] Numbers 33:37-38

[3] Sichas 29 Tamuz, 5735 (1975). Sichas Motzei Shabbos Matos-Maasei 5739 (1979). Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 18 Matos-Maasei pp. 411-412. A similar idea I saw in Sefas Emes Maasei 5659.

[4] 1:12

[5] Avos chapter 1. Avod D’Rabi Nosson ch. 12

[6] Numbers 20:29. See also Rashi Rashid Devarim 34:8.

[7] Deuteronomy 34:8

[8] Tractate Kallah ch. 3

[9] Yuma 9b

[10] Megilah 13b

[11] See Tanya Igeres Hakodesh ch. 27-28

[12]

https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/3779581/jewish/Its-Their-Right.htm

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subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Construct-ive Criticism

Construct-ive Criticism

In Parshas Matos (perek 32) the Torah relays the story of the two shevatim, Reuven and Gad, who seek and are given land on the eastern side of the Jordan which had previously been owned by Sichon and Og. The two tribes come to Moshe and inform him that they are blessed with an abundance of sheep and this land is appropriate for livestock, and therefore they request, "do not bring us across the Jordan." Moshe then reproves them for following in the evil ways of the meraglim who thirty-nine years ago dissuaded the Jewish nation from entering the Promised Land and he was fearful that their request would once again undermine the national desire for their homeland. They respond to Moshe and declare (32:16), "Corrals for the flock we will build here for our livestock, and cities for our small children. We shall arm ourselves and join our brethren in their conquest of the land and stay with them till the land of Canaan is settled and our small children will stay in the fortified cities here." Rashi cites from the Tanchuma that Moshe chastises the two tribes and accusing them of having faulty priorities, i.e. for their

prioritizing their financial concerns over the welfare of their children, as we can see in their request wherein they stated, "We will build corrals for our sheep and cities for our children". Moshe taught them this is improper, rather let the primary values be primary and the secondary values be secondary; build cities for your children first and then take care of the needs of the sheep.

The Be'er Yosef (Rev Yosef Salant zt"l) comments that at first glance, this is most difficult to understand. How could the dor deah, which was raised in an aura of spirituality, make such a glaring mistake of putting their material concerns before the welfare of their families? He then proceeds to give the following fascinating explanation, as follows: note that when the Jewish nation asked the two kings, first Sichon then Og, to pass through their lands (see Parshas Chukas) they were not only rebuffed, but each of these kings brought their armies to the desert and attacked the Jewish people, and the young Jewish nation was victorious over both kings and defeated them. It is interesting to note that since the battles occurred in the desert the cities of Sichon and Og were not in any way war-torn or disturbed. Perhaps a screen door here and a broken window there needed replacement, but for the most part Reuven and Gad believed that these cities were open, available, and ready for their families to move in. It is here, the Be'er Yosef explains, that Moshe disagrees with the two tribes. Don't think, Moshe said, that you can simply take the wreath off the door, put a Mezuzah up, and then you can move your families in. Since these homes were steeped in idolatry they cannot be used for raising a Jewish family. Moshe therefore instructs them (32:24) "Build for yourselves cities for your small children and tents for the flocks". Indeed, the two tribes listen to Moshe, and therefore we are taught (32:34-38) that the children of Gad and Reuven built many cities in that area.

Is this really the halacha, that before one moves into a home that was inhabited by non-Jews that they have to make some significant structural change to the home? Indeed, this is the halacha regarding the conversion of a church into a synagogue. Many poskim were against this practice including the Chasam Sofer (Orach Chaim 42) and Maharam Shik (Yoreh Deah 142). The late Reb Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim (1:49) writes that he is not comfortable with the converting of a church to a synagogue, however if it was done with panim chadashos, meaning structural changes within the building, then he could agree to its usage as a synagogue. Why, then, did Moshe insist upon this more rigid application of the law where we are talking about homes for the tribes of Reuven and Gad and not synagogues? I'd like to suggest two possibilities.

Firstly, I believe we can understand this by utilizing a halachic principle found in Hilchos Channukah. The Pnei Yehoshua (Shabbos 21b) asks why did the Chashmonaim insist on finding pure oil to light the menorah when there is

the halachic principle (as found in Pesachim 77a) that the laws of tumah are hutra b'tzibbur, i.e. the laws of impurity are suspended in a situation when we are dealing with the majority of the Jewish nation? His question, therefore, is: why did we need a miracle and why make a fuss over the one cruse of oil when they could have used the impure oil? Reb Yosef Engel (Gilyonai Hashas, Shabbos 21b) answers that the principle of tumah hutra is applicable when we have a functioning Beis HaMikdash. However, to initiate and start a Beis HaMikdash anew requires a stronger foundation of total purity, and therefore they insisted on using pure oil.

Hashem said (Vayikra 14:34) that when Klal Yisrael would enter the Land of Canaan, He will place a tzara'as affliction houses in the land. The Medrash Rabbah (Vayikra 17:6) teaches that this was a good tiding for the Jewish nation because Amori people hid their treasured possessions in the walls of their homes so that the Jewish people would not find them, and as a result of the process of dealing with tzara'as in a house which includes opening the wall, the Jews were enriched with these hidden possessions. The Zohar (Parshas Tazria 50a) asks that if the purpose of the tzara'as was to benefit the Jewish nation, why could they not replace the stones they removed from the wall to find the treasure? Why did they have to remove the stones to outside their cities? The Zohar answers that the tzara'as was Divinely sent because the homes of the Amorites were spiritually contaminated by the idolatry worshipped therein, and this would prevent a foundation of kedusha from being laid for a Jewish home. Therefore, it was necessary to remove the stones and have them replaced, and oftentimes demolish the house, in order to facilitate and construct a Jewish home.

The settling of the two tribes in eiver haYarden was the beginning of the settlement of the Jewish nation, albeit in the "annex" of the Land of Israel. Just as reinaugurating the Beis HaMikdash required a strong foundation of total purity, so too this settlement of the land had to be al pi taharas hakodesh, in the most pure and pristine manner, and therefore they had to re-construct the homes to facilitate them being imbued with the highest levels of kedusha.

A second possibility as to why Moshe adopted a stringent standard for the homes of the tribes of Reuven and Gad was to intimate that each and every Jewish home is really a mikdash me'at (a miniature Temple) and therefore he applied the halacha that is afforded a synagogue, namely to reconstruct the building. An interesting proof of the spiritual potential of each home may be found in the Talmud (Brachos 16b) which brings many examples of the personal prayer that different Amoraim recited at the conclusion of their Shemoneh Esrei. Aside from the Torah, avodah and gemilas chasadim that each Jew must bring to their home, Rebbe Elazar added the following prayer to his amidah: "May it be Your will Hashem our G-d, that You

cause to dwell in our lot, love brotherhood, peace and companionship." We see that in addition to man's initiative and actions, he has to pray to Hashem that he be successful in this holy endeavor.

I'm going to give an example of the beautiful chessed that emerges from a sensitive Jewish home. The Vishnitzer Rebbe would ordinarily spend but a few moments each night at the many weddings he was invited to. He once made an exception, stayed for a long time and before he left he said to the father of the chassan, "Please call me whenever you get home". The man insisted it could be very late, perhaps one or two in the morning. The rebbe said, "I don't care. Make sure you call me when you get home." The man reluctantly called the Rebbe after two in the morning and the Rebbe started to ask him many, of what seemed to be mundane questions, especially from a most holy rav. He asked how the food was, was it plentiful, was it served nicely? He asked how the music was, was it too loud? The rebbe engaged him in very down to earth questions regarding the evening's proceedings. When the call was over his shamash, who had answered the call and was privy to this entire conversation, asked the rebbe at the end "What's going on here? Since when are you concerned with such trivial issues?" The rebbe answered that the man had lost his wife only a few months prior to the wedding. "Ordinarily, when the parents of the kallah or chassan get home from the wedding they go over each and every detail of the wedding. What was it like on your side? How was the food? How was the music? This man, unfortunately, came home to an empty home. He had no one to rehash the events of the evening with. I, therefore, called him to give him that opportunity and experience." WOW! That is an example of generating a creative house of chessed.

In the period of the three weeks that we find ourselves in, the tefillah with which we conclude every Shemoneh Esrei is sheyiboneh Beis haMikdash bimhayra biyamaynu. This is usually translated as "Please rebuild the Beis haMikdash speedily in our days". The Rav Naftali of Rupchitz zt"l interpreted this alternatively in the following way: "May you speedily rebuild the Temple with our days", that is to say that the positive actions, Torah and mitzvos, performed in our homes each day, contribute another brick to the building of the Beis haMikdash on high.

In reality, each individual is a living Beis haMikdash, as the Torah teaches (Shemos 25:9) "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell in each and every one of them." Therefore, it is most significant that we do some serious introspection regarding the personal Beis haMikdash within ourselves. It is not sufficient to resolve to no longer speak lashon hara, rather, this is the time to ask, why do I have the tendency to be jealous of others and to knock others? It is a time for deep constructive criticism to reconstruct the Mikdash within ourselves. There are so many factors that divide the Jewish people from one another, and when we think about and analyze these

factors, we see that in reality they are, for the most part, inconsequential. Maybe there are differences in hashkafa but these differences are certainly no excuse nor license to hate another. If we look to the giants of the previous generation, such as the late Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l, they had a neshama that embraced all Jews. Reb Aryeh Levin zt"l visited, and extended love to, Jewish criminals and prisoners. It is purported that Reb Tzvi Yehuda Kook zt"l said that he heard from his father that he did not hate anybody except for Ben Yehuda as they had studied together in Volozhin and he became an apikores. However, he added, that he was working on it. The message, I believe, is very clear. We have to learn from what Moshe told the tribes of Reuven and Gad, i.e. that we all need to accept constructive criticism and ensure that our foundations are laid al pi taharas haKodesh.

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Science of Speech

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Our parashah begins with the laws of vows, obligations, and the power one's words have to create new realities. What are some relevant lessons here for us to learn and apply to our day-to-day living?

It is well known that the quality of speech is what makes people unique. In characterizing the various dimensions in this world, Chazal list inanimate objects, vegetative growth, animal species, and finally the world of the 'medaber,' the one who speaks. The "ruach memala," the power of speech, the spirit of G-d blown into man, brings his G-dliness to the fore. "Ish ki yidor neder laHashem oh hishava shevua le'esor issar al nafsho lo yachel devaro – if a man makes a vow to G-d or makes an oath to obligate himself he must not break his word." (Bamidbar 30:3) Rashi comments on the words, "lo yachel devaro," when one makes a vow, "lo yechalel devaro," one should be careful not to make his words profane. "Chilul" is taking something holy and treating it in a way that disrespects its sacred purpose. Vayomer Yehudah explains that we must uphold whatever words come out of our mouths, even words that are not said as a promise. We must understand that even casual words have power that should be used carefully and appropriately.

The Netivot Shalom quotes Rabbeinu Yonah who teaches that when one who sanctifies his mouth, it becomes a "klei sharet," a holy vessel. Indeed, the purpose of our creation is to praise Hashem, and as such, the mouth becomes the medium of this holy mandate. It is therefore not surprising that the essential mitzvot of a Jew involve speech: learning Torah, prayer, remembering Shabbat. Words spoken from a mouth that has been refined have the status of kedushah and are inherently more elevated.

In Lekutei Torah the Ariz"l explains that a malach, an angel, is created with every word that emanates from one's mouth. It can either be a positive force or a negative one. "Lo yachel devaro" tells a person that no speech is profane, a spiritual force is created from everything he says. Just as it is prohibited to use a "kli sharet" for mundane purposes, likewise, all speech should be measured carefully. Shabbat is a time, as Yeshaya Hanavi teaches us, that our speech must be even more elevated than during the week. Our Torah learning takes on a different dimension on Shabbat, and some are careful to be more mindful how they use any words on Shabbat.

The Talmud teaches that even one's casual conversations will be presented at his final judgment. After his passing, Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer came to his student Rabbi Chaim Berlin in a dream and related that the harshest judgement is in the area of speech. Rav Biderman explains the following pasuk quoted in the Gemara, "u'magid l'adam mah secho – and declares to man what his speech is" (Amos 4:13). After one's lifetime he will be shown how much his tefillah could have impacted the dynamics of the world globally and individually had he used this power to the fullest. Let us take this meaningful lesson to invest in our words, holy and casual, to elevate ourselves and those around us.

From the Virtual Desk of the OU Vebbe Rebbe

Hagomel After Losing the Way

Rabbi Daniel Mann

Question: My son and I went hiking in a quite isolated area (no cell phone service) and took a wrong turn and walked a couple hours without seeing signs of civilization. We were almost out of water and weak before finding someone who directed us to safety. How should we thank Hashem for getting us through the danger?

Answer: There are four main possible steps to thank Hashem for being saved from danger. 1) Reciting Birkat Hagomel in front of a minyan (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 219:1-3). 2) Making a seudat hodaya (thanksgiving meal to thank Hashem) (see Living the Halachic Process VI, G-8.) 3) Giving tzedaka (Mishna Berura 218:32). 4) Reciting the beracha of "she'asa li nes bamakon hazeh" when one comes to the place of his miraculous salvation (Shulchan Aruch, OC 218:4).

We will deal first with the easier questions. The Shulchan Aruch does not mention seudot hodaya, and it apparently is never an obligation. On the other hand, a few gemarot relate to such a practice, and it can be very positive (see Living the Halachic Process *ibid.*) and is essentially without "risk." So, if you perceive you were in real danger, a seudat hodaya is a wonderful albeit optional expression of gratitude. The same is true of giving tzedaka.

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 218:9) cites two opinions whether the beracha upon coming to the place of his miracle is only for miracles that seem to defy nature or

even for more commonplace salvations. He recommends making the beracha without Hashem's Name. From your description, it sounds unlikely that the prospects for survival were low enough to qualify the salvation as a miracle on any level. Therefore, if you ever make it back to that place, no beracha seems warranted, certainly not with Hashem's Name.

Is Hagomel called for? The gemara (Berachot 54b) prescribes reciting Birkat Hagomel for people who emerged safely from the following predicaments, which are referred to in Tehillim 107's description of thanking Hashem: traveling by sea and through a midbar, disease, and prison. The Shulchan Aruch (219:9) brings two opinions as to whether the beracha is prescribed for any danger (e.g., a dangerous animal attacked him, a wall collapsed on him). While he recommends making the beracha without Hashem's Name in such cases, the accepted minhag, based on multiple Acharonim, is to make the regular beracha for extrication from any danger (Mishna Berura ad loc. 32; Igrot Moshe, OC II:59). However, as above, it is difficult to ascertain whether the level and perhaps type of danger you were in qualifies as warranting a beracha that is not found in the "official list." Might this case fit into the category of those who travel in a midbar? The Rambam (Berachot 10:8) lists, as one of the four situations for Hagomel, walking on roads outside the city (without mentioning desert). The Shulchan Aruch (ibid. 7) cites the Sephardi minhag to recite Hagomel after traveling outside the city a parsah (app., 4 kilometers; Yabia Omer I, OC 13 says that it goes by the time it takes to walk a parsah = 72 minutes). (This is the criterion for tefillat haderech – ibid. 110:7). This is because of a general assumption of danger in inter-city roads. The Ashkenazi minhag is to make Hagomel only after a "midbar," where there are bandits and wild animals, and not for uneventful land travel (regarding air, see Igrot Moshe ibid.).

The Mishna Berura (219:31) says that if a traveler on a normal road is attacked by robbers, all agree he recites Hagomel. The combination of factors (road plus danger) justifies the beracha (see Sha'ar Hatziyun ad loc. and Igrot Moshe ibid.), making it equivalent to a desert, and that applies to your case – lost with little water on path. Furthermore, walking lost in an isolated area is walking in a midbar (which includes wilderness) itself, one of the four definite Hagomel cases. While poskim mention animals and bandits, that is in addition to what the p'sukim (Tehillim 107:4-7) discuss – being lost in a wilderness with limited food and drink (see Ish Matzliach, II, OC 11; Imrei Shefer 29).

TORAH SHORTS:Matot-Masai 5783

by Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz

Levels of Control (Matot-Masai)

Nothing is more dangerous than a friend without discretion; even a prudent enemy is preferable. -Jean de La Fontaine

Moses addresses the leaders of the tribes of Israel. He instructs them as to the laws of vows. He instructs them about literally, "what comes out of your mouths." The Bat Ayin on Numbers 30:2 connects the fact that Moses is addressing the leaders of the tribes to a person's ability to control their mouth.

It seems that Israel's judicial, military, and most likely political leadership during their years of wandering in the desert was organized in a hierarchical system, as initially proposed by Moses' father-in-law, Jethro. Back in the Book of Exodus, shortly after the nation of Israel is miraculously freed from Egypt, crosses the Reed Sea and camps out at the foot of Mount Sinai, Jethro gives Moses much needed advice. He saw Moses attending individually to every single person in Israel, tells him it's unsustainable and recommends a hierarchical meritocracy. Moses implements Jethro's plan and establishes the roles of Captains of Ten, Captains of Fifty, Captains of One Hundred and Captains of One Thousand.

The Bat Ayin suggests that a person achieved a higher rank based on their ability to control their mouth. Those who exhibited the greatest control over what they said, how they said it, when they said it, to whom they said it, and perhaps most importantly, what they didn't say – those people merited the highest rank within the leadership of Israel. The less prudent, less sensitive, less cautious and less circumspect a person was in their dialogue, the lower their rank, and ostensibly, those with little control of their speech were not given any positions of responsibility.

However, the control of their tongue was a product of their awe and reverence of God. The stronger a person understood their divine responsibilities and obligations, the more a person sought sanctity and transcendence. The more they used their powers of speech for noble and holy purposes, the more they were elevated.

May we always use caution and deliberation in what we say and achieve greater levels of divine connection.

Shabbat Shalom,
Ben-Tzion

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Matos

Putting People First

During the presidential run of 1992, candidate Bill Clinton published a book entitled Putting People First. He had it right. He just wasn't the first one to write the book. This week we'll explore how Moshe — very subtly — taught his nation that people, especially the children, come first.

The Jews were camped on the bank of the Jordan River, about to enter the land of Israel. Representatives of the

tribes of Gad and Reuben approached Moshe with a very brazen request. Numbers 32:3-5: "We don't want to enter Israel," they exclaimed. "The land here is very suited for our cattle, and it would be quite beneficial if we were to remain here." Moshe, recalling the calamity of the ten spies who dissuaded an entire nation from entering Israel, reacted in shock. "Do you remember what happened 40 years ago? Do you want to, once again, demoralize your brothers and sisters as did the spies? Do you remember that your parents and an entire generation perished in the desert due to that sin?" Moshe then recounted, in full detail, the misfortune of that fateful event. "And now," he concluded, "you have risen in place of your fathers to rekindle the burning wrath of G-d?" The representatives, sat quietly through the denunciation and then spoke. "No, Moshe," they exclaimed. "It was never our intent just to remain here. We'll build stables for our livestock and homes for our children. Then we will join our brethren in the fight for Israel. Only after all is conquered will we return home and settle." Moshe, obviously pacified by the quick and obviously well prepared response, reviewed the stipulations. "OK," he countered, "you shall arm yourself for battle, cross the Jordan and fight with your brothers until Hashem drives out the enemy. Once the Land is conquered and settled, you can come back here and this land will be a heritage for you." After Moshe reiterated all the prerequisites involved in the deal, he warns them. "If you transgress your commitment you will bear a terrible sin before Hashem." Then, in what is seemingly out of place he adds the following. "Build cities for your children and pens for your livestock, and thus you shall observe the words that left your mouth." Two questions bother me: Why is Moshe adding his comments on the domestic portion of their request? Isn't his only concern that the tribes should join their brothers in the conquest of the land of Israel?

Rashi notes that Moshe switches the order of the request. The tribes said they will "build stables for our livestock and homes for our children." Moshe switches the order and tells them "build cities for your children and pens for your livestock." Why is this followed by the words, "thus you shall observe the words that left your mouth."? Didn't he already warn them of the consequence of retraction?

Henry Hirsch, the president of the Welbilt Co., one of America's leading oven and major appliance manufacturers, had another labor of love. He was the president of one of America's premier Torah institutions, Yeshiva Torah Voda'ath. At a board meeting, at which many of the yeshiva's prominent lay leaders were present, the school's cook prepared a beautiful supper in honor of the eminent supporters. As one of the students was serving the executives, Mr. Hirsch looked at the delicious meal. "Excuse me," he asked the young scholar. "What are they serving you in the main dining hall?" The boy looked

sheepishly at Mr. Hirsch and stammered, "I think we're having egg salad sandwiches."

The renowned philanthropist turned to the executive board and the representatives of the Yeshiva administration. "We are all here for the sake of the Yeshiva boys, I think it is they who should be eating this chicken dinner. Let's send it to them and we'll have the egg salad instead."

Moshe was pleased with the offer to fight. However, he noted a major problem in the honorable plans of the tribes of Gad and Reuben. They prefaced their commitment with a very suspect phrase. "We will build pens for our livestock and then we will build cities for our children." Moshe listens, reviews their offer and is doubtful. People who put monetary values before humans tend to worry about finances before family. And people who put money first often change their position, when their holdings are at stake. Thus Moshe reiterates their pledge with one major amendment. He says to them, "build cities for your children and then pens for your livestock; thus you shall keep the word that left your mouth." If the children come first, then he will trust them. He knows and believes their values are in order and they will uphold their pledge. A major provision in the deal was not only a military commitment, but a philosophy that will guide the Jews for centuries. Put the people first!

Good Shabbos!

Office of the Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Matot Massei: What difference does it make where we live?

The maths doesn't add up.

In Parshat Maasei we're told how six cities of refuge were established for our people: three which were to be west of the River Jordan, in Israel proper, and three in Transjordan, called Ever HaYarden, east of the River Jordan. These were cities which were wisely established for people guilty of homicide. There was a danger that family members of the victim might seek revenge, and so the person who had killed somebody inadvertently needed to flee, for his or her safety, to a city of refuge.

But the maths doesn't add up. Because in Israel proper there were nine and a half tribes, and in Transjordan there were only two and a half tribes: Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe. So why would there be three cities of refuge on each side?

The Talmud explains that outside of the holy territory of the land of Israel, people had less respect for the sanctity of life, therefore there was a greater need for cities of refuge in that area.

Reb Itzele of Volozhin, a great 19th century scholar, adds a further dimension. He talks about the primary problem being the threat from members of the family of the victim. Outside of the land of Israel they wanted to seek revenge but inside Israel proper, they were more likely to consider:

seeing as one person has already died, what sense will it make for another person to die? These people therefore controlled their urges. As a result there were fewer people who came into the category of 'goel hadam' – somebody seeking to take revenge.

From here emerges a hugely important lesson for all of us. It's all about the impact of our surroundings. Our environment sets a tone for our lives. I believe that there are two primary messages here.

First of all we should carefully select where we live where we raise our children because the influences of our environment will always have an impact on us. Secondly and more importantly, let us also guarantee that within our own family circles the tone of morality and ethics that we establish will be such that those growing up within the family will be committed to leading a responsible life.

If we see to it that our homes are a place of kedusha, of much sanctity, that will hopefully make all the difference to the ways of life of those within them.

Shabbat shalom.

Toiveling Keilim

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1:

"Last time I went to immerse some cutlery, a lady immersing some aluminum bowls asked me to include her with my beracha. When I asked her whether she wanted me to help her recite her own beracha on the mitzvah, she responded softly that she received a psak not to recite a beracha when toiveling aluminum, although she did not know the reason. Why would she not recite the beracha?"

Question #2:

"I have a gift business in which I sell candy dishes with candies, fruits, and nuts already in the glass dishes. Must I toivel these dishes before I fill them?"

Introduction:

In Parshas Matos, the Torah teaches: Only the gold and the silver; the copper, the iron, the tin and the lead: any item that was used in fire needs to be placed in fire to become pure [meaning "kosher"], yet it must also be purified in mikveh water. And that which was not used in fire must pass through water" (Bamidbar 31:22-23). These verses serve as the basis for teaching three different sets of laws:

1. Absorbing Concepts

How to kasher vessels that were used to cook non-kosher foods. An item that was used directly in fire, such as a spit or grate that broiled non-kosher, is kashered only by burning it directly in fire; an item used to cook on top of a fire, such as a pot that cooked non-kosher, may be kashered via a process similar to the way it was used, etc.

2. Tainted Metal

Which items are susceptible to tumah. The Torah here teaches that implements made of metal become tamei (spiritually impure) through contact with a tamei item

(such as an animal carcass), and that immersing them in a mikveh restores them to tahor status. An item is susceptible to tumah only when the Torah informs us of this fact – if the Torah never taught that an item can become tamei, it does not, and therefore most items in the world are not susceptible to tumah. (Unfortunately, these laws have limited practical application until Moshiach comes and we again have the parah adumah. At that time, we will be able to live according to the tahor status necessary to observe the mitzvos related to the Beis Hamikdash, terumah and maaser sheini.)

3. Immersed in Holiness

The mitzvah to immerse implements in a mikveh or spring prior to using them for food. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 75b) notes that this immersion is required even if the vessel has never been used. In other words, this mitzvah is unrelated to the requirement of kashering equipment that was used to prepare non-kosher food and to the laws related to purifying implements that became tamei.

Materials that require tevilah

The Torah teaches that utensils owned by a non-Jew that are made of gold, silver, copper, iron, tin or lead require immersion in a kosher mikveh or spring when they are transferred to Jewish ownership. According to most authorities, this mitzvah is a Torah requirement, although there is a minority opinion that this mitzvah is required only midrabbanan (Rambam, as understood by Pri Chadash). We will assume that the requirement to immerse gold, silver, copper, iron, tin and lead implements is Torah-ordained. (Bear in mind that, although we would not use lead as an ingredient because of valid concerns about lead poisoning, this medical problem was not discovered until the nineteenth century. Therefore, we find much earlier halachic literature discussing immersion of lead or lead-lined utensils.)

There is no requirement to immerse food utensils made of wood, earthenware, ivory, bone, leather, stone or most other materials. We will soon discuss glass and plastic.

Mechiras Chometz and Tevilas Keilim

As we all know, before Pesach one is required to rid one's house and all one's possessions of chometz. However, some items, such as toasters, mixers, wooden kneading bowls, and flour bins are difficult, if not impossible, to clean. Shulchan Aruch and Rema (Orach Chayim 442:11) recommend giving wooden kneading bowls and flour bins and the chometz they contain as a gift to a non-Jew before Pesach, with the understanding that the gentile will return them after the holiday. Today, the standard mechiras chometz that we perform includes selling this chometz and these appliances in the sale. However, what do I do if I have metal appliances that may be full of chometz, such as mixers and toasters? If I sell these appliances to a gentile and then purchase the appliance back from him, will I now need to immerse the appliance in a mikveh?

The halachic authorities note that someone selling his or her chometz to a gentile before Pesach should be careful not to sell utensils that require tevilas keilim. Instead, one should rent the appliances to a gentile and sell the chometz they contain (Chachmas Odor; Noda Beyudah, cited in Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 120:13). An item rented to a gentile does not require immersion when it is returned to the Jewish owner.

Cleavers versus Graters!

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 75b) quotes Rav Sheishes as suggesting that anything purchased from a gentile, even a clothing shears, should require immersion. Rav Nachman responded that the mitzvah of tevilas keilim applies only to kelei seudah -- literally, implements used for a meal, which includes both utensils used to prepare food, such as pots and knives, and those utilized to eat or drink, such as drinking cups and tableware (Avodah Zarah 75b).

Grates and Grills

One is required to immerse only those items that usually touch the food directly. Therefore, stove grates, blechs, hotplates, knife sharpeners, trivets, can openers and corkscrews do not require tevilah (see Yoreh Deah 120:4), but grills, peelers, funnels, strainers, salt shakers, pepper mills and tongs do require tevilah, since they all touch food.

What about storage vessels?

Is one required to immerse a metal container or glass jar used to store foodstuffs, but that is not suitable for preparing or consuming food?

Rabbi Akiva Eiger (on Yoreh Deah 120:1, quoting Keneses Hagedolah [Beis Yosef 18]) discusses whether storage vessels require tevilah, and concludes that it is unclear whether they should be immersed. Therefore one should immerse them without reciting a beracha, because in case there is no mitzvah to immerse them, reciting a beracha al tevilas keilim before immersing them is reciting a beracha levatalah, a beracha in vain. A better solution is to immerse them at the same time that one immerses an item that definitely requires a beracha.

Kelei Sechorah -- "Merchandise"

The halachic authorities note that a storekeeper does not toivel vessels he is planning to sell, since for him they are not kelei seudah, but items he intends to sell. Later authorities therefore coined a term "kelei sechorah," utensils used as merchandise, ruling that these items do not require immersion until they are purchased by the person intending to use them (based on Taz, Yoreh Deah 120:10). Furthermore, several halachic authorities contend that the storekeeper cannot immerse the vessels prior to sale, since there is as yet no requirement to immerse them (Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak 8:70). This is based on a statement of the Rema that implies that a tevilah performed before one is obligated to immerse a vessel, such as while it is still owned by the gentile, does not fulfill the mitzvah and must

be repeated after it becomes the property of a Jew (Rema Yoreh Deah 120:9).

Based on this discussion, we can now address one of our above-mentioned questions:

"I have a gift business in which I sell candy dishes with candies, fruits, and nuts already in the glass dishes. Must I toivel these dishes before I fill them?"

This question is a modification of a situation in which I was involved. I once received a glass candy dish from someone, with a note from the business stating that the dish has already been toiveled. I called the proprietor of the business to inform him that, in my opinion, not only is he not required to toivel the dish, but I suspect that it does not help. My reasoning is that, although the proprietor fills his dishes with nuts and candies, from his perspective this is still merchandise that he is selling. The dish therefore qualifies as kelei sechorah which one need not immerse, and, therefore, immersing them does not fulfill the mitzvah. As a result, not only is the proprietor not obligated to immerse the dishes, but doing so fulfills no mitzvah, and it is a beracha levatalah for him to recite a beracha on this immersion. Including a note that the dish was toiveled is detrimental, since the recipient will assume that he has no requirement to toivel this dish, whereas, in fact, the end-user is required to immerse it. For these reasons, I felt it incumbent on myself to bring this to the attention of the owner of the business.

The proprietor was very appreciative. He told me that, in truth, it was a big hassle for him to toivel the dishes, but he had been assuming that halacha required him to do so before he could fill the dishes.

Some Immersing Details

When immersing the utensil, one should not hold it very tightly in one's hand, since this will cause the part of the utensil he is holding to not be immersed properly. Instead, one should either hold the utensil somewhat loosely, or alternatively, one should dip one's hand into the mikveh water before holding the utensil that will be immersed (Rema, Yoreh Deah 120:2; see Taz and Shach).

Prior to immersing a utensil, one must remove all rust and dirt from the utensil. If one immersed the utensil and it had rust or dirt that most people would not want on the appliance, one must clean it, and then re-immersing it (Yoreh Deah 120:13).

When one is immersing an item that definitely requires tevilah, immediately prior to dipping it, one should recite the beracha, Asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al tevilas keili. If one immerses more than one vessel he should conclude instead al tevilas keilim (Yoreh Deah 120:3). Although some authorities mention alternative texts to the beracha, I have quoted the commonly used text, which follows the majority opinion.

If it is uncertain whether the item requires tevilah, one should not recite a beracha. It is preferable, if possible, to immerse it at the same time that one immerses a different

utensil that definitely requires tevilah, so that both items are included in the beracha.

May a child toivel keilim?

If a child tells you that he immersed a vessel in a kosher mikveh, may you rely that this indeed happened?

The halacha is that if an adult supervised the child immerse the vessel correctly, one may use the utensil, but one may not rely on the child attesting that he or she immersed the utensil properly (Yoreh Deah 120:14; see also Gr"a ad locum and Pri Megadim, Orach Chayim, Mishbetzos Zahav 451:6). Apparently, this is not a well-known halacha, since one often finds children being used as agents to immerse utensils for their parents.

People eating from glass dishes...

The Gemara teaches that food utensils made of glass must be immersed prior to use, since glassware is similar to metalware in that when it becomes broken it can be melted and repaired, what we usually call recyclable. One recites a beracha prior to immersing glassware, just as one recites a beracha prior to immersing metalware.

Of course, this leads us to a question about plasticware, since many forms of plastic are recyclable in ways very similar to metal and glass. Does repairable plasticware require tevilah just as glassware does? Most people assume that plasticware is not included in the mitzvah of tevilas keilim, but why?

This takes us to an earlier discussion between 19th-century poskim concerning a type of boneware, which, when broken or cracked, could be repaired by melting and melding it. (I personally have no experience with this material, but I imagine that one could probably melt and repair bone, just as one can repair horn by melting and melding. There is much halachic discussion about the repair of a damaged shofar by melting and melding the crack.) Rav Avraham Shaag, the rebbe of Rav Yosef Chayim Sonnenfeld (later the Rav of the old Yishuv of Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael), concluded that just as one is required to immerse glassware because it is repairable, one is required to immerse boneware (Shu't Ohel Avraham #24, quoted by Darkei Teshuvah). This position was disputed by Rav David Zvi Hoffman, the preeminent posek of Germany in his day, who contended that since the immersion of glassware is required only midrabbanan, one need immerse only those items that Chazal specifically required, but a newly developed material, albeit similar to glassware, would not require immersion (Shu't Melamed Leho'il, Yoreh Deah #49).

The late authorities debate whether plastic items require immersion prior to use. Indeed, some authorities (Shu't Minchas Yitzchak 3:76) require the immersion of reusable plastic plates and the like, because they follow the logic of Rav Avraham Shaag -- although without a beracha, since perhaps Rav Dovid Hoffman is halachically correct. Nevertheless, most authorities conclude that one is not

required to immerse plasticware (Shu't Yabia Omer 4: Yoreh Deah: 8; Tevilas Keilim page 226).

Other Metals

When teaching that metal implements become tamei and that one must immerse food utensils before use, the Torah specifies the six metals that were available in ancient times: gold, silver, copper, iron, tin and lead. (Bronze and brass are both alloys whose main component is copper; in bronze, the most significant minority element is tin, and in brass it is zinc.) However, over the last two hundred years, mankind developed the means to extract and process several other metals, including platinum, chromium, aluminum, and titanium. Do these "new" metals have the same halachic status as the six mentioned in the Torah? Are platinum rings, aluminum urns and titanium airplanes susceptible to tumah? Do chrome pots and aluminum trays require tevilas keilim?

The Tiferes Yisrael, in his extensive introduction to the Order of Taharos, rules that the newly discovered metals have the same halachic status as the six mentioned explicitly by the Torah, and they are all capable of becoming tamei (Yevakeish Daas #44). It follows from his line of reasoning that one is required min haTorah to immerse food vessels made of the new types of metal, and indeed this is how many authorities rule (Tevilas Keilim page 225). Many authorities contend that, although one is required to immerse aluminum pots, one is not required to immerse aluminum items that are disposable. Since they are meant to be disposed after use, they are not considered "keilim" that require immersion.

On the other hand, other poskim dispute the Tiferes Yisrael's conclusion that all types of metal become tamei, contending that since the Torah mentions six specific metals (and the Torah could certainly have used a generic term for all metal items that would have been much briefer), choosing a lengthy way of listing six types of metal demonstrates that these are the only types of metal that become tamei, and that any newly developed metals are not susceptible to tumah (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:164; letter from Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky published at end of the sefer Tevilas Keilim).

According to the latter approach, one can argue that chrome pots and aluminum implements do not require tevilas keilim. The prevalent accepted practice is to assume that they do require tevilas keilim, although some authorities consider this a sufficient enough doubt to omit the beracha prior to immersing these items.

Conclusion

According to Rav Hirsch, metal vessels, which require mankind's mining, extracting and processing, represent man's mastery over the earth and its materials. Whereas vessels made of earthenware or wood only involve man shaping the world's materials to fit his needs, the manufacture of metal demonstrates man's creative abilities to utilize natural mineral resources to fashion matter into a

usable form. Consuming food, on the other hand, serves man's most basic physical nature. Use of metal food vessels, then, represents the intellectual aspect of man serving his physical self, which, in a sense, is the opposite of why we were created, which is to use our physical self to assist our intellect to do Hashem's will. Specifically in this instance, the Torah requires that the items hereby produced be immersed in a mikveh before we use them, in order to endow them with increased kedusha before they are put to food use. This demonstrates that although one may use one's intellect for physical purposes, when doing so one must first sanctify the item, to focus on the spiritual.

Parshas Mattos-Masei
Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Moshe ben Yitzchak.

Only as Good as His Word

And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Jewish people saying; "this is what Hashem has commanded. If a man vows a vow to Hashem, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to whatever comes out of his mouth" (30:2-3).

Maimonides, in the introduction to his commentary on Mishna, ponders why Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi, compiler of the Mishna, chose to place the tractate of Nedarim (vows) in the section of Nashim (the laws related to women). He answers that the placement is appropriate as Nedarim deals with vows made by a woman that can be annulled either by her father or her husband. However, the laws regarding a father or husband annulling vows do not appear until the tenth chapter of Nedarim; clearly this isn't a focus of the tractate.

Perhaps an alternative answer to Maimonides' question can be suggested. The vast majority of tractate Nedarim is concerned with the language and articulation of a vow – which words and/or statements bind a person to a commitment and which do not. The tractate also focuses on which words properly communicate one's intent and which phrases do not. This means that to bind oneself to a commitment requires the correct words, the proper intent, and the listener's understanding.

As Nedarim is essentially about articulating intent and how communications are understood, it is incredibly relevant to the section of Nashim. Interaction with wives (and mothers and daughters, of course) are all about understanding communication. Men have to understand that conversation isn't just about saying what's on their minds. They have to begin by considering how their words will be interpreted and understood (or not) and then choose their words carefully. Even then, men often fail (as we are reminded). It must be understood that through speech – which is a reflection of our soul and a God-given ability through His

breath – one has the power to convey thoughts and create obligations by articulating commitments.

Perhaps this is why the only transaction that requires actual speech is that of the marriage ceremony. The message being delivered is that marriage can only begin with a man articulating his intent through his words – and in a manner that his bride finds acceptable.

Don't Focus on Yourself – Be Happy

And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Avenge the people of Israel from the Midianites; afterwards you shall be gathered to your people. And Moshe spoke to the people saying, "Arm some of yourselves for the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and do the Lord's vengeance in Midian. From every tribe a thousand [...] twelve thousand armed for war" (31:1-5).

This week's parsha relates Moshe's final responsibility as leader of the Jewish people: to exact vengeance on the Midianites who had caused devastating human losses to the Jewish people. Hashem informed Moshe that after completing this final mission Moshe would die. Rashi (ad loc) quotes the Midrash Tanchuma: "Even though Moshe knew that at the end of this final task he would die, he did it with joy and didn't delay." How do Chazal know that he did it with joy if it doesn't appear anywhere in the pesukim?

Rashi (verse four) explains that the words "from every tribe" include even the tribe of Levi. In other words, every tribe sent one thousand armed soldiers for war against the Midianites. The commentators (Mizrahi and others ad loc) ask a very difficult question on Rashi: If Moshe indeed sent one thousand from every tribe including the tribe of Levi, that would equal 13,000 armed soldiers, so why does verse five say that only 12,000 were given over to war?

Rashi (verse five) explains that the 12,000 armed men had to "be given over" to duty because they had heard that after this final mission Moshe would die. The men were very reluctant to go and had to be coerced. So even though Moshe had gone about his final task with joy, the Jewish people were very sad. Why this dichotomy?

As the baby boomer generation ages, the burden of their care falls on a large portion of our population – their children. Why is it that some of these children view caring for their aging parents as their greatest privilege and are thrilled to be able to do this for their parents, while other children see it as an overwhelming burden? This isn't limited to caring for others; often two people in the same predicament (e.g. a serious health issue) have polar opposite attitudes to life and living. Why? What is the root cause of this difference?

The answer is focus. A person who is constantly, and solely, focused on what he can do for others is always happy as his main currency of life is defined with what he can do for others. Conversely, a person who is focused solely on himself is devastated when anything about him is diminished. Therefore, an outwardly focused individual

looks at caring for a parent as a tremendous opportunity; not only to do a great kindness, but also to repay a debt of gratitude. While an inwardly focused person only sees how his life is “diminished” by this added responsibility.

This, of course, is a cause for sadness. The inwardly focused individual doesn't feel a deep sense of gratitude because, after all, everything is coming to him. This sense of entitlement (i.e. I am owed everything I receive because everything is about me) causes these individuals to lead a frustrating and unhappy life because they are always waiting on the largesse of others. On the other hand, the person with the healthy giving attitude is always happy because he is in control of his own destiny; he isn't frustrated by waiting for others to give him what he “deserves.”

Moshe was an outwardly focused individual. Even though Hashem told him that he would die after this final mission, he was happy because his sole focus was what he could do for others. Anytime he had something to accomplish he did it with joy. We see this clearly in the pesukim: Hashem tells Moshe to take revenge for the Jewish people, yet when he tells the Jewish people he changes the purpose of the war to be revenge for Hashem. He is telling the Jewish people that this isn't about us, this is about Hashem. When someone attacks Hashem's children (the Jewish people), it is an attack on Hashem and we have to avenge His honor.

The problem with the perspective of the Jewish people was that they were focused on their loss (i.e. Moshe dying after this final mission) and had to be “given over” because they didn't want to lose Moshe. Only the tribe of Levi, Moshe's tribe and the one tribe that was historically outwardly focused on what Hashem wanted (e.g. they never participated in the golden calf, they were the only tribe to keep the mitzvah of circumcision in the desert, etc.), wasn't reluctant to go to war. It is for that reason that only 12,000 men had to be given over to the war. Only the other tribes were reluctant, the tribe of Levi was already ready to go on this final mission.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה