

PHILO-TORAH – YOUNG ISRAEL OF AVENUE K – Matos-Mas-ei/Rosh Chodesh

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created by R' Phil Chernofsky of TT fame. Much the same, much to be different.

This Y. I. of Ave. K edition is dedicated in loving memory of ILANA MICHAL b. AMIT YEHUDA, a"h

These Divrei Torah are dedicated in beloved memory of Yechiel Michel b. Shlomo, z"l, whose 11th yahrtzeit is 3 Av; and Yitzchak b. Yonah, z"l, whose 6th yahrtzeit is 6 Av

THREE FRIDAY NIGHT MINYANIM – 6:36 (PLAG), 7:20pm, 8:15pm – All in main shul
CANDLELIGHTING NOT BEFORE 6:56pm

SHABBOS MORNING MINYANIM

Shabbos Shacharis – Shocheyn Ad – 5:20 (neitz – 5:34:15); 7:50am; 9:15am

WEEKDAY SHACHARIS MINYANIM – 5:10am, 6:55am, 8:00am

REMEMBER that we have set up conferencing capability for our shiurim. Please call in to hear our wonderful Daf Yomi Maggidei

shiur, Rabbi Moshe Zywica - mornings, and Rabbi Shmuel Sadovsky - evenings

Mornings – Monday THROUGH Friday – 6:05am – (605) 313-5943, ID – 106083#

Nightly, Sunday THROUGH Thursday – 8:30pm – Zoom ID 770 292 6177#, PW – 414019#

DAF HAYOMI – MORNING AND NIGHT THIS WEEK:

Mornings – Mon THROUGH Fri – 6:05am;

Nightly, Sun-Thu – 8:30pm

Parashios Matos-Masei

1 Av, 5781;

Daf – Sukka 3 9-10 July

Candlelighting – 8:10pm, but NOT BEFORE 6:56pm;

These Divrei Torah are dedicated for a z'chus for a refua shleima for Ruchama Chana Bracha bas Chasya Henya Myril, Chava Tova Emunah bas Shulamis, Eliyahu Zev b. Breindel, Yona Malka b. Pesil, Aviva Sabra b. Yona Malka, Moshe b. Miriam, Amiram Shmuel b. Zohara, b'soch sh'ar cholei Yisrael

CALnotes – Rosh Chodesh Av - The first of Av is one of 295 dates on the calendar (out of a total of 385), that is part of the LO ADU ROSH system. Meaning that all of those days have four days of the week on which they can fall, and three days of the week that they cannot fall. Rosh Chodesh Av is LO AGU - it cannot fall on a Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday.

Furthermore, of the days of the week that the dates in the LO ADU ROSH system can fall, three are similar in frequency, the fourth less than half as often. For Rosh Chodesh Av, Monday is most frequent at 32% of years, Wednesday 28½%, Friday 28%, and Shabbat (as this year), 11½%.

Kiddush L'vana - Most shuls will wait until after Tish'a b'Av for Kiddush L'vana. See the Tish'a b'Av Review for further details. Minhag Yerushalayim and YIAK is not to wait, but to take the first opportunity for KL three full days after from the molad. The molad of Av is Friday night, 10:45pm Israel Summer Time). Three full days after that is Monday night, July 12th. However, the Moon sets on that night before 10:00pm, so the first op for KL in Israel will be Tuesday night, July 13th.

Haftara for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Av - Although there are different opinions, it is the common practice to read SHIM'U D'VAR HASHEM (the second of the three haftarot of puranata) rather than the haftara for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. S'fardim will conclude the haftara with the first and last pasuk of HASHAMAYIM KISI. Ashkenazim do not have that minhag.

R"Ch Av on Shabbat - Even though the Nine Days begin on Shabbat, no change to regular Shabbat observance takes place. However, Shabbat R"Ch Av should not be used for engagement celebrations or graduation parties (and the like).

For havdala after Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Av, some people will use a non-wine substitute beverage (like beer). Others will use wine and give it to a child drink - old enough to understand brachot but not old enough to understand Aveilut HaChurban, mourning for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Still others will follow the opinion (Chazon Ish) that havdala is still part of Shabbat (even though it is technically after Shabbat) and drink the wine, as usual.

Matot-Mas'ei and Maftir for R"Ch - There are seven pairs of sedras that sometimes read separately and sometimes they are combined. Matot and Mas'ei are the most often combined sedras of the seven pairs. See the GM link for further details and an interesting gimatriya match.

	Matot	Mas'ei	M&M
of 54 sedras	42nd	43rd	-
of 10 in Bamidbar	9th	10th	-
lines in a Torah	190	189	379
rank	29th	30th	1st
Parshiyot	9	8	17
P'tuchot	4	6	10
S'tumot	5	2	7
P'sukim	112	132	244
rank (Torah/Bam.)	24/7	12/5	1/1
Words	1484	1461	2945
rank	29/6	32/7	1/1
Letters	5652	5773	11425
rank	30/7	28/6	1/1
Mitzvot	2	6	8
positive	1	2	3
prohibitions	1	4	5

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - [P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha. Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 16+12=28 p'sukim - 30:2-31:12 - [P> 30:2 (16)] "And Moshe spoke to the leaders of the Tribes of Israel..." The first principle of the topic of Nedarim (vows & oaths) is that a person must fulfill the terms of his vow and it is prohibited to "profane one's word" [407, L157 30:3].

On the other hand, built into the Torah's laws are procedures for release from vows. These procedures also constitute a mitzva, known as HAFARAT N'DARIM [406, A95 30:3]. A girl (12-12½ yrs. old - officially called a NAARA) who makes a vow can have her vows nullified by her father (only on the day he hears of them). Similarly (but with differences), a wife's vows can be nullified by her husband. (In this case, only some vows, those which affect the husband can be nullified by him.)

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

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

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

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

The Chatam Sofer notes that when G-d commands the battle against Midyan, He calls it NIKMAT B'NEI YISRAEL, a revenge for Israel's sake. When Moshe calls the people to battle, he refers to revenge for G-d's honor. If the people would be fighting for their own honor, they might forgo the battle and not hasten Moshe's end. But to avenge G-d's honor, they dare not refuse.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[S> 32:5 (11)] They then requested permission to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe's initial reaction is intense anger, fearing that the request of the two tribes would discourage the People of Israel from wanting to proceed into the Land, repeating the experience of the "spies" of almost 40 years earlier.

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

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

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 23+10+39=72 p'sukim - 32:20-33:49 - Fourth Aliya is always the BRIDGE Aliya between two sedras when they are combined. This particular R'VI'I is THE longest Aliya in the Torah. There are seven whole sedras in the Torah each with fewer p'sukim than this Aliya.

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

The Torah describes the cities that the 2½ tribes established to settle their families and flocks prior to their crossing the Jordan. Perhaps the seemingly unnecessary details give us the message that we are dealing with part of Eretz Yisrael, and not just something extra-territorial.

[P> 33:1 (39)] The sedra of Mas'ei begins with a summary listing of the 42 places of encampment during the years of wandering in the Wilderness. Most places are just listed; a few are anecdotal. The present day identity of many of these places is in dispute or unknown. This portion covers the Exodus from Egypt (the city of Ra-m'ses), the passage through the Sea, and the 3-day journey that brought the People to Mara, with its "water problem" (and solution). From there it was back to Yam Suf, before continuing into the Wilderness.

The Travelog

Towards Improved Layning & Davening Enunciation - VAYIS-U... VAYACHANU... And they traveled from ... and they camped in ... Each word occurs 42 times in Parshat Mas'ei - which matches the numbers of places of encampment as the People went from Egypt to the border of Eretz Yisrael.

The word VAYIS-U is followed by a MEM (from) and placename, 41 times; once it says VAYIS-U B'NEI YISRAEL...The MEM prefix is voweled with a TZEIREI before a placename beginning with ALEF, HEI, CHET, AYIN, or REISH. MEI-RA-M'SEIS, MEI-EITAM, MEI-CHATZEIROT, MEI HAR-SHAFER, Otherwise, the MEM's vowel is a CHIRIK. For example...MI-SUKOT, MI-MARA, MI-DAFKA

The word VAYACHANU is followed by a BET (in) and placename, 38 times. When the placename's first letter is voweled by a SH'VA NA, the BET gets a CHIRIK and brings the first letter of the placename with it into the first syllable, changing the SH'VA to NACH. R'FI-DIM, but BIR-FI-DIM <> K'HEI-LA-TA, but BIK-HEI-LA-TA. When the placename begins with a CHATAF-PATACH, the BET prefix is BA, as in BA-CHATZEIROT. For all other first-letter vowels, the BET has a SH'VA NA, as in B'SUKOT <> B'ARVOT MO'AV and many others.

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

VAYIS-U from... VAYACHANU at/in

From (0) Ra-m'ses at (1) Sukkot at (2) Eitam at (3) Pi HaCherot at (4) Mara at (5) Eilim at (6) Yam Suf at (7) Midbar Sin at (8) Dafka at (9) Alush at (10) R'fidim at (11) Midbar Sinai at (12) Kivrot HaTaava at (13) Chatzeirot at (14) Ritma at (15) Rimon Peretz at (16) Livna at (17) Risa at (18) K'heilata at (19) Har Shefer at (20) Charada at (21) Mak'heilot at (22) Tachat at (23) Terach at (24) Mitka at (25) Chashmona at (26) Moseirot at (27) Bnei Yaakan at (28) Chor HaGidgad at (29) Yotvata at (30) Avrona at (31) Etzion Gever at (32) Midbar Tzin (a.k.a. Kadesh) at (33) Hor HaHar...

This is where Aharon died at the age of 123, on Rosh Chodesh Av. Not only is this the only yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah, but it is interesting that the date is NOT mentioned in Chukat, where we read of Aharon's death. It appears here in the recounting of the episode - this year, on the yahrzeit itself.

[S> 33:40 (10)] The Torah then tells us again that our presence was noted by the K'naani king of Arad in the Negev of Eretz Yisrael. We know from earlier in the Chumash, that the K'naani attacked the people after Aharon's death, but that is not mentioned here. Rather, the list of places then continues... at (34) Tzalmona at (35) Punon at (36) Ovot at (37) I'yei HaAvarim at (38) Divon Gad at (39) Almon Divlataima at (40) Harei HaAvarim at (41) Arvot Moav.

Apparently, the counting of the encampments includes their first point of departure, which we marked as 0. So the number 42 holds. We numbered from 0 to 41 so that Chashmona would come out as the 25th place of encampment and serve as one of the R'MAZIM (hints) to Chanuka from the Torah.

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

The first stop out of Ra-m'seis is SUKKOT, G'matriya = 480, the number of years from the Exodus until the building of the First Beit HaMikdash - the arrival of the People of Israel EL HAMENUCHA

V'EL HANACHALA (D'varim 12:9). So just the first leg of the wandering represents (numerically) the major first (and second) leg of the journey of Jewish History.

SUKKOT, says the Baal HaTurim, got its name from the Heavenly Clouds that began "functioning" there. MIDBAR SIN got an extra YUD (which is TEN) to be SINAI to mark the fact that the ASERET HADIBROT were given there. - Baal HaTurim

The Midrash says that it was at ALUSH that the People first received the Manna and where we spent our very first Shabbat. The Manna was given to the People of Israel in the merit of Sarah Imeimu, who was asked by Avraham to knead and bake cakes for the angels/guests. Her enthusiastic providing of food for others was repaid by G-d, Who provided food for Sarah's children more than 400 years later. The name ALUSH is a play on the word "I will knead".

RITMA was the place from which the spies were sent, and therefore the place where the decree to wander the wilderness was pronounced. One can imagine a qualitative difference in the mental attitude of the people during the first 14 encampments contrasted to those following Ritma.

CHASHMONA was the 25th resting place of the People. Centuries later, there was a resting (from battle) on the 25th (of Kislev). The people through whom G-d wrought the miracles of Chanuka were the Chashmona'im. This is considered one of the Torah "hints" to Chanuka.

Rashi points out that with 14 places before the decree to wander, and with 8 places in the final year, there were only 20 places that the People moved to and from in 38 years or so. That is not really all that much. G-d was merciful with the People even as He was punishing them.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 33:50-34:15

[S> 33:50 (7)] G-d speaks to Moshe in Arvot Moav and commands the People to enter, conquer, acquire, and settle the Land, according to the "Divine Lottery". This is one of the 613 mitzvot according to Ramban - The mitzva of YISHUV ERETZ YISRAEL, the mitzva to live in Israel. Ramban says that this mitzva applies in all times, including our own.

Part of the mitzva, explains Ramban, is that the people of Israel may not shun G-d's gift and promise, and go conquer and settle elsewhere. Jews who live anywhere in the world outside of Israel should always remember their "stranger in a strange land" status. Adopting someplace else as your own and removing Israel from your personal agenda, contravene the spirit (and maybe the letter) of this mitzva.

[P> 34:1 (15)] The boundaries of the Land are detailed. These boundaries are now for the 9½ tribes, since Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe have claimed their allotments on the East Bank.

Read the description of the boundaries of the land that is being given by G-d to the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To us. Unlike the identity of many of the encampments, we know where these boundaries are. Eretz Yisrael for the Jewish People goes at least (see next paragraph) from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. The Torah does not seem to indicate that parts of the Promised Land should become a foreign state - regular or demilitarized - or be given to enemies of the State of Israel or the Jewish People.

(Perhaps - no, no perhaps - it's a definite!) Do you believe that G-d created the world? Do you believe that G-d commanded us to keep the Shabbat? Do you believe that G-d gave Eretz Yisrael to

the Jewish People, in perpetuity? Do you believe that it is His Will that we, His People, live in Eretz Yisrael? These questions are not 'pick and choose' for us. They are The Package Deal that G-d made with us and the reason He took us out of Egypt and made us a nation - His nation.

In G-d's original promise to Avraham Avinu, the land to be given to his descendants was to be "from the Egyptian River until the great river, P'rat". The boundaries described in this week's sedra contain a territory significantly smaller than that which was promised. Our Sages tell us that the original promise includes territory to be added to Eretz Yisrael in the future, in the times of the Moshiach.

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

[P> 34:16 (14)] Next the Torah lists the new leaders of the tribes who will be in charge of the "Divine lottery" by which the Land will be apportioned.

Elazar and Yehoshua are the overall leaders of the Nation.

Kalev b. Yefunch is the leader of Yehuda.

Shimon: Shmuel b. Amihud.

Binyamin: Elidad b. Kislun.

Dan: Buki b. Yogli.

Menashe: Chaniel b. Eifod.

Efrayim: K'mu'el b. Shiftan.

Zevulun: Elitzafan b. Parnach.

Yissachar: Paltiel b. Azan.

Asher: Achihud b. Shlomi.

Naftali: P'dah'el b. Amihud.

[P> 35:1 (8)] Following the general plans for dividing the Land, the People are instructed to provide cities for the Leviyim [408, A183 35:2], since they, the Leviyim, do not receive Land as inheritance. The cities and their surrounding areas, number 48, including the 6 cities of refuge.

◁ Note that the measure of 2000 amot as "city limit" was subsequently borrowed by the Sages in fixing the distance outside one's dwelling place that a person may walk on Shabbat, known as T'CHUM SHABBAT.

◁ Rashi points out that there were three cities of refuge on each side of the Jordan River, even though in the western case, they would serve 9½ tribes and in the eastern case, they would serve 2½ tribes. An inference is drawn that there would be more careless homicides on the eastern side of the river.

These cities, to be given by the tribes to the Leviyim, were given proportional to the populations of the tribes.

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

[P> 35:9 (26)] The cities of refuge (and the other 42 Levite cities, with some differences) serve to protect the inadvertent killer. Even a murderer flees to a protecting city pending trial.

It is forbidden to kill a murderer until he stands trial and is found guilty [409, L292 35:12].

The inadvertent killer is sent - or he flees - to a city of refuge [410, A225 35:25]. The Torah presents guidelines for defining murder and inadvertent killing and sets down some of the court procedures, such as the prohibition of a witness also acting as judge in a criminal case [411, L291 35:30]. We are

also warned not to attempt substitute punishments for a murderer [412, L296 35:31] and the inadvertent killer [413, L295 35:32]. Strict adherence to all rules of justice assure us continued "quality living" in Eretz Yisrael, accompanied by the Divine Presence.

MITZVAnotes

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

How unusual for the Torah to do that. The small Sanhedrins of 23 judges, whose jurisdiction it is to carry out the commands of the Torah in matters of "sentencing" for certain crimes/sins are duty-bound to comply with halacha. Why these extra commands to follow procedures that are already required? It is quite possible for us to rationalize an alternative punishment or treatment of the convicted murderer - intentional or inadvertent. And sometimes, the alternative suggestion will be more appealing, more logical, more beneficial than the Torah-required procedure. Very tempting. So the Torah comes to reinforce its insistence that its procedures be carried out. Ir Miklat is punishment, protective custody, and atonement rolled into one. And it is the command of G-d. We can't change it.

[P> 36:1 (13)] Leaders of the family of Menashe to which the daughters of Tz'lofchad belong, approach Moshe and raise the problem of potential erosion of their tribal allotment if Tz'lofchad's daughters marry outside their tribe, taking their land with them. Moshe issues a ruling restricting them from marrying outside their tribe. This is not a law in perpetuity (and therefore, it is not counted as a mitzva among Taryag); it applies only in this first generation to enter and inherit the Land. In compliance, Machla, Tirza, Chogla, Milka, and No'a marry Menashe-ites.

The Book of Bamidbar ends with the statement, "These are the Mitzvot and the Laws that G-d commanded Moshe to (transmit to) Bnei Yisrael, in Arvot Mo'av on the Jordan (Jericho) River."

Maftir in 2nd Torah - 7 p'sukim from Pinchas - Bamidbar 28:9-15 - Chapters 28 and 29 in Bamidbar (Parshat Pinchas) deal with the daily and Musaf korbanot in the Mikdash. The two Shabbat p'sukim followed by the five that deal with Rosh Chodesh are combined for Maftir of Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. Notice that the Musaf of Shabbat is an expanded version of the weekday sacrifices and Rosh Chodesh's Musaf is like those of the Chagim. This is logical, when you think about it. Six days... and on the 7th - Shabbat is one of the days of the week and the unique and special one among them. The Chagim belong to the Jewish calendar, which is based on the months and Rosh Chodesh.

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

Although this Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh and we read from two Sifrei Torah, and even though the Shabbat-R"Ch Maftir is usually followed by the special haftara for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh - it isn't always the case. The three haftarot of the Three Weeks remain as a set, and the Shabbat-R"Ch haftara is not read. S'fardim have the minhag to follow SHIM-U D'VAR HASHEM with the first and last pasuk of HASHAMAYIM KISI (the Shabbat-R"Ch haftara). Ashkenazim do not. If your shul does and it is Ashkenazi, then someone messed up or borrowed the minhag of Eidot Mizrach.

This is the 2nd of the 3 Tragic Haftarot read during the Three Weeks. It is the continuation of last week's haftara. G-d, speaking through the prophet, chastises the People of Israel for the terrible double sin of forsaking Him AND turning to gods who are nothingness. Repeatedly, we are asked how it was possible that we turned away from G-d so. Terrible punishment for this betrayal of G-d is prophesied. The haftara ends on the hopeful note that if we return to G-d, then He will return to us and restore His special relationship with us.

Bringing the Prophets to Life - Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

This week's haftara, the second of the T'LAT D'PUR'ANUTA, three haftarot of punishment that precede Tish'a b'av, is taken from the second and third chapters of Yirmiyahu, a direct continuation of the prophecy that we read last week. This, the first prophecy that the navi addresses to Israel, accuses the people of being disloyal to G-d. By turning to the false gods of other nations, Israel abandoned their faith in the one G-d and worse, they exchanged the worship of the One true G-d with the veneration of deities that were false and powerless. Additionally, Yirmiyahu accuses the wayward nation of being even worse than the idolatrous nations who remained faithful to their gods - even though they have proven to be ineffectual. The navi then argues that it was this faithlessness that led the people to be ungrateful, for when one doesn't believe that Hashem is THE One, THE only, THE all-powerful, he will fail to recognize Him as the source of all blessing, and therefore, deserving of all thanks.

Ironically, Israel was led onto this wayward path as a result of the brachot, the gifts and blessings that Hashem had showered upon them. Their G-d-given successes led them to believe that they were a privileged nation, protected by their powerful Divinity, whose Temple and Holy Presence stood in their midst. And, for that reason, they were convinced that Hashem would never allow His Temple to be destroyed! Even while under the Babylonian siege, the Jerusalemites chose to heed the words of the false prophets rather than look into their own actions and repair their ways. And this is why the prophet cries out to them: "How can you claim: 'We have not sinned?' Look at your path in the valley (perhaps referring to Gei Ben Hinom, where they practiced Molech worship of child sacrifice) and see what you have done!!" And it was exactly this false belief that brought their downfall.

Rambam opens his Laws of T'shuva by detailing the steps leading to a successful act of repentance with HAKARAT HACHEIT, a recognition of the sin, the misdeed, the corruption. Without realizing that one has sinned against G-d there cannot be regret or remorse and therefore there cannot be t'shuva or penitence and, as a result, there can be no forgiveness and no atonement. The inability - or refusal - of Israel to recognize her sin, her blindness to the corruption in her midst and her rebelliousness toward G-d made forgiveness impossible. It is for that reason, tragically, that Yirmiyahu's words remained un>>>>

In Memory of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l - Conflict Resolution

One of the hardest tasks of any leader - from Prime Ministers to parents - is conflict resolution. Yet it is also the most vital. Where there is leadership, there is long-term cohesiveness within the group, whatever the short-term problems. Where there is a lack of leadership - where leaders lack authority, grace, generosity of spirit and the ability to respect positions other than their own - then there is divisiveness, rancour, back-biting, resentment, internal politics and a lack of trust. True leaders are the people who put the interests of the group above those of any subsection of the group. They care for, and inspire others to care for, the common good.

That is why an episode in parshat Matot is of the highest consequence. It arose like this: The Israelites were on the last stage of their journey to the Promised Land. They were now situated on the east bank of the Jordan, within sight of their destination. Two of the tribes, Reuven and Gad, who had large herds and flocks, felt that the land upon which they were now encamped was ideal for their purposes. It was good grazing country. So they approached Moshe and asked for permission to stay there rather than take up their share in the land of Israel. They said: "If we have found favour in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan" (Bamidbar 32:5).

Moshe was instantly alert to the risks. These two tribes were putting their own interests above those of the nation as a whole. They would be seen as abandoning their people at the very time they were needed most. There was a war - in fact a series of wars - to be fought if the Israelites were to inherit the Promised Land. As Moshe put it to the tribes: "Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the Lord has given them?" (32:6-7). The proposal was potentially disastrous.

Moshe reminded the men of Reuven and Gad what had happened in the incident of the spies. The spies demoralised the people, ten of them saying that they could not conquer the land. The inhabitants were too strong. The cities were impregnable. The result of that one moment was to condemn an entire generation to die in the wilderness and to delay the eventual conquest by forty years. "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the Lord even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following Him, He will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction" (32:14-15). Moshe was blunt, honest and confrontational.

What then follows is a model illustration of positive negotiation and conflict resolution. The Reuvenites and Gadites recognise the claims of the people as a whole and the justice of Moshe's concerns. They propose a compromise: Let us make provisions for our cattle and our families, they say, and the men will then accompany the other tribes across the Jordan. They will fight alongside them. They will even go ahead of them. They will not return to their cattle and families until all the battles have been fought, the land has been conquered, and the other tribes have received their inheritance. Essentially they invoke what would later become a principle of Jewish law: ZEH NEHENEH V'ZEH LO CHASEIR, meaning, an act is permissible if "one side gains and the other side does not lose". We will gain, say the two tribes, by having land which is good for our cattle, but the nation as a whole will not lose because we will still be a part of the people, a presence in the army, we will even be on the front line, and we will stay there until the war has been won.

Moshe recognises the fact that they have met his objections. He restates their position to make sure he and they have understood the proposal and they are ready to stand by it. He extracts from them agreement to a T'NAI KAFUL, a double condition, both positive and negative: If we do this, these will be the consequences, but if we fail to do this, those will be the consequences. He asks that they affirm their commitment. The two tribes agree. Conflict has been averted. The Reuvenites and Gadites achieve what they want but the interests of the other tribes and of the nation as a whole have been secured. It is a masterclass in negotiation.

The extent to which Moshe's concerns were justified became apparent many years later. The Reuvenites and Gadites did indeed fulfil their promise in the days of Yehoshua. The rest of the tribes conquered and settled Israel while they (together with half the tribe of Menashe) established their presence in Transjordan. Despite this, within a brief space of time there was almost civil war.

Chapter 22 of the Book of Yehoshua describes how, after returning to their families and settling their land, the Reuvenites and Gadites built "an altar to the Lord" on the east side of the Jordan. Seeing this as an act of secession, the rest of the Israelites prepared to do battle against them. Yehoshua, in a striking act of diplomacy, sent Pinchas, the former zealot, now man of peace, to negotiate. He warned them of the terrible consequences of what they had done by, in effect, creating a religious centre outside the land of Israel. It would split the nation in two.

The Reuvenites and Gadites made it clear that this was not their intention at all. To the contrary, they themselves were worried that in the future, the rest of the Israelites would see them living across the Jordan and conclude that they no longer wanted to be part of the nation. That is why they had built the altar, not to offer sacrifices, not as a rival to the nation's Sanctuary, but merely as a symbol and a sign to future generations that they too were Israelites. Pinchas and the rest of the delegation were satisfied with this answer, and once again civil war was averted.

The negotiation between Moshe and the two tribes in our parsha follows closely the principles arrived at by the Harvard Negotiation Project, set out by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their classic text, *Getting to Yes*. Essentially, they came to the conclusion that a successful negotiation must involve four processes:

(1) Separate the people from the problem. There are all sorts of personal tensions in any negotiation. It is essential that these be cleared away first so that the problem can be addressed objectively.

(2) Focus on interests, not positions. It is easy for any conflict to turn into a zero-sum game: if I win, you lose. If you win, I lose. That is what happens when you focus on positions and the question becomes, "Who wins?" By focusing not on positions but on interests, the question becomes, "Is there a way of achieving what each of us wants?"

(3) Invent options for mutual gain. This is the idea expressed halachically as ZEH NEHENEH V'ZEH NEHENEH, "Both sides benefit." This comes about because the two sides usually have different objectives, neither of which excludes the other.

(4) Insist on objective criteria. Make sure that both sides agree in advance to the use of objective, impartial criteria to judge whether what has been agreed has been achieved. Otherwise, despite all apparent agreement, the dispute will continue, both sides insisting that the other has not done what was promised.

Moshe does all four. First he separates the people from the problem by making it clear to the Reuvenites and Gadites that the issue has nothing to do with who they are, and everything to do with the Israelites' experience in the past, specifically the episode of the spies. Regardless of who the ten negative spies were and which tribes they came from, everyone suffered. No one gained. The problem is not about this tribe or that but about the nation as a whole.

Second, he focused on interests, not positions. The two tribes have an interest in the fate of the nation as a whole. If they put their personal interests first, God will become angry and the entire people will be punished, the Reuvenites and Gadites among them. It is striking how this negotiation contrasts so strongly to the dispute with Korach and his followers. There, the whole argument was about positions, not interests - about who was entitled to be a leader. The result was collective tragedy.

Third, the Reuvenites and Gadites then invent an option for mutual gain. If you allow us to make temporary provisions for our cattle and children, they say, we will not only fight in the army. We will be its advance guard. We will benefit, knowing that our request has been granted. The nation will benefit by our willingness to take on the most demanding military task.

Fourth, there was an agreement on objective criteria. The Reuvenites and Gadites would not return to the east bank of the Jordan until all the other tribes were safely settled in their territories. And so it happened, as narrated in the book of Yehoshua:

Then Yehoshua summoned the Reuvenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Menashe and said to them, "You have done all that Moshe the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now - to this very day - you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as He promised, return to your homes in the land that Moshe the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. (22:1-4)

This was, in short, a model negotiation, a sign of hope after the many destructive conflicts in the book of Bamidbar, as well as a standing alternative to the many later conflicts in Jewish history that had such appalling outcomes.

Note that Moshe succeeds not because he is weak, not because he is willing to compromise on the integrity of the nation as a whole, not because he uses honeyed words and diplomatic evasions, but because he is honest, principled, and focused on the common good. We all face conflicts in our lives. This is how to resolve them.

QUESTIONS (around the Shabbat table)

Do you consider the request from the tribes of Reuben and Gad to be a reasonable one?

How fair is Moshe's response to these tribes?

Is this approach to conflict applicable to other conflicts, great and small, in the world today?

PT-DT - Philo-Torah D'var Torah - Ramban's Mitzva #4

From the Sedra Summary: ...the People are instructed to provide cities for the Leviyim [408, A183 35:2], One of the Mitzvot Asei in Parshat Mas'ei is as stated in the above excerpt. I wonder sometimes if readers know what the numbers in "red" mean, and if they notice the explanation on the first page of the Sedra Summary, as follows...

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

That we must give cities in Eretz Yisrael to the Leviyim - this is the 408th mitzva in Sefer HaChinuch. In Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot it is positive commandment (A) number 183. The Chinuch lists the mitzvot in order of appearance in the Torah, mixing the positives and the prohibitions. Rambam organizes mitzvot by topic, and has separate lists for Asei and Lo Taaseh. The mitzva is commanded in Bamidbar, perek 35, pasuk 2.

For over 29 years, I have been preparing weekly Sedra Summaries and the presentation of the mitzvot has always focused on Rambam and the HaChinuch.

Although the most popular countings of the Torah's 613 mitzvot are the Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot and the Sefer HaChinuch, they are not the only two counters of mitzvot. Without going into too much more detail, the Ramban (who was 11 years old when the Rambam died) challenges the Rambam's counting in well over 10% of the mitzvot.

Perhaps the most well-known point of departure between Rambam and Ramban is the topic of Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Yisrael, living in the Land of Israel. Although Rambam writes very strongly about the imperative to live in Israel, he does not number among his 613, the mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael.

The Ramban definitely does. Known as Ramban's Mitzva number 4, he quotes the following pasuk from this week's sedra (the second of the two): You shall clear out the Land and settle in it, for I have given you the Land to occupy it. The Ramban counts Living in Eretz Yisrael as one of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah, and he says it applies in all times.

Why the Rambam does not count Yishuv Eretz Yisrael as one of Taryag is debated among commentaries. The Rambam quotes the gemara and states - in his halachic work - that a person shall always live in Eretz Yisrael and not in Chutz LaAretz. And that he who lives in Israel has a G-d, but he who lives outside Israel is like one who has no G-d. It seems clear from the Rambam's words and from the fact that he considered himself a sinner by not living in Eretz Yisrael, that he considered Yishuv Eretz Yisrael as an imperative.

It can be suggested that the Rambam - consistent with his counting of mitzvot - considers the Mitzva of Living in Israel as a supra-mitzva, one that includes and facilitates many other mitzvot. This type of mitzva, he does not number among the 613, but they are nonetheless, mitzvot.

Matot and Mas'ei are always read during the Three Weeks - separately or combined. Which means that we have a sharp counterpoint between the mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael and on the totally other side of the coin, the first mentioned of the five calamities which befell the Jewish People on the upcoming Tish'a b'Av.

This puts us at one of many crossroads with the Calendar pointing to one road and the Sedra pointing the other way. Until the fast days associated with the Churban are changed to Yamim Tovim, with the coming of the Mashiach and the Third Beit HaMikdash, the Calendar - as it is now - points in a negative direction, while the Torah consistently reminds us of the proper path we should have always taken and which many of every generation don't seem to pay attention to.

The Mitzva to Live in Eretz Yisrael - is it one of the 613 or not? Is it an obligation or 'just' that one gets a mitzva for doing it? Whatever other issues are involved, the bottom line is this:

R'TZON HASHEM. G-d's desire. It is so patently obvious from so many p'sukim in the Torah, that HKB"H has always wanted and continues to want His People to live in His Land, by His Torah. Don't let this sound merely like a slogan. It is the reason He took us out of Egypt. It is the reason He gave us the Torah. Eretz Yisrael is the place He wants us to be.

The sedra tells us to live in Eretz Yisrael. In the words of the Ramban, the mitzva includes not choosing any other place in the world to call home. The mitzva includes filling the Land with the Jewish People. The mitzva includes not leaving any of the Land in the hands of others, especially not our enemies.

This is the Parshat Mas'ei challenge. This is the Torah Challenge. Embrace all aspects of Torah - ERETZ YISRAEL L'AM YISRAEL AL PI TORAH YISRAEL.

Increased Torah learning, observance of mitzvot, acts of Chesed, spreading Torah values and teachings - pleasantly and with love of our fellow Jews - AND - increased fulfillment of Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Yisrael by more and more Torah Jews - will combine to hasten the Geula, BIMHEIRA V'YAMEINU, AMEIN

Walk through the Parsha with Rabbi David Walk - IT'S YOURS FOREVER

Starting in 1984, the ArtScroll Siddur conquered the prayer book market for Orthodox shuls and Jews. Its attractive design and helpful annotation were very well received. But no one version of our prayerbook can be universally accepted. For various reasons of sociology and economics, this Siddur didn't have the Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel. A compromise was reached and a variant edition came out under the aegis of the RCA (now it's called the 'Synagogue Edition'). In this prayer, a verse is quoted from D'varim (30:5) describing the Jews' dwelling in the Holy Land. This verse features the word VIRISHTA, which can be translated 'possess it', as Koren does, but ArtScroll went with 'and you shall occupy it'. In light of the Arab condemnations of Israel that's a very unfortunate word choice, indeed.

In ArtScroll's defense, it's not an easy word to translate. That problem comes up in this week's Torah reading. After the long list of all the journeys of the Jews through the desert, we have two verses about the Jews settling into Eretz Yisrael, both of which begin with the word V'HORASHEM, and it would be very convenient to translate them differently in each instance, as Targum Onkelos actually does. Here are the two verses:

You shall drive out (V'HORASHEM) all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their temples, destroy their molten idols, and demolish their high places. You shall clear out (V'HORASHEM) the Land and settle in it, for I have given you the Land to possess (LARESHET) it (Bamidbar 33:53,54).

Notice that the Chabad.org translation also renders the two appearances of the same word differently. I assume that this is because in the first instance the Jews are interacting with the local human inhabitants, while in the second case the Jews interface with the inanimate land itself. Here's the problem, the term is clearly stating that the Jews are to become the new landlords of the Holy Land, but how to do that while interacting with different entities.

I think that Robert Alter handled it very elegantly by saying 'you shall dispossess the inhabitants' in the first instance, and 'you shall take possession of the land' in the second. We took the place of the former residents in verse 52, but worked the land diligently to make it ours in verse 53. Translation is never easy.

Finally, we can ask the central question: What command is God presenting to our brave ancestors who conquered the Land with this verb?

The Ramban famously states: In my opinion this is a positive commandment, in which He is commanding them to dwell in the Land and inherit it, because He has given it to them and they should not reject it... And that which our Rabbis have emphasized, the significance of the commandment of settling in the Land of Israel, and that it is forbidden to leave it... Rashi, however, explained: "And you shall drive out the inhabitants of the Land - if you dispossess it of its inhabitants, then you will be able to dwell therein, and to remain there, but if not, you will not be able to remain in it." But our interpretation is the principal one.

The Ramban is adamant that it is always a mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael. However, he recognizes that there are others who disagree, like Rashi, who only recognized this obligation when we Jews actually have control over the land, as we do now.

But why is this term V'HORASHEM used to express this obligation. Why not just V'SHAVTEM BAH or V'GARTEM BAH, 'dwell there'? I believe that this word carries a special connotation, because it's the word for inheriting and bequeathing. The taking hold of the Land, both in terms of superseding the previous inhabitants and in working the Land, is not the ultimate goal or purpose. The ultimate intention is to see the Land passed down to the next generation. It's not about possession; it's about continuity and legacy.

Now there's another famous Hebrew term with a similar connotation, and that is NACHALA. This word is used to describe the tribal portions, again in our parsha, also implies bequest. It's actually a beautifully picturesque word. The meaning of the root term is NACHAL, which means a stream. In other words, a NACHALA is a possession which flows from one generation to the next. The difference is L'HORISH implies an action by the possessor; the word L'HANCHIL describes an automatic, passive occurrence, no action necessary.

Our two verses are describing vigorous activity on the part of the Jewish nation to become the rightful owners of ERETZ YISRAEL. The first actions are vis-a-vis the previous inhabitants; the next efforts are to develop the Land itself to make it fruitful and productive. However, the ultimate objective is to maintain the connection to Eretz Yisrael forever.

Walk thru David HaMelech's T'hilim - with Rabbi David Walk

Ed. note: This is a new column in which Rabbi Walk will present one perek of T'hilim each week. We have decided to begin with Shir shel Yom

Perek 82 - DAY THREE: DOUBLE GOOD

Back in the mid-80s we were moving from Moshav Elazar across the street (highway 60) to our new home in Efrat. So, we called one of the most venerable moving companies in Israel, HOVALOT YA'AKOVI, in business since 1950, just like me. On the phone, I asked to move the following Monday. The response? 'No, you want to move on Tuesday, YOM SHE'HUCHPAL BO 'KI TOV'! I was being informed that Tuesday is the best day for new endeavors, because that day God said, 'And it was good', twice. At that point, I was trying to remind myself who was the rabbi and who was the truckdriver. Of course, they may just have been fully booked on Monday, but I was convinced.

So, YOM SH'LISHI is a special day, and that must be reflected in the SHIR SHEL YOM for Tuesday. We recite Psalm 82. For the reason, we turn first to the Talmud in Rosh HaShana: On the third day of the week. they would recite the psalm beginning: "God stands in the congregation of God" (Psalms 82:1), because on the third day of Creation He revealed the land in His wisdom and thereby prepared the world for His assembly that could now live on the dry land (35a). Not exactly what I was expecting.

Obviously, we've got to get a better understanding of the chapter itself to truly connect this Psalm to YOM SH'LISHI. The place to begin is the well-known declaration: God stands in the divine assembly; among the divine beings He pronounces judgment (Tehillim 82:1). This verse is used by our Sages to better understand court procedures (Sanhedrim 6b). However, it's most famous use is: Rabbi Yitzchak said: From where is it derived that God is located in synagogue? As it is stated: "God stands in the congregation of the Lord." The congregation of God is the place where people congregate to sing God's praises, and God is located among His congregation (B'rachot 6a).

We're still no closer to understanding what this has to do with YOM SH'LISHI. Rav Shmuel Eidelis (Maharsha, 1555-1631) in his insights to Aggadot (non-Halachic material in the Talmud) helps shed

some light on the matter. He comments that just like God's separation of dry land from the oceans provides stability to the world, so, too, does the Divine Torah justice system provide needed balance to the world. The obvious connection between Tuesday and justice is, of course, the Flood. When human society loses its sense of fairness and security, as in the generation of the Flood, the stability of the areas of human habitation are threatened with inundation and destruction.

It is this potential for the world to lose its normal stability which is referred to in verse 5: They neither know nor understand, they go about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth totter. The 'they' in that quote are the rich and powerful judges who often use their wealth and position as the unchanging reality of the world. They are 'in the dark' to the true reality, that all stability comes directly from God, and began on that primordial Tuesday.

There is an ever-present danger of judicial corruption. This dangerous reality is described in verse 6. In Biblical Hebrew judges are often called ELOHIM. This term can also be used to refer to heavenly beings and even God. It's use demands that society treat justice with tremendous reverence, but it can lead to abuse. That's why our Psalm warns those with judicial power: but you shall die as men do, fall like any prince (v. 7).

The rock-solid nature of our continents usually instills within us a sense of stability and security, which isn't always justified. We must remember the cataclysmic flood of the generation of No'ach. The only bulwark against a future disastrous inundation is our judicial system. Its fairness forms the dyke against the raging seas.

Tuesday and its Psalm are a reminder that this sense of safety is based upon our reliance on God, the only true Judge. So, the poor and needy, who must search for justice in this often-difficult world, are advised to best seek this fairness on Tuesday. God doubled the declaration that this world is good on that day. That's why our Psalm reminds us: Judge fairly the wretched and the orphan, vindicate the lowly and the poor, rescue the poor and the needy; save them from the hand of the wicked (v. 3 & 4).

Our poem reminds us of the dangers in our societies, but it's Tuesday, so have some hope. Like Ya'akov said, 'It's a wonderful day to start something new and exciting.'

Rav Kook Torah by Rabbi Chanan Morrison <> www.ravkooktorah.com

No Excuses for Remaining Outside the Land! Moshe's rage was palpable. "You have risen in your fathers' places as a band of sinners!" (Bamidbar 32:14). When the tribes of Gad and Reuven petitioned not to cross the Jordan River and enter Israel proper, Moshe denounced the proposition and lashed out at them. "Why are you trying to discourage the Israelites from crossing over to the Land that God has given them?"

We can certainly understand Moshe's anger and frustration. But this incident took place not long after he was punished for berating the people at Mei Meriva. When he snapped at the people, "Listen now, you rebels!" (19:10), God informed Moshe that he would not be leading the Jewish people into the Land of Israel.

We similarly find that the prophet Yeshayahu was punished for his harsh criticism when he lamented, "I live among a people of unclean lips" (6:5). Yet there is no indication that Moshe was wrong in his scathing response to the tribes of Gad and Reuven. What was different?

Imitating the Mistake of the Spies

Rav Kook explained that, in this situation, Moshe was justified in his outrage. Moses realized that their request could discourage the entire people from entering the Land, like the debacle of the Spies. His response needed to be stern.

We learn from here that anyone discouraging the Jewish people from ascending to the Land is following in the footsteps of the infamous Spies and repeating their disastrous folly.

The tribes of Gad and Reuven presented reasonable arguments - "we have much livestock". But their request could erode the people's commitment to settle the Land. There was no place for polite discussion; Moshe needed to be forceful and resolute. And if that was true for the righteous tribes in the time of Moshe, what can we say in our generation, even when people offer what appear to be reasonable objections to making Aliyah?

Rav Kook concluded: we are unable to fathom God's ways, but nothing exempts one from Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael. We must bolster our faith that, by ascending to the Land and settling it, we are fulfilling the Torah's goals.

[According to Shivchei HaRe'iyah, p. 268, Rav Kook related this idea to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), the sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch, when the Rebbe visited Rav Kook in 1929. The Rebbe is reported to have responded, "These are holy words from a holy mouth."]

Rav Kook's forceful words found a practical application in an unusual court case that he adjudicated in 5682 (1922).

Warsaw, 1920 - Yitzchak Gershtenkorn had a plan. A brilliant, magnificent plan. The 29-year-old Hassidic Jew from Warsaw approached two friends with his proposal: every week, they would deposit money into a joint bank account. The funds would be dedicated to a single goal - to purchase land to settle in Eretz Yisrael. His friends enthusiastically agreed. Over the coming months, they deposited money each week, excited in the knowledge that each payment brought them a little closer to their goal.

R. Yitzchak noted that his endeavor was already a remarkable success. His two friends, who had never dreamed of settling the Land, had changed. They acquired new aspirations; their views on Galut (exile) and the Land of Israel had shifted. They had become "Jews of Eretz Yisrael"!

He decided the time was right to take the next step. He began recruiting other religious Jews in Warsaw. Gershtenkorn spoke in synagogues about settling and working the Land, raising great interest. Within a short time, the group numbered 150 members. They formed a society called Bayit v'Nachala ("Home and Heritage"), dedicated to establishing an agricultural community for religious settlers in the Holy Land.

After the initial enthusiasm, however, the project began to waver. Some members were nervous because Polish law prohibited taking money out of the country. Others worried that the funds raised were so meager that, even after years of saving, they would not suffice to purchase suitable land in Eretz Yisrael. Several members threatened to resign.

That winter, the Gerrer Rebbe returned from a visit to Eretz Yisrael. [Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866-1948), known as the Imrei Emet of Gur, had a special love for Eretz Yisrael. He visited

four times, purchased parcels of land, and urged his chassidim to do likewise. The fifth time he came to Israel, it wasn't as a visitor. He was fleeing from occupied Poland and the Nazis, who placed the "Wunder Rebbe Alter" at the top of their most-wanted list. Elderly and in ill health, the Rebbe escaped from Poland in 1940 to the house that awaited him in Jerusalem. (Mishpacha Magazine, Sep. 2018)]

The Rebbe granted an audience to R. Yitzchak and told him, "I will recommend anyone who asks me that they should join your group. I cannot provide you with any financial help because I am already committed to a similar undertaking in the Jaffa area. But never get discouraged! God will crown your venture with success."

Encouraged, R. Yitzchak called a general meeting of Bayit v'Nachala. When the members heard the Gerrer Rebbe's words and blessing, their doubts and hesitations were dispelled.

Purchasing Bnei Brak

Two years later, R. Yitzchak and two other delegates traveled to Eretz Yisrael to locate a suitable plot of land for their envisioned community. In his memoirs, R. Yitzchak described his high emotions during the long train ride from Egypt to the Holy Land:

"On that night, as we traveled from Alexandria to Tel Aviv, I could not sleep. We passed through the desert, and the sand penetrated our railway carriage through the closed blinds. To me it was symbolic: a person does not enter the Land of Israel unless he is first covered in desert sand, like our ancestors long ago who sojourned through the Sinai desert.

Absorbed in my thoughts, the sights and visions of Biblical times passed before my eyes. In my mind, I saw the journeys of the ancient Israelites, traveling with their flags and tribal camps. I, too, was not traveling alone, but stood at the head of an entire camp of Warsaw Jews, who were waiting to hear the results of our expedition.

My heart began to beat fast. We are crossing the border! We are already traveling in our Land. I opened the window wide and breathed in the soul-reviving air of Eretz Yisrael."

While the purpose of the journey was to locate a suitable plot of land, R. Yitzchak took advantage of times between trips to meet the prominent scholars and rabbis of the holy city of Jerusalem. On the Shabbat before Pesach, he visited Rav Kook in his home, where he was greeted with great warmth.

[In his memoirs, Yitzchak Gershtenkorn described his surprise upon meeting Rav Kook:

"In Poland at that time, one had the impression that there were two chief rabbis in Jerusalem. The first was Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, appointed by the Haredi community; and the second was the leader of the enlightened community - Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook. I pictured Rav Kook as a modern rabbi. A year before my visit, I had become friendly with his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook [who visited Warsaw to promote his father's movement, Degel Yerushalayim]. Already in Warsaw, R. Tzvi Yehuda made a deep impression on me as a serious Torah scholar, distinguished in Torah and piety. But the Haredi newspapers in Poland would always stress the prominence and authority of those who opposed Rav Kook.

How great was my astonishment during my first visit to Rav Kook's house. I saw before me a holy tzaddik, one of the select few of the generation. How saintly and noble was his holy visage! ... His words of Torah and piety flowed like a spring, brimming with love for the Land of Israel and the Jewish people... After that visit, I become attached to Rav Kook in heart and soul."]

For three weeks, the delegates searched for suitable land, examining plots near Rehovot and Rishon LeTzion. But Gershtenkorn was most drawn to a hilly stretch of ground along the road from Tel Aviv to Petach Tikva. The land belonged to a few Arab families who lived in a nearby village.

The residents of the nearby settlements urged them to buy this particular piece of land so that all Arab holdings from northern Tel Aviv to Petach Tikva would be under Jewish ownership. It was a matter of security; the hills of Bnei Brak were used by Arabs to ambush Jewish travelers. A new Jewish settlement would dislodge the Arab raiders and secure the road from Tel Aviv to the Sharon region.

Rav Kook's Ruling

There was, however, a serious issue which led to a vehement dispute among the delegates. Geula, the organization responsible for redeeming land from Arab hands, requested 10,000 pounds sterling for the property they sought. But their society had only collected 900 pounds.

The other delegates were wary. How could they obligate themselves to an additional sum of 9000 pounds - ten times more than they had succeeded in saving at that point! - without prior consensus of the entire group?

Gershtenkorn was confident that the money could be raised. After many arguments, the delegates agreed to bring the matter as a Din Torah for the Chief Rabbi, Rav Kook. According to his decision, they would proceed.

The evening after Pesach, the delegates presented their dispute to Rav Kook. The society's treasurer argued that he saw no basis at the current time for a reasonable livelihood for the members, who are not wealthy; it is the delegates' obligation to be faithful agents and not conclude any transaction until returning to Warsaw and giving an accurate report to the society.

Yitzchak Gershtenkorn argued that he was the sole official representative; the other delegates had no right to obstruct the purchase.

After much deliberation, Rav Kook ruled in favor of Gershtenkorn. He noted three points:

1. We must distinguish between an individual and a community. If an individual asks whether he should make Aliyah or not, one is permitted to give advice for a specific case. But a community is a different story. One who influences the views of an entire community and deters them from moving to the Land - he is "giving an evil report of the Land" and repeating the villainous act of the Spies.
2. Regarding the concerns that the group will be unable to complete the purchase of the land, we have a rule in Halacha that "The community is not poor." Who said that only the current members will foot the bill? If they are unable to pay, other Jews of means will come and purchase a share, thus enabling the society to conclude the land acquisition.
3. Yitzchak Gershtenkorn was appointed as the sole representative with powers to purchase. The other delegates did not have the right to prevent him from executing the transaction.

Two weeks later, R. Yitzchak handed over the society's money as down-payment for the land. Thus the agricultural settlement of Bnei Brak was founded - on the 5th of Iyar.

[The following week, Gershtenkorn met with Rav Kook before returning to Poland. Rav Kook provided him with a public letter of recommendation to help enlist more members and financial support. R. Yitzchak wrote in his memoirs:

"At all times, the Gaon [Rav Kook] was my faithful light and guide in our dealings regarding Bnei Brak. During the most trying and difficult days, when I would travel to Jerusalem to pour out my heart and soul before the Kotel, I never missed the opportunity to visit his holy abode. The encouragement and strength that I received from him were a balm for my soul."]

Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, pp. 405-407. Chaluztim LeTzion: the Founding of Bnei Brak with Rav Kook's Support, by Moshe Nachman, pp. 32-33. Background details from The Jewish Observer, Sept. 1974)

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher - A Diary of Life

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel. Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the command of Hashem, and these were their journeys according to their goings forth." (Bamidbar 33:1-2)

Parshat Mas'ei begins with a review of the 42 encampments that Israel made in their 40 year journey through the Wilderness. Rashi notes that this is an illustration of the kindness of Hashem that, although it would seem that they were constantly on the move, never had any rest, this is not the case. Except for the first year when there were 14 encampments and the 40th year when there were 8, in the intervening 38 years, there were only 20 stops, including one stop at Kadesh which lasted for 19 years. See Rashi to D'varim 1:46.

The Ohr HaChayim says that Hashem told Moshe that beginning with the Exodus from Egypt, he was to keep a written record of all encampments as they occurred. These notations accumulated until Israel reached the 42nd stop, the Plains of Moav, where Moshe organized the list into the 48 verses that now follow. Included in this list are the incidences that took place at some of these encampments where the people saw the Hand of Hashem which took care of their every need and desire.

From this remark of the Ohr HaChayim that Moshe kept a diary of the four decades spent in the Wilderness, Rav Pam explains that we can extrapolate the practical insight for life.

Every person is a recipient of Hashem's kindness many different ways. There are periods of great joy and accomplishments, and there are periods of travail and worry which are often resolved through the hidden Hand of Hashem. This happens to each person as an individual and to a family or a community as a group. Unfortunately, with the passage of time many of these illustrations of the Kindness of Hashem are only vaguely remembered, or even totally forgotten.

One way of fulfilling the command of "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation" (D'varim 32:7), is to follow the lead of Moshe and record as they happen "one's own encampments" in the journey through life.

Like the verses mentioned here in Parshat Mas'ei, they will become a permanent written record of the goodness of Hashem in one's own life as well as that of his family and community.

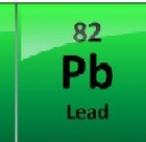
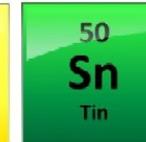
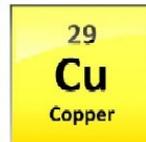
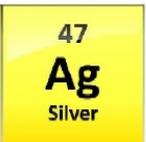
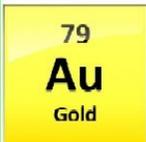
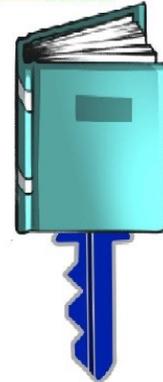
ParshaPix – Matot-Masei, 5781



One For Me,
One For You



$$\frac{1}{5} = \frac{1}{4}$$



CHIZUK & IDUD Matot-Mas'ei 2017

Parshat Matot starts off with the laws of vows, bringing to mind SHALOSH HASHAVU'OT, the three most intriguing, far-reaching and historically significant oaths listed in the Talmud (Ketuvot 111a). The Talmud teaches us that as the People of Israel were sent off into Galut, three oaths were taken. The Jewish People accepted upon themselves the following two oaths:

SHELO YA'ALU BACHOMA - that we should not ascend 'like a wall' -all together; en masse.
That we should not rebel against the nations of the world.

The third oath applies to the nations of the world who accepted upon themselves not to oppress Israel too harshly' (SHELO YISHTAB'DU B'YISRAEL YOTER MIDAI).

We learn of these oaths from the three-fold repetition in Shir HaShirim (2:7, 3:5, 8:4) of the pasuk "I made you swear, daughters of Jerusalem. Do not stir nor awake the love until it pleases." This is taken to mean that once exiled, the People of Israel should not return to Israel until G-d has shown us that he is interested in our return. Many have opined that this source is not of a Halachic nature, pointing to the fact that neither the Rambam, nor the Shulchan Aruch, mention the matter in their respective halachic works. Nonetheless, others have claimed that this passage imparts a binding Halachic imperative.

For example, the Megilat Esther (a super-commentary on the Ramban's Sefer Hamitzvot) writes in Mitzvat Asei 4 that these oaths are the reason the Rambam did not codify the Mitzva of Yishuv HaAretz. Since this passage requires that "we must wait until the Mashiach comes before 'going up' to Israel", therefore the Mitzva does not currently apply.

However, even assuming that these oaths relate to a halachically binding requirement, one may wonder whether they are still in effect in present times. If we focus on the second vow - the requirement not to rebel against the nations - it would seem reasonable to conclude that Aliyah, and the establishment of a State, would be allowed if and when the nations acquiesce to the return of the Jewish People to the Promised Land.

In the San Remo Resolution of 1920 the Allied Powers of World War I (England, France, Italy, Japan) declared their joint desire to forward and put: "into effect the declaration originally made on November 8, 1917, by the British Government (The Balfour Declaration), and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." For Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk the theological ramifications of this proclamation were profound: This multi-national declaration signified the lifting of the oaths which had weighed heavily upon us for close to two thousand years. In his words, the San Remo Resolution removed, "the fear of the oaths", and reestablished the mitzva to settle the Land.

Others pointed to a different historical episode - which took place some twenty five years later - as the basis for a competing argument leading to a similar conclusion. They too explained that the oaths which had governed Jewish History for hundreds of years were no longer binding. Thus, Rav Zevin claimed that the three oaths are to be viewed as a package deal. The two oaths taken by the Jewish People are binding only so long as the nations of the world abide by their own word, and do not oppress us in an overly excessive manner. In the aftermath of the atrocities of the Holocaust, argued Rav Zevin, we can rest assured that the mutual contractual obligations have been rescinded.

With the crumbling of this classic 'anti-Aliyah' argument, many have fallen back on the historical second-best perennial favorite: "One is best advised to stay away from Israel", they worriedly dispense their counsel, "lest their young children be negatively influenced religiously.

The story is told, of the meeting between the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Shneerson, with Rav Kook, in the year 1930. Rav Kook asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe if he tries to influence his followers to make Aliyah, to which Rav Schneerson replied in the negative, noting the fear of spiritual and educational KILKUL. Rav Kook answered as follows: When Moshe refers to the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and their cohorts as TARBUT ANASHIM CHATA'IM, a culture, or brood, of sinners, we do not find that he is reprimanded by the Almighty. However, when Moshe and Aharon referred to the People of Israel as rebels, they are severely punished and not permitted to enter the Land, (Bamidbar 20:10). How are we to explain this glaring discrepancy? Rav Kook explained that the Torah is trying to teach us an important lesson: By choosing to settle on the other side of the Jordan, Gad and Reuven, were jeopardizing the mission of successfully settling Eretz Yisrael. Since they had chosen to stay away, one could therefore utter negative and pejorative words against them. This is the rightful desserts of those who choose not to participate in the national mission of Yishuv Ha'aretz.

It is time to separate yourself from a 'culture of sinners'; It is time to come home!

Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness - Ramat Shiloh Beit Shemesh

Ed. note: It should also be mentioned that the first oath never included individual Jews. Each of us was always allowed to live in Eretz Yisrael. The oath, as Rabbi Roness pointed out, referred to forming a large group of Jews to attempt to conquer the Land from its occupiers (word chosen on purpose and used correctly, for a change). Aliya was always permitted. And once a yishuv was established in Eretz Yisrael, there were many things it was allowed to do to protect its members - including, but not exclusively, such as form a defense army.

Q&A - Excerpted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

How to spend Tish'a b'Av

Question: Besides refraining from forbidden activities, how should one spend Tish'a b'Av?

Answer: For a few reasons, the answer depends on the individual. As usual, some matters depend on the local minhag. In this case, it is even more individualistic, as different people arrive at the proper frame of mind in different ways. Furthermore, we have to be realistic. Not everyone who will refrain from a given practice will be sitting all day crying about the Beit HaMikdash. I remember a group of people who were careful not to learn Torah on Tish'a b'Av, but they used the afternoon for an annual softball game. A little "leniency" regarding something more suitable might have been better. In any case, we will use halachot to arrive at a general approach to what is appropriate.

There are two major elements to the various halachot that govern activities on Tish'a b'Av (other than those that are directly fast-related). One element is to concentrate on the aveilut (mourning) over the national destruction that the day commemorates. The other is to refrain from things that we categorize as joyful.

The mishna presents two minhagim regarding whether work is permitted on Tish'a b'Av. The main reason not to work is, apparently, in order to keep one's mind on aveilut. The mishna instructs each person to follow the local minhag, as does the Shulchan Aruch. (In the Beit Yosef, he reports a widespread practice of stringency, which some Sephardic poskim accept as a final ruling.) The Rama

states that the Ashkenazic minhag is to abstain from work of even a moderately serious nature until chatzot (midday). (The halachot are similar to those of Chol Hamo'ed and are beyond our present scope.) This leads us to the conclusion that until chatzot one should act in a way that keeps his mind on aveilut. This is supported by the minhag to postpone preparing the night meal until chatzot, to sit on or near the floor, and to recite kinot until close to chatzot.

After chatzot, the main focus is on not doing things that are joyous. Of course, there are different levels of happiness, and there is some distinction between activities that are formally forbidden and those that fall within the realm of the spirit of the law. Torah study is formally classified as something that makes one happy and is forbidden even for those who do not derive from it a strong, conscious joy. Only Torah topics that are objectively sad or aveilut-related are permitted. There are sources and logic that support both sides of the question of whether works of mussar (literally, rebuke) are permitted to be studied on Tish'a b'Av. The matter may depend on the nature of the work (e.g., the extent to which p'sukim, midrashim, and interesting philosophical insights are incorporated).

The spirit of the law is also expressed in the law. The Shulchan Aruch says that one should not stroll in the marketplace, lest he come to frivolity. The Mishna Berura urges those with the minhag to visit the cemetery to do so in small groups to avoid it turning into "a happening." These are just a couple of halachot that help set a tone and give a direction to follow.

A practice has developed to have daylong programs of talks on topics of soul-searching. While Tish'a b'Av is intended to be more a day of sadness than of self-improvement, most people are better served by taking part in such forums than staying at home, attempting the difficult task of maintaining the proper frame of mind on their own. Whereas in the morning the focus should be on the kinot (recitation or explanation), the afternoon may be spent on forums of contemplation and soul-searching. Lecturers and participants should do their part to ensure that the content and atmosphere are somber and do not foster socializing, which is against the spirit and halachot of the day.

OzTORAH - RabbiRaymond Apple - Keeping the Tribes Intact

Matot means "Tribes". President Rivlin often speaks about the people of Israel (despite the many centuries since Biblical times) as a people of tribes.

In the Torah the tribes derive from the children of Yaakov; what President Rivlin speaks about are Ashkenazim and Sephardim, religious and secular, orthodox and non-orthodox, Chassidim and Mitnagdim and so on.

Jews often ask why we need divisions and can't unite into one overall people. The fact is that we really are one people but the differences reflect our history and make us so interesting. The obstacle we have to overcome is the tensions between us which sometimes explode into offensive language and a lack of respect for each other.

42 Journeys - The sidra deals with the movements of the Children of Israel through the wilderness. Rashi tells us that there were 42 such journeys.

There was more movement in the first and last stages of the forty years in the wilderness, which according to Rashi shows Divine generosity since God allowed a more settled life to develop during the middle period.

The people were not constantly on the move throughout the forty years but had opportunities to develop a community life without continually having to pack up and move on to the next stopping place.

S'forno suggests that the story is a tribute to the people, since most of these 38 years required unbelievable stamina and hardiness.

After all, what did they live in? Not solid mansions but ramshackle sukkot! What fortitude the people showed throughout this period! God protected them against the elements.

Whether they knew it or not, it was His miracles that maintained them.

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb - Honesty and Integrity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For one thing, honesty and integrity are not just descriptors of individual persons' characters. Rather, they are social values, which ideally should define the essence of human communities and entire

societies. From a Jewish perspective, “honesty” and “integrity” cannot be restricted to individual paragons of virtue, saints and holy men, but must become universal cultural norms.

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

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

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

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

Most well-known among the “ceremonies” releasing us from our personal vows and promises is the Kol Nidrei prayer which ushers in our most hallowed day, Yom Kippur. Not really a prayer in the ordinary sense, Kol Nidrei is a statement in which we declare our past vows null and void. This custom is experienced by many as strange and as an offense to the value of integrity. But I personally have always found that it reinforces the role of integrity in my life and in the lives of all of us who live in the “real world.”

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

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

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

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

A Short Vort Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

There is a famous Rashi in the week's Parsha, which seems eternal and worthy to be mentioned. The tribes of Reuven and Gad turned to Moshe to acquire the lands on the Eastern side of the Jordan. They stipulated that they accepted upon themselves the responsibility to enter the land of Canaan armed to fight with the rest of the tribes, first, before returning to their portions. They even conditioned that they would leave their sheep and families secured on the Eastern side, as they would fight with Israel in conquering the Western part.

(32:16) "And they came near to him and said: Sheepfolds we will build for our cattle here and cities for our little ones." "Gidrot Tzon nivneh l'mikneinu ...V'aarim l'tapeinu"

This seems a very fair request on the part of the two and a half tribes. All Moshe needed was to accept or not accept their proposal. Yet, Moshe answers them in reverse to what they requested. He said to the (24:24) "Build you cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep" - Why the different order? Was it simply a mistake in syntax?

Rashi quoting the Tanchuma says that it was intentional. Moshe taught them correct priorities in life. First, take care of your families and only then secure your possessions. Moshe, aware of their incorrect perspective of things, leaves them with an important message. The children are more important than we are; they are our future!

Perhaps this was the mistaken perception of the generation of the wilderness, to think of themselves first. Moshe's legacy is to concern ourselves about the future generation first- they ensure our survival. Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Shalom Rosner - Today is Aharon's Yahrzeit

Aharon HaKohen ascended Hor HaHar at Hashem's bidding and died there, on the first day of the fifth month in the fortieth year of Bnai Yisrael's exodus from Egypt. (Bamidbar 33:38)

There is only one person's yahrzeit recorded in the Torah and that is the date of Aharon Hakohen's death. It happens to be today! Rosh Hodesh Av.

Although the date of Aharon's death is recorded in Masai after the various journeys are delineated, we are initially informed of Aharon's death in Parshas Hukas. Immediately following the disclosure of Aharon's departure, the other nations felt it was an opportune time to attack Bnai Yisrael.

The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the south, heard that Israel had come by the route of the spies, and he waged war against Israel and took from them a captive. (Bamidbar 21:1).

What made the other nations perceive Am Yisrael as being so vulnerable immediately following the death of Aharon?

Furthermore, the gemara informs us (Ta'anit 9a) that the Mann was provided to Am Yisrael in the merit of Moshe, the Be'er was in the merit of Miriam and the Ananei Hakavod in the merit of Aharon. How are the Ananei Hakavod most relevant to Aharon?

One of the yesodos of Am Yisrael is the midda of Arvus – unity. Am Yisrael is referred to as one body. When we received the Torah, we were united as one – as is stated VAYICHAN SHAM YISRAEL - in the singular, to highlight the unification we experienced at that moment. Aharon was

known as an “ohev shalom v’rodef shalom” (Avos 1:12)– always seeking to restore peace among the people. When we are unified, no other nation can harm us. It is as if a spiritual armor protects us. Yet, when we are divided, we are vulnerable and at the mercy of our enemies. The Mishkan Betzallel suggests that once Aharon perished, the other nations hypothesized that in his absence there would be inner conflicts and they would be able to be victorious over Am Yisrael.

Perhaps the Ananei Hakavod were provided in the merit of Aharon, as they symbolize the unification of Am Yisrael. They encircled and protected the people as a unit. That personified Aharon, an individual who always sought to unify the nation.

It is no coincidence that Aharon’s death is on Rosh Chodesh Av, the month in which both the Batei Mikdash were destroyed, due to sinas chinum. When we act as an ‘am mefuzar umefurad” (a nation that is split) then we fall before our enemies. On Aharon’s Yahrzeit may we recall Aharon’s glue that bound the nation together, as the seamless cloud that protected our nation in the desert. May we seek to emulate Aharon’s love, respect, care and concern for every member of Klal Yisrael so that we can be zoche to experience a geula shlema during our lifetime.

Rabbi Moshe Taragin - Geulas Yisrael Jews Who Oppose the State of Israel

After thousands of years being dispersed across many cultures and across different continents we have finally returned home. Despite the myriad differences which divide the Jewish people, our beloved State of Israel deeply unites Jews across the ideological spectrum. So many have returned home and so many others courageously support our national project of homecoming. It is therefore frustrating to encounter Jews who are severely disaffected and even alienated by the State of Israel. Debating particular policies is legitimate and valuable; however, many Jews stridently contest our State, exhibit public opposition, and sometimes, even cooperate with our sworn enemies. Processing this strange resistance in Jews can be very puzzling and even infuriating.

It is simple-minded to just dismiss these opponents as self-loathing or self-hating Jews: “what type of proud Jew could possibly be opposed to the Jewish state?”. To be sure, there are Jews who revile their Jewish identity and despise any Jewish symbols. However, in all honesty, many Jewish opponents of Israel are proud Jews who struggle to reconcile their Jewish identity with their perception of Israel and its policies. Understanding their narrative and why we differ can help us better sharpen our own basic Jewish values.

Our historical calling is meant to inspire humanity toward moral and religious values. At the core of our message to humanity are the values of morality, ethics and social justice. To many Jews, the Zionist ethos greatly imperils this Jewish agenda. How can Jews exemplify morality when our State doesn’t appear to offer equality to its inhabitants? How can we stand for justice and compassion when our State is being restored upon disputed Lands? How can we sound universal messages when the spiritual ambitions we harbor for the State challenge democratic norms? For some, these contradictions create unsolvable tensions between their Jewish identity and their support for the State of Israel.

Where and how do WE differ? Don’t we also believe in morality, ethics and social justice? Why do we believe that our settlement of this Land is consistent with the Jewish message of morality? We “differ” in at least two crucial issues: the Divine authorship of our mission and our view of history.

Divinely-Crafted Mission - Indeed, Jews possess a historical mission and indeed that mission includes the spread of moral values. However, our mission is Divinely-crafted and delivered, not one which merely evolved over the passage of history. The ultimate barometer of morality is Divine will

and not popular opinion or current moral trends. Often, we must uphold values or pursue agendas which differ from common moral conventions but are based upon absolute and eternal Divine will.

Our Divine-crafted mission isn't just ideological but geographical. We are meant to disseminate these important moral messages from our national platform in Israel; our moral voice isn't meant to reverberate in a historical vacuum. Our tragic absence from Israel for close to 2000 years severed our historical mission from our Divinely-designed platform. Without efforts to return to Israel, our agenda of disseminating moral guidance is, at best, limited.

Messianic History - It is frustrating to live in a world which doesn't recognize our broader religious mission and, even worse, which is extremely antagonistic to our efforts to resettle Israel. We are routinely depicted as an imperialist regime imposing an iron-fisted occupation upon innocent victims. How can an 'apartheid' state opposed by so many, possibly contribute to a historical agenda of morality and compassion?

It all depends on how you view history. If history is evolutionary and open-ended, current enlightened voices condemning Israel are convincing and compelling. The current historical culture casts our return to Israel as immoral and if current views are definitive, then indeed, settling this Land against international opposition is immoral and antithetical to our Jewish mission.

However, religious Jews are all Messianists, who view history differently - as predetermined and cyclical – careening back to an earlier time and to a different set of conditions. Our current historical reality – though impressive- is fundamentally “broken”. We currently inhabit a world in which our efforts to re-establish Jewish nationhood and reassert our moral voice appears hypocritical and imperialistic. One day these perspectives will change. One day the world will be Divinely re-aligned and even our fiercest enemies will thank us for the values we stand for, and the G-d we continue to represent in this very hostile world. Sadly, many who view the State of Israel as an immoral enterprise, seem trapped in our current historical reality with little or limited Messianic horizons.

As a West Bank “settler” I struggle with this dualism on a daily basis: I believe in an overarching “Messianic” recalibration of our world and I take active measures to advance that reality. I believe that a Messianic overhaul will advance humanity and that my “settler” efforts are universally beneficial. Most of the world, however, still doesn't view me that way. While living under the current situation, I attempt- to the best of my capabilities and without surrendering my historical vision- to be respectful to all inhabitants of this Land and to operate within legal, moral, and practical means.

It is important to accurately assess anti-Israel sentiment among deeply proud Jews, who are unable to reconcile their sense of Jewish mission with the current struggle to resettle our Land. By understanding their qualms, we can better appreciate our differences and better reinforce our own values.

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider - At The Heart Of Kriat HaTorah

What is the source for the institution of Kriat HaTorah, the public Torah reading? Its origin is to be found in an intriguing episode. In parshat Beshalach the Torah records that after encountering the Divine at the Red Sea through epic miracles, the Jewish people wandered three days “without water.” Although the literal reading refers to a lack of water to drink, the Sages of the Talmud sensed another layer of meaning. Three days had elapsed since their previous contact with God. This detachment had impaired their spiritual wellbeing.

At that time, according to the Talmud, Moshe in response to the nation's spiritual malaise instituted Kriat HaTorah on Mondays, Thursdays, and Shabbat to ensure that three days would never elapse without a connection with the word of God. (Bava Kamma 82a)

It is noteworthy to find the original source for institutionalizing the public reading of the Torah from a pre-Sinai stage. It was already apparent at that early stage in our history that experiencing the word of God regularly was essential.

However, this is only the first layer in understanding the significance of standardizing Torah reading. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l developed a powerful theory regarding another essential component of Kriat Hatorah. Namely, the Torah reading corresponds to conjuring up in our hearts and minds the experience of Matan Torah and Sinai.

The following incident reported in the Talmud serves as a basic source for the Rav's contention. The Yerushalmi (Megillah perek 4) cites an episode in which Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak visits a shul and witnesses a kriat HaTorah in which the reader is "leaning on a post" (or perhaps the table). He is perturbed that he is reading the Torah in such a posture. He claims that "this posture is forbidden; just as it was delivered at Sinai in a manner which instigated fear and trembling, so must it be rendered in public in a manner which evinces awe."

This vignette supports the Rambam's position that one must stand for the reading of the Torah (Hilchot Tefillah 12:6). Kriat HaTorah, the Rav claimed, is not merely the collective or communal recital of Torah texts. Instead, it reenacts the pivotal moment at Mount Sinai during which God's word was revealed to the Jewish people.

The Rav argued that this notion is not only articulated in the Talmud but there is actually a compelling mitzvah mandated in the Torah that evinces the Sinai experience. Our public reading of the Torah stems from a concrete source - the practice of Hakhel. Take note of the Rambam's descriptions of the once-in-seven year public reading:

"Even converts (who may not understand the actual meaning of the Torah) are obligated to listen with fear and awe as though it were the actual day in which the Torah was delivered...each person should envision himself as if just now commanded by God Himself" (Hilchot Chagiga 3:6).

The Rambam views hakhel's reading of the Torah as an attempt to recreate the experience at Mount Sinai. The association is captured in the very name of the mitzvah - hakhel - which invokes the great assembly that characterized Mount Sinai. Additionally, the Torah actually demands the presence at hakhel of every man, woman and child, even though the latter may not be formally obligated to study Torah, since their presence assures the presence of a sweeping and all encompassing assembly that echoes Mount Sinai. The formal weekly reading of Torah today has its underpinnings in the hakhel reading and therefore the motif of recreating the Sinai experience is an essential component.

The obligation to conjure up the experience at Sinai devolves upon every Jew. It is rooted in an even more fundamental source. The Torah charges us with a lofty task which the Talmud expresses in the following way: [It is written] "You shall make them known to your children and grandchildren," and following that it is written: "The day that you stood before Hashem your God at Chorev." Just as at Chorev, there was dread and awe, trembling and fear, so too here [in respect to the teaching and studying of Torah] it must be done with dread and awe, trembling and fear (Berachot 22a).

The Ramban, in contrast to the Rambam, counts the mitzvah of recalling the experience at Sinai as an independent mitzvah. The Rav alludes to the possibility that our formal reading of the Torah affords us with the opportunity to fulfill this dictum to evoke the memory of Mount Sinai whenever the Torah is formally read. (And From There You Shall Seek, p.140).

This idea may also explain why krias HaTorah (the formal Torah reading) was inserted within the context of prayer. If it was purely an engagement in Torah learning it should have been placed following prayer. The fact that it is placed within the prayer service points to the notion that reading the Torah is a facet of avodah shebalev, it is to be experiential and should conjure up sentiments of standing lifnei Hashem, in the presence of God. (Derashot Harav p.220)

Rabbi Daniel Mann - The Transition From Shabbat Into Tisha B'Av

Question: Could you please explain how to handle the transition from Shabbat into Tisha B'Av (when it falls on Motzaei Shabbat) regarding se'uda shlishit, Havdala, and changing clothes?

Answer: Se'uda shlishit: The baraita, quoted in Ta'anit 29a says that one may eat as extravagant a meal as he wants on Shabbat even if Tisha B'Av falls on that day or the next. The Tur (Orach Chayim 552) cites customs that one is allowed and would do best to curtail the Shabbat meal. This is especially so at se'uda shlishit, which is, in effect, the se'uda hamafseket. However, these considerations are countered by the need to avoid displaying mourning on Shabbat. Therefore, there are no real restrictions, even at se'uda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 552:10). However, the mood should somewhat reflect the coming of Tisha B'Av, as long as it does not bring on clearly noticeable changes (Mishna Berura 552:23). One important halachic requirement is that one must finish eating before sunset (Rama ad loc.).

Havdala: One says Havdala in Shemoneh Esrei. Havdala over a cup of wine is done after Tisha B'Av (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 556:1). Despite these facts, if one forgot to mention Havdala in Shemoneh Esrei, he does not repeat Shemoneh Esrei. Rather, the declaration of HaMavdil, which enables one to do actions that are forbidden on Shabbat, suffices (Mishna Berura 556:2). Unlike Havdala during the Nine Days, where we try to give the wine to a child rather than an adult (Rama, Orach Chayim 551:10), after Tisha B'Av, an adult can freely drink the Havdala wine (Mishna Berura 556:3). The beracha on besamim is not recited this week because it is always recited only on Motzaei Shabbat, and on Tisha B'Av it is not appropriate because it is supposed to serve as a pleasure that revives the soul.

The beracha on the fire is specific to Motzaei Shabbat, is not a pleasure, and does not require a cup. Therefore, the minhag is to recite it in shul toward the end of davening, before the reading of Eicha (Mishna Berura 556:1). There are those who say that a woman should, in general, avoid making Havdala. This is because of the doubt whether a woman is obligated in the beracha on the fire, which is not directly related to Shabbat and thus is a regular time-related mitzva, from which women are exempt (Bi'ur Halacha 296:8). Therefore, if one's wife will not be in shul at the time of the beracha, it is better for the husband not to fulfill the mitzva at that time, but to make the beracha on the fire at a time that his wife can hear it (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 62:(98)).

Taking off shoes: As we mentioned, one may not do a noticeable act of mourning before Shabbat is over. While finishing to eat before sunset or refraining from washing need not be noticeable, taking off shoes is. There are two minhagim as to when to take them off: 1) One waits until after Shabbat is out, says HaMavdil, and then changes clothes and goes to shul. One can do so a little earlier than the

regular time listed for Shabbat being out, which is usually delayed a little bit beyond nightfall to allow for a significant adding on to Shabbat at its end. The exact time is not clear and depends on the latitude of one's location. It is advisable to start Ma'ariv a little late in order to allow those who take this approach to make it to shul (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 62:40; Torat HaMo'adim 9:1). (If the rabbi has ruled that everyone should take the following approach, all should conform, and there is no need for such a delay). 2) One takes off his shoes after Barchu of Ma'ariv. One who takes the second approach should bring non-leather footwear and Eicha/Kinot books to shul before Shabbat to avoid the problem of hachana (preparations for after Shabbat). However, if one uses these sefarim somewhat in shul before Shabbat is out, he can bring them with him on Shabbat (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata ibid. 41).

Rabbi Moshe Bloom - A Short Guide For Gardening During Shemitah

It is forbidden to plant and seed during Shemitah.

Watering (irrigation) is permitted during Shemitah, but only at the level necessary for proper upkeep of the vegetation. The best is to reduce the amount of irrigation in comparison to regular years or increase the intervals between irrigating times.

Fertilization must be done before Shemitah, thus we recommend the use of slow-release fertilizers before Shemitah begins.

Weeds and weeding: Permitted when there is concern that weeds will take over the garden's plants, or when there is concern that pests will find refuge in the weeds. We recommend the use of anti-sprouting agents or lawn weed killers. You can also get rid of weeds with a motorized scythe. You may not till or turn the soil.

Pruning bushes and hedges – when the hedge is full, it is permitted to prune it to retain its existing shape. However, it is forbidden to prune hedges with gaps and ragged edges in order to “fill in” the gaps or cause the hedge to grow better.

Designing and pruning trees – This should be done before or after Shemitah. It can be done during Shemitah only when there is a dangerous obstacle or hazard close to the sidewalk, the road, or electrical wires and pruning the trees can prevent accidents.

Mowing the grass – It is permitted to mow a full lawn as usual. However, it is forbidden to mow a lawn that has “bald spots” in order to fill in those spots.

Activities that are not related to agriculture or gardening, are permitted. Some examples: paving roads and walkways and building supporting walls. However, garden soil may not be used to fill in supporting walls (for example).

Rabbi Gideon Weitzman - Having Children, Or Not

Last week we started looking at the Nachmani case in which a separated couple, Ruth and Daniel Nachmani, fought in the courts for the custody and use of their frozen fertilized eggs.

To recap, the Nachmanis were unable to have a child and decided to undergo fertility treatment using a gestational carrier. Ruth and Daniel underwent fertility treatment and created fertilized eggs that were frozen in a clinic in order to be implanted in the surrogate carrier. Some time after this, before they had the chance to use these eggs Daniel left Ruth and went to live with another woman who had

a child together and so did not need to use the frozen eggs. Ruth was left alone and saw no reason that she would not use the eggs. She applied to the hospital to release the fertilized eggs into her possession for the purpose of the surrogacy procedure, but Daniel opposed this.

The hospital refused to release the fertilized eggs since they could not make the legal and ethical decision as to who possessed ownership of the eggs. This led to a long and complex legal battle in which various courts debated the question of the ownership of the eggs and the permissibility to use them. The District Court agreed to produce an order against the hospital that would force them to release the fertilized eggs to be used by Ruth and the gestational carrier. But Daniel appealed the judgment of the District Court to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court overturned the District Court's decision, and so the hospital were under no obligation to release the fertilized eggs, that remained frozen and unusable. But the battle did not end there, and Ruth petitioned the Supreme Court to reconsider the matter and hold a further hearing.

While the first decision of the Supreme Court had been made by five judges, the second hearing was with a wider forum of eleven judges. They debated the previous decision and a majority reached the decision to overturn the previous ruling and permit Ruth Nachmani to use the eggs. The late Judge Tzvi Tal sat on the hearing and came to the decision that she could use the eggs. One of his justifications was the Jewish value of having children, if Daniel's position was upheld then the eggs would never become life. The only chance that they had to become life was to use them. In his words "Furthermore, Jewish heritage, which is one of the fundamental principles of the Israeli legal system, considers having children an important value, whereas not having children is not considered a value at all."

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher - A Diary of Life

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel. Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the command of Hashem, and these were their journeys according to their goings forth." (Bamidbar 33:1-2)

Parshat Masai begins with a review of the 42 encampments that Israel made in their 40 year journey through the Wilderness. Rashi notes that this is an illustration of the kindness of Hashem that, although it would seem that they were constantly on the move, never had any rest, this is not the case. Except for the first year when there were 14 encampments and the 40th year when there were 8, in the intervening 38 years, there were only 20 stops, including one stop at Kadesh which lasted for 19 years. See Rashi to Devarim 1:46.

The Or Hachaim says that Hashem told Moshe that beginning with the Exodus from Egypt, he was to keep a written record of all encampments as they occurred. These notations accumulated until Israel reached the 42nd stop, the Plains of Moav, where Moshe organized the list into the 48 verses that now follow. Included in this list are the incidences that took place at some of these encampments where the people saw the Hand of Hashem which took care of their every need and desire.

From this remark of the Or Hachaim that Moshe kept a diary of the four decades spent in the Wilderness, Rav Pam explains that we can extrapolate the practical insight for life.

Every person is a recipient of Hashem's kindness many different ways. There are periods of great joy and accomplishments, and there are periods of travail and worry which are often resolved through the hidden Hand of Hashem. This happens to each person as an individual and to a family or a

community as a group. Unfortunately, with the passage of time many of these illustrations of the Kindness of Hashem are only vaguely remembered, or even totally forgotten.

One way of fulfilling the command of “Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation” (Devarim 32:7), is to follow the lead of Moshe and record as they happen “one’s own encampments” in the journey through life.

Like the verses mentioned here in Parshat Masai, they will become a permanent written record of the goodness of Hashem in one’s own life as well as that of his family and community.

CHIZKUNI - Jacob Solomon

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

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

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

But unlike Rashi, Chizkuni translates V'LO TACHANIFU ET HAARETZ literally, as "You shall not flatter the land." The simple meaning of CHANIFUT is flattery, where a person dishonestly openly attributes good things to people who are unworthy. Where a person praises when he should condemn. Chizkuni implies that this is a statement about the Land that is patently false: that it tolerates guilty people pleading to a lesser charge so that they can evade the due penalty in favor of buying their way out. Quite the contrary. Israel's presence on the Land works on the principle of "Justice, justice you shall pursue" (D'varim 16:20), that the same law applies to rich and poor alike.

It may be worth applying this principle of the Chizkuni to the way that some people erroneously view their being in Eretz Yisrael. They had been observant or were at least connected with observance in Chutz La'aretz, outside Israel. They belonged to communities, they followed some traditional practices on Shabbat and Chagim, and they kept a modicum of kashrut. They then made Aliyah. Despite feeling considerable uncertainties about how they would fit in, they continued to personal fulfillment in just being here, working here, and sharing the burdens of Israeli society.

They thus felt they were doing their bit by being here. In so being, they slowly jettisoned many of the practices that they kept "in the home country". In the mind-frame they "flatter the Land", holding that being here and involved in Israeli society compensates for their abandoning the practices of their faith.

It is then in this spirit that the Torah warns: "The Land will not effect atonement." Do not think that G-d expects less from you just because you moved here. On the contrary, the Land is spiritually charged: He expects more. He expects us spiritually and observance-wise to progress, in harmony with: "For I am G-d who dwells among the Children of Israel."

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir - The most powerful weapon
Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

Words that we say do not leave a physical mark, but they do not disappear. At the moment that we say something, we create a new reality in the world. This is the subject that opens this week's Torah portion: Moshe gathers the heads of the tribes tells them that if someone promises something, he should not violate his promise: "He shall not violate his word; according to whatever came out of his mouth, he shall do" (Bamidbar 30:3). Rashi explains: "He shall not violate his word: He shall not profane his word, he shall not make his word unholy." That is to say: the words that come out of our mouth are meant to be holy, and it is forbidden to utter unholy words.

Speech expresses what is in the soul, and every year, as Tish'a b'Av approaches, we read this parsha that reminds us to create a different kind of spoken culture. "Life and death are in the power of the tongue" (Mishlei 18:21). Words can destroy the world but also give it life. This is a reminder that all of us possess the most powerful weapon without having to carry a license: the ability to speak.

It's very easy to criticize others in this area, especially public figures, but we are also susceptible to verbal indiscretions. According to S'fat Emet: "This is the purpose of life - to improve and refine our speech."

Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

"Do not defile the earth upon which you are, for bloodshed defiles the earth, nor will the earth find atonement for the blood which has been shed upon it" (Bamidbar 35:33).

Here, at the final chapters of the Book of Bamidbar, Moshe Rabbeinu reminds the people of the horrendous act of murder and manslaughter. The warning here is not just about murder but also about any shedding of blood even without intention to kill like negligence or by accident.

Out of all prior commands or prohibitions, why does Moshe choose this one to emphasize again? Why does Moshe choose this moment on the border of Israel to intertwine this act of shedding blood with the entrance to the Land?

The Torah seems to paint a picture, not only of the sanctity of human life but also the harmony of human life with creation. Many Jewish sources point to the importance of caring for this earth. The Torah provided us with laws of how to plant, how to harvest and even how to let the earth rest. Judaism seems to put value on caring for the earth. The word for Man in the Torah is ADAM, originating from the word ADAMA - earth. The Torah begins with the creation of Mankind for the main purpose of working the earth and safeguarding it.

From this interlocking connection, we can assume that the verses in this week's parsha, which command us not to defile the earth through bloodshed, teach us a deeper message. By spilling innocent blood, we upset the sensitive balance of harmonious existence. Thereby, concluding that any sin, according to Jewish theology is not only disobedience to G-d but also unravels the harmony that exists between man and earth.

From the beginning, Adam's sin led to harsh work on the land, not always reaping its fruit. Kayin's sin led to exile from his land to become a nomad. Sin causes a rift, not only between man and G-d but also between man and his natural environment. Committing evil causes a detachment from nature itself. Acts like murder, idolatry and immorality defined in the Torah as Tumah - acts of defilement, pollute the land.

Standing at the border of the Land of Israel, Moshe reminds us to value the land we are about to enter. We must be careful to preserve and watch over its cleanliness, both physical and spiritual. When man sins, the land suffers. The Torah even described in its rebuke that when Israel sins, the land will expel us. The analogy of the Torah is like a person who ingested poison; the body will vomit it out.

This message is all too poignant during the days preceding Tish'a b'Av, when we literally were expelled from our beloved Jerusalem and Land of Israel due to our sins. Moshe words in this parsha seems to be more a prophecy than a warning.

May we continue to learn lessons from the past and understand the ramifications of our actions. We should be aware of Moshe's message of the harmony between Israel's actions and the Land of Israel on which we live.

MASHIV HARU'ACH / MORID HATAL - Afterthoughts by Yocheved Bienenfeld

The second paragraph of the Shmoneh Esrei is referred to as 'gevurot' (powers). The primary gevura of Gd that is mentioned is T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM, the revival of the dead. Depending upon the season, we insert one of two different phrases between the opening sentence and the rest of the paragraph. We refer to the particular gevura of Gd in terms of bringing either rain - mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem - or dew: morid hatal. According to the Bartenura in the Mishna of Berachot (5:2) rain is considered a gevura based upon a pasuk in Iyov (5: 9-10). The main theme of the paragraph, however, is the revival of the dead so how do these phrases about rain and dew fit in? We have been taught that receiving rain is similar to T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM because it makes possible the growth or rebirth, of a 'dead' seed in the ground into a plant. Given that the main idea, then, is T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM, perhaps another way of understanding these words is appropriate:

Mashiv Haru'ach - When it comes time for Hashem to "return the spirit" (soul), the time of T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM, He will also

Morid Hageshem - return it along with the physical body ('gashmiyut') from which it came (as Ramban says, that the physical will be elevated to the level of the neshama so that there will no longer be any conflict between the two.)

What further supports this kind of understanding is the phrase used during the other part of the year: Morid hatal. (26:19) The dead shall live... awake and sing you who dwell in the dust, for Your dew is the dew of light. Chazal, on the Yerushalmi, explain this as: (Berachot 5:2) this is the dew through which, in the future, the dead will be revived.}

How perfect! Morid hatal - at the time of T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM, Gd will bring down the 'tal' that will do just that - revive the dead.

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While We Are Alive

If you want to mashiv haru'ach, to return the spiritual to your life and enrich it, then you must morid hageshem - you must lessen and minimize the role and importance of gashmiyut, the physical and material in your life.

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### Pirkei Avot - Perek Sheini, Mishna 17

Rabi Yosi said, Let the property of your fellow-man be as dear to you as your own; qualify yourself for the study of the Torah, since the knowledge of it is not an inheritance of yours; and let all your deeds be done for the sake of Heaven.

R' Yosi made three statements; I'd like to focus on the second of the three: qualify yourself for the study of the Torah, since the knowledge of it is not an inheritance of yours;

Not an inheritance? What about - TORAH TZIVA LANU MOSHE, MORASHA K'HILOT YAAKOV (D'varim 33:4) - The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a legacy for the congregation of Yaakov. Legacy is something inherited from a predecessor; a heritage.

The Mishna says that Torah is not an inheritance. The Torah says it is a heritage or legacy. Same thing? No.

With a source in Talmud Yerushalmi, the difference looks like this: When a person passes away, his estate goes automatically to his heirs. Whether they are ready for it or not. Whether they deserve it or not. It is automatic. That's YERUSHA and that's what Rabi Yosi says the Torah is not.

In the passing down of a heritage or legacy - a MORASHA - the heirs have a claim to that which is passed down, but whether they actually possess it, depends on them. The Torah is the legitimate heritage for the Jewish People, and no one else. But each Jew has to want and work towards holding on to Torah. If one deserves it, he will have made the Torah his own. But if one does not work properly to make it his own - through Torah learning and practice, then it is not his on a silver platter.

There is one other thing that the Torah calls a MORASHA. And the same guidelines apply. Sh'mot 6:8 - "I will bring you to the land regarding which I raised My hand, [swearing] that I would give it to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; I will give it to you as a MORASHA - I am God."

The Land of Israel has been given to us - and to no other nation. But in order for it to really be our heritage, our legacy, our MORASHA, we must deserve it. We must work hard for it. It should go without saying that we must be here. Torah and Eretz Yisrael. That's the whole story.

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**MATOT-MAS'EI** - There are seven pairs of sedras (among the 54 sedras of the Torah) that are sometimes read separately and sometimes combined. The reasons for combining and separating the pairs differ from each other. And that results in different frequencies of being combined or read separately.

The pair that least frequently combines is Chukat & Balak, that combines only 28½% of the time in Chutz LaAretz (in years that Shavuot is Friday-Shabbat) and NEVER in Israel (where there is no second day of Shavuot to fall on Shabbat - and the (first) day of Shavuot never falls on Shabbat).

Tazria & Metzora, Acharei & K'doshim are combined 63% of the time. So is B'har & B'chukotai in Chu"l, but in Israel, B&B are combined only 45% of the time.

Nitzavim & Vayeilech are combined 55% of the years.

Vayakhel & P'kudei are combined 60% of the time.

Matot & Mas'ei are combined 89½% of the time in Chu"l and 79½% of the time in Israel. They are - by far - the most combined of the double sedras.

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

Moshe spoke to the tribal heads of the Israelites, telling them that this is the word that God had commanded:

And here is the first pasuk of Mas'ei (Bamidbar 33:1) - These are the journeys of the Israelites, who had left Egypt in organized groups under the leadership of Moshe and Aharon.

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

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The first topic of Parshat Matot is NEDARIM, vows. The Torah states emphatically, that if a person swears, vows, promises, and so on - LO YACHEIL D'VARO, he may not profane his word. Seems simple and straightforward. You give your word, you have to keep it.

But then the Torah tells us about HAFARAT NEDARIM, the fact that a father and a husband can nullify the NEDER of daughter (of certain age) and wife (under certain circumstances). The Oral Law teaches us the much broader topic of HATARAT NEDARIM, the procedure by which a person can have a Beit Din nullify his NEDER (within guidelines).

LO YACHEIL D'VARO stands on one side of the issue, and V'HEIFEIR is the starting point of the exact other side. The two sides of the NEDARIM issue are equal. As serious as 'do not profane your word' is, the proper nullification of ill-intentioned vows, is as serious. We who firmly believe that the Written Word and the Oral Law are inseparable components of Torah and Halacha, see the equalness of LO YACHEIL D'VARO and V'HEIFEIR (which are GMs at 291).

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### **ParshaPix – the answers - Matot-Mas'ei**

Father/daughter - see them? He's giving her a bracha, but in the context of Parshat Matot, he (the father) has the power to annul her vows (on the day he hears of them). This applies to a daughter of a specific age - see Sedra Summary for details <> Husband/wife. This is the other pair that is involved in HAFARAT NEDARIM (not HATARAT) There is a significant difference between the husband's setting aside his wife's vow and a father's setting aside his daughter's vow. Again, see Sedra Summary for details <> 5 crowns & one with a sword under them refers to the five kings of Midyan - EVI, REKEM, TZUR, CHUR, REVA - and Bil'am who saw their end during the battle against Midyan - by the sword <> Face-to-face sheep, goats, cows, donkeys represent the even split of the spoils of war from Midyan - one for you and one for me - between the army and the people. This is an indicator of the debt of gratitude we owe our soldiers for protecting us and for fighting for us. It was so then and it is so today vis-a-vis TZAHAL, the police, and security personnel <> gold bars refers to the contribution of the officers of the battle in thanks to G-d for the zero casualty rate among them <> Pyramids - Egypt, where MASEI B'NEI YISRAEL began <> two sukkot for SUKKOT - first location out of Egypt <> logo of YOTVATA dairy company, stands for the place of encampment of the same name <> the choir for is for MAK-HEILATA, another encampment <> Chamikiya for CHASHMONA - which not only sounds like Chanuka's Chashmona'im, but it was the 25th place of encampment (depending upon how you count them), as in CHANU-KAF-HEI <> Pomegranate with P for Rimmon Peretz, another place of encampment <> The map with a big 3 on each side of the Jordan River refers to the Cities of Refuge to be designated in Eretz Yisrael <> The scales of justice are for the careful attention that the courts must pay in cases of homicide (the example from this week's sedra) in determining culpability of the guilty party <> The road sign to Hebron is one of the requirements for Cities of Refuge (of which Hebron is one). Roads to them must be well-marked to facilitate the escape to them of one who committed a homicide, regardless of the level of his culpability <> Cow with the horns stands for the rare (this once only) occurrence of the TROP called KARNEI PARA <> the mathematically incorrect statement, that a fifth is equal to a quarter. A quarter is REVA, one of the five kings (1/5) killed in the Midyanite battle. <> Five more Chatan-Kalla, this time representing the daughters of Tz'lofchad who marry distant cousins to solve the "land going from one tribe to another tribe" problem <> Smiley is wearing a Mexican sombrero, so we are looking for the word smile in Spanish, which is RISA, a sound alike (or a sound the same) as the place of encampment known as RISA <> ballot box with a hand putting a slip of paper with the letter O on it, on its way into the box. That, then, is an O-VOTE, as in the place called OVOT <> book-key as in the tribal leader of Dan, BUKI b. YOGLI <> compass with the North being designated by the letters LE rather than N. This gives us ELITZAFAN (close to TZAFON) ben PARNACH, the Nasi of Zevulun <> the six elements are for the six metals mentioned in one pasuk - there is a subtle Unexplained with the elements <> and another 'regular' Unexplained

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**THREE FRIDAY NIGHT MINYANIM – 6:36 (PLAG), 7:20pm, 8:15pm – All in main shul  
CANDLELIGHTING NOT BEFORE 6:56pm**

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**YOUNG ISRAEL OF AVENUE K - SCHEDULE FOR SHABBOS**  
(EMAIL - [viofavenuek@aol.com](mailto:viofavenuek@aol.com))

**SHABBOS MINYANIM**

**Shabbos Shacharis – Shocheyn Ad – 5:20 (neitz – 5:34:15); 7:50am; 9:15am**

**WEEKDAY SHACHARIS MINYANIM – 5:00am, 7:00am, 8:00am**

REMEMBER that we have set up conferencing capability for our shiurim. Please call in to hear our wonderful Daf  
Yomi Maggidei shiur, Rabbi Moshe Zywica - mornings, and Rabbi Shmuel Sadowsky - evenings

Mornings – Monday THROUGH Friday – 6:05am – (605) 313-5943, ID – 106083#

Nightly, Sunday THROUGH Thursday – 8:30pm – Zoom ID 770 292 6177#, PW – 414019#

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**Z'MAN KRIAS SH'MA IS 9:17am – Say Sh'ma before coming to the 9:15am minyan**

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**DAF HAYOMI – MORNING AND NIGHT THIS WEEK:**

Mornings – MonTHROUGH Fri – 6:05am;

Nightly, Sun-Thu – 8:30pm

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**MINCHA GEDOLA EVERY AFTERNOON INCLUDING FRIDAY – 1:45pm**

**Candlelighting – 8:10pm BUT NOT BEFORE 6:56pm; Mincha – 6:36, 7:20, and 8:15pm  
Sh'kiya Friday Night – 8:28pm**

**Earliest Tallis – 4:28am**

**K'VASIKIN – Neitz is at 5:34:15am (Shocheyn Ad – 5:20am) – Main shul**

**Hashkama Minyan – Shocheyn Ad – 7:50am – MAIN SHUL**

**Regular Minyan – Shocheyn Ad – 9:15am – MAIN SHUL**

**Z'man Krias Sh'ma on Shabbos– 9:17am**

**Earliest Mincha Shabbos afternoon – 1:39pm**

**Shul Mincha #1 – 1:45pm - EVERY SHABBOS AFTERNOON**

**SHUL MINCHA #2 – 6:00pm followed by**

**Daf HaYomi – Rabbi Shmuel Sadowsky – 6:20pm**

**Shul Mincha #3 – 8:00pm**

**Sh'kiya Shabbos afternoon – 8:28pm**

**Ma'ariv – 9:00pm**

**Motza'ei Shabbos – 9:10pm**

**Weekday Mincha followed by Ma'ariv – 8:10pm**

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**The Y. I. of Ave. K edition is dedicated in loving memory of ILANA MICHAL b. AMIT YEHUDA, a”h**