

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MATOT-MASEI · 2 AV 5772 - JULY 21, 2012 · VOL. 19 NO. 39

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A MATCHLESS MATCHMAKER

“When you cross the Jordan to the land of Canaan, you shall designate cities for yourselves, cities of refuge.” (35:10-11)

Not long ago, the much beloved wife of a great Rabbi passed away. In due course he was remarried to a lady many years his junior. The second marriage was also very happy. Someone commented to him that he had been blessed to find such a good second match. “Well,” he commented, “you see, I had the best matchmaker in the world.” “Oh really, who was that?” asked the other. The Rabbi replied, “Shortly before my first wife, may she rest in peace, passed away, she said to me in the hospital one day, “David, when I pass away, I want you to go to Eretz Yisrael. There’s a great friend of mine who lives in Jerusalem. I’ll give you the address. I want you to marry her. She’s a wonderful person. I can rely on her to look after you properly.”

In this week’s *parsha* the Torah mandates the establishment of cities of refuge. Someone who had killed inadvertently could take refuge in one of these cities and escape the blood avenger of the victim’s family. The Torah chose as the sites of the refuge cities the cities of the Levi’im. Why? Why did G-d choose the cities of the Levi’im as the cities of refuge?

When someone kills, he doesn’t just kill a person. He kills a son, a brother, a sister, a father, a mother. It’s rare indeed that no one is affected by a murder except the victim himself. Killing someone has a ripple effect. A relative feels implacable resentment against someone who kills a member of his family. The Levi’im, however, did not react in this way. Since it was G-d’s will that there should be cities to which accidental murderers could run, they would accept a murderer into their community without any resentment, even if they were related to the deceased. Such was their spiritual level that they subordinated their feelings totally to G-d’s will.

Man is not an animal. Being human means being able to subordinate our instinctive feelings to our higher selves. However, it’s difficult to imagine being on the

level of selflessness of the Levi’im or that *rebetzin* on her deathbed. Nevertheless, just knowing that there are people like that in the world may encourage us to be a little less selfish.

For the right match can kindle a lot of light.

Being human
means being able
to subordinate
our instinctive
feelings to our
higher selves.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What’s the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

© 1992 - 2012 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Matot

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows — especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. *Bnei Yisrael* wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among *Bnei Yisrael*. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the *Ohel Mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of *Bnei Yisrael*, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe

grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

Masei

The Torah names all 42 encampments of *Bnei Yisrael* on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d commands *Bnei Yisrael* to drive out the Canaanites from *Eretz Yisrael* and to demolish every vestige of their idolatry. *Bnei Yisrael* are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be “pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides.” The boundaries of the Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside 48 cities for the *levi'im*, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the Land. Cities of refuge are to be established: Someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The daughters of Tzelofchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. Thus ends the Book of *Bamidbar/Numbers*, the fourth of the Books of the Torah.

ISRAEL Forever

THE SECOND THOUSAND

“A thousand from a tribe, a thousand from a tribe, for all the tribes of Israel shall you send to this army.”
(*Bamidbar* 31:4)

This was the “order of the day” issued by Moshe in preparation of the Divine commanded war against Midian.

Why is the number “thousand” repeated?

Our Sages saw this as an indication that every tribe not only sent a thousand of its men to the battlefield but also designated another thousand of its members to pray for the

success of their brothers in battle.

As the Israeli government struggles to find a solution to the problem of legislation regarding universal conscription, we hope that the reading of this week's portion and its subtle mention of the important role played by “the second thousand” will influence even the secular public that an army is not made up only of frontline fighters.

We certainly hope that the prayers and Torah study of “the second thousand” will secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and *Eretz Yisrael*

SHOMRON – THE MOUNTAIN OF SHEMER

The “sh” in the acronym *Yeshu* so much in the news stands for Shomron, a historic part of *Eretz Yisrael*. Now used as a title for an entire region, this was the name of the capital of the Kingdom of *Yisrael*. It was named after the



original owner of the mountain on which a great city was built. Omri purchased this mountain from Shemer and as a reward for adding a city to *Eretz Yisrael* he was the only one of the rulers of the Kingdom of *Yisrael* who was privileged to have a son and grandson sit on this throne.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Matot

1. Who may annul a vow?
2. When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
3. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
4. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
5. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
6. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the "machane" (camp). Which machane?
7. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
8. "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
9. During the conquest of the Land, where did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* position themselves?
10. What promise did *Bnei Gad* and *Bnei Reuven* make beyond that which Moshe required?

Masei

1. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
2. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
3. What length was the camp in the *midbar*?
4. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
5. What was the *nesi'im*'s role in dividing the Land?
6. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
7. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
8. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
9. Why is the *kohen gadol* blamed for accidental deaths?
10. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in *yovel*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

Matot

1. 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of *nedarim*. Otherwise, three ordinary people.
2. 30:10 - If she is under 12 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.
3. 31:2 - Because Moav only acted out of fear against the Jewish People. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav.
4. 31:5 - They knew that Moshe's death would follow.
5. 31:6 - The *aron* and the *tzitz*.
6. 31:19 - The *Machane Shechina*.
7. 31:23 - Immersion in a *mikve*.
8. 32:16 - They showed more regard for their property than for their children.
9. 32:17 - At the head of the troops.
10. 32:24 - Moshe required them to remain west of the Jordan during the conquest of the Land. They promised to remain after the conquest until the Land was divided among the tribes.

Masei

1. 33:1 - To show G-d's love of the Jewish People. Although it was decreed that they wander in the desert, they did not travel continuously. During 38 years, they moved only 20 times.
2. 33:40 - When Aharon died, the clouds of glory protecting the Jewish People departed.
3. 33:49 - Twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2,000 *amot*).
4. 34:2 - Because certain *mitzvot* apply only in the Land.
5. 34:17 - Each *nasi* represented his tribe. He also allocated the inheritance to each family in his tribe.
6. 35:13 - After Yehoshua separated three cities west of the Jordan.
7. 35:14 - Because murders were more common there.
8. 35:16 - One capable of inflicting lethal injury.
9. 35:25 - He should have prayed that such things not occur.
10. 36:4 - It remains with the new tribe.

- On which parts of a woman's body does a bloodspot arouse suspicion that it came from her womb
- Finding a reason for a bloodspot being on her body or clothes which remove suspicion
- Blood found in the urine
- Garment which was borrowed by a non-Jewess or a *nidah*
- Blood found beneath one of three women sleeping in a bed
- How much searching for the source of *tumah*
- Status of corpses found after years of futile search
- Why Moshe was more fearful of Og than of his brother Sichon
- How a faded bloodspot on a garment can be handled in order to purify the garment
- The various physical symptoms preceding menstruation which form the pattern of a veset
- The obligation of avoiding marital relations when the wife's veset approaches

TO BELIEVE AND NOT BELIEVE

“In regard to *lashon hara* (slandering report) one should not accept what he hears as true but he nevertheless should take caution lest it be true.”

This important advice from our Talmudic Sages is the key to solving a mystery in the prophecy of Yirmiyahu.

“The pit into which Yishmael had cast the corpses of the people who were murdered by the hand of Gedaliah....” (Yirmiyahu 41:9)

Earlier in that very chapter we learn that Gedaliah, who was appointed head of the Jewish community that remained in Eretz Yisrael, was assassinated by Yishmael. Yishmael subsequently murdered a large band of pilgrims from various

parts of Israel and cast their bodies into a common grave. Why then is Gedaliah himself identified as the murderer?

The answer lies in the fact that Yochanan ben Karech had warned Gedaliah that Yishmael had been hired to assassinate him and requested permission to take preemptive action against him. Gedaliah's response was that this could not be true and he took no precautions to protect himself. It was his failure to take caution while disbelieving which eventually led to the death of those buried in that pit.

It was centuries after these events that the pit containing the bodies was discovered after an intensive search for the source of *tumah* which tradition had assigned to that area.

• *Nidah 61a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“Moshe was fearful of Og, king of Bashan, because he was concerned that the merit of his informing Avraham that his nephew Lot had been taken captive might make him unconquerable.”

• *Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochi - Nidah 61a*

AVAILABLE AT JEWISH BOOKSTORES & WWW.OHR.EDU

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

THE WASSERMAN **TALMUDIGEST** SERIES

A tantalizing gateway to the incomparable wealth of intellect and guidance contained in the Talmud

VOLUME ONE - THE COGUT EDITION
VOLUME TWO - THE WINKLER EDITION

COMPLAINT

From: Beth

*Dear Rabbi,
I've been told that I'm "a complainer". Is there any advice as a rabbi that you can give me to improve this tendency? Thanks for your time.*

Dear Beth,

Once a Jewish man was admitted to the hospital in an unconscious state. Until he came to, the hospital staff consulted his family regarding all his needs: kosher food, a *minyán*, regularly scheduled family visits – in short, all his needs were provided for. When his doctor later asked him if there was anything else they could do for him, he replied: "Yes, please move me to another hospital." Astounded, the doctor exclaimed: "But we've done everything possible for you!" "That's true" he replied, "But the problem is that here I have nothing to complain about!"

People in general and the Jewish People in particular, as recorded in the Torah, have a tendency to complain. In fact, I've heard it said facetiously that a Jew who doesn't complain is suspect that his ancestors were not at Sinai!

However, despite the fact that we are certainly discouraged from viewing the glass half-empty but rather encouraged to view it half-full, that doesn't mean that complaining, or at least the source of complaint, is always wrong.

Usually, at least on some level, a complaint expresses, albeit not always in the best way, a desire for improvement. Accordingly, if it's a Jewish thing to complain, that may be a result of an ingrained longing for a perfected world, which, according to Judaism, is the ultimate purpose of Creation. Similarly, a "complainer" is very likely a

person who has higher aspirations for improvement. This can be a very good thing.

So if you have a tendency to complain, I wouldn't necessarily suggest improving it by removing it, but rather literally improving it – by improving the way you express your "complaints". Here's how:

First, make sure that it's really coming from a desire to improve and that there is something practical you can do to change the situation. If not, it's just a complaint and has little value other than to vent frustration, and most people don't want to be vented on. But if you find that your inclination to complain is genuinely to correct, then, rather than complain, express your desire for improvement in a positive and constructive way.

Rather than saying, for example, "I can't stand it when...", get used to saying, "Wouldn't it be nice if..." Or instead of saying, "Why do you always..." express it as "Perhaps we could try..." This type of communication is much more positive, expresses flexibility and, rather than voicing bitterness over the past or present, it instills hope for the future. That's what people want to, and should, hear.

In closing, a main way of determining whether your intention is to complain or to correct is to observe to whom it's directed. If it's always directed to others or to situations outside yourself, that needs correcting. But if it's also directed toward yourself, that's probably a sign that in general you're looking for improvement. Here too, though, your "complaint" to yourself should be expressed positively and constructively in order to avoid just venting frustration but rather to enable improvement. And when people see that you adopt this approach toward yourself as well, they will retract their complaint of your being a "complainer".

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU

FROM THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY

QUESTION MARKET

VOLUME ONE - THE KLEIN EDITION

Relevant, informative, and thought-provoking answers to contemporary questions on Jewish law, customs, and ethics

FOR WHOM THE BELL RINGS

Question: It often happens that I hear someone ringing my doorbell while I am in the middle of a telephone conversation. While I am hesitant to interrupt my telephone talk by going to the door, I do appreciate the anxiety of the person at the door who is ringing. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Your sensitivity towards the feelings of others is to be complimented. In regard to the question of priorities which you propose, the determination must be made as to who will suffer most from your action. Let us draw a comparison between the discomfort caused to your telephone partner who is asked to hold on for a minute and that of a

person at the door who receives no response to his ringing.

The person on the phone is aware that you are on the line and will be resuming the discussion once you answer at the door. The person at the door has no indication of whether you are at home and suffers some anxious moments until you finally show.

The investment of effort to reach you by the phone caller was no more than pressing a few buttons, while the person at the door made a considerable effort to come to your home.

The conclusion is that you should ask the party on the phone to hold on while you see who is at your door.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SURPRISE FOR THE POLICE

Responsibility for communal funds was always a prime concern of the late *mashgiach* of Yeshivat Slobodka in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Moshe Tokatsinsky. During a fundraising visit to London on behalf of the yeshiva, he was the victim of a robbery while traveling in the "Underground". He reported the incident to the local police and provided them with precise descriptions of the robbers who were soon apprehended along with the cash they had stolen.

Here came the catch that stood in the way of a happy

ending. The police asked the rabbi to prove that the money found on the robbers really was stolen from him.

To their surprise the rabbi pulled out a piece of paper on which were listed the serial numbers of all the bills which people had given him for the support of the yeshiva. He had foresightedly anticipated the possibility of such a scenario and had taken the precaution that probably no one else would have thought of.

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

THE ESSENTIAL MALBIM

THE KOHN FAMILY EDITION

VOLUME ONE - BEREISHET/GENESIS • VOLUME TWO - SHEMOT/EXODUS

PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL / MESORAH

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU