

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MASEI • 2 Av 5779 - AUGUST 3, 2019 • VOL. 26 NO. 45

\*In Israel: Masei is read this week and Devarim next week  
 \*Outside of Israel: Matot-Masei are read this week and Devarim next week (finally back in sync!)

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Lessons from London

“These are the journeys .....” (33:1)

I recently returned from visiting my mother in London. When I stay there I *daven* at the local Orthodox shul. It’s an affluent and not overly-observant community, where the emphasis seems more on the “Modern” than on the “Orthodox.” But something happened there that really impressed me. After the morning minyan, with about 20 people in attendance for the prayer service, there was a *brit mila*. At 8 o’clock there suddenly descended on the shul around one hundred thoroughly secular-looking ladies and gentlemen, dressed for a ball. I thought to myself, “They look so assimilated and yet they’re coming to an event that qualifies as child mutilation to many of their non-Jewish friends!”

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught: “Every commandment that Israel took upon themselves with joy, as for instance *brit mila*, is still observed with joy, as it is written in Psalms 119:162: I rejoice over Your word.”

The Jewish People are alive and well and living – amongst other places – in London!

The last Torah portion in the Book of Bamidbar, called Masei, chronicles the journey of the Jewish People through the wilderness. The Torah lists the forty-two places where the *Bnei*

*Yisrael* camped on their way to Eretz Yisrael. What is the reason for these forty-two stops in the desert? There is a mystical concept that the purpose of these encampments was for the Children of Israel to release and gather the sparks of holiness that were trapped in the desert’s emptiness. Each of these stopping places corresponds to a letter of G-d’s Name, and so by gathering the sparks from each place, a little more of G-d’s Name – i.e. His recognition in the world – was revealed. Three thousand years later, the Jewish People still journey. A hundred years here, two hundred there. On their journeys through Spain, America, China and England the Jewish People “extract” and redeem the sparks of holiness that are trapped throughout the world. When this process is complete, the Mashiach, the anointed one, will gather all the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. And then, “On that day, G-d will be one and His Name one.” G-d will be revealed as the one true G-d. His Name will then be complete.

Our Sages tell us that the mitzvah of *brit mila* carries with it the promise of three rewards: The eternity of the royal House of David, the dwelling of the Divine Presence on the Jewish People and the eternal ownership of the Land of Israel.

---

# TALMUD TIPS

---

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Masei: *Temura 9-15*

### A Good Read!

Rabbi Yehuda bar Nachmani taught: One verse says, “G-d said to Moshe, ‘Write these words for yourself,’ and the same verse continues, ‘for according (“al pi,” which literally means “by mouth”) to these words I have formed a covenant with you and with the Jewish People.” (Shemot 34:27) This teaches that the Oral Torah is not permitted to be “said” in writing, and that the Written Torah is not permitted to be said by heart.

This well-known teaching on our *daf* is the source of much discussion throughout the ages by the *Rishonim* and *Poskim*. Perhaps the most discussed question is how we may say the first verse of the Shema while covering our eyes and obviously not reading it from a Sefer Torah or even a Siddur. (In addition, this mitzvah is referred to in the Mishna and in halacha terminology as “*Kriat Shema*” – reading the Shema – and not as “*Amirat Shema*,” which would mean “saying the Shema,” and imply that it is said by heart.)

A number of reasons are offered by the commentaries for the need to read verses from the Written Law, and not say them from memory. One is that one might make a mistake if it is not read from a Sefer Torah or a *sefer*. Accordingly, if the verse is one that is oft-recited and is fluent in the mouths of people, there is no worry that it will be said incorrectly if done so by heart. (Tur, Orach Chaim 49)

Another reason for the need to read verses from a *sefer* and not just say them by heart is that there are special meanings conveyed by the form of the letters in *lashon hakodesh*. Therefore it is important to see the words that one is saying, to (hopefully) see and gain greater depth in Torah. As we are taught, “The letters of (of the holy Hebrew language) impart wisdom.” (Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 49)

Another reason to read verses from a Sefer Torah is that in case a Sefer Torah is present and open, another person who sees a verse said there by heart should not wrongly think that this verse is not written in the Sefer Torah. Although one might think that this concern would apply only if a Sefer Torah is present, a “blanket ban” was made to not allow saying verses by heart even without a Sefer Torah present. (Kol Bo)

Aside from the “fluency-factor” mentioned by the Tur as a reason to allow saying verses by heart, other factors and reasons are found in our sources. One is that since the prohibition is of Rabbinical origin (the Torah cited in the

Gemara is an *asmachta* “hint”), the Rabbis decided not to forbid saying verses by heart when it will dishonor the congregation. For example, if a rabbi is giving a lecture and quoting a number of verses, it would be awkward and time-consuming to read each verse from the appropriate written source, and lead to a discomfort to the attendees of the Torah lesson. (It is important to note that other reasons and factors are found in numerous *Rishonim* and *Poskim*, especially in Berachot 9a, Yoma 70a and Gittin 60b – besides in our *sugya*.)

Tosefot on our *daf* also asks why we may say verses of praise (i.e. Psalms and many such verses in the prayer services) by heart instead of only from a *sefer*. Tosefot answers that the requirement to read from a *sefer* is only when the speaker intends to help other listeners fulfill their obligation in the mitzvah. In this case the one saying the verses of the Written Torah should be careful to read them and not just say them by heart. The reason for this distinction – that saying them by heart for oneself is sufficient, while saying them by heart for others is not – is not explained by Tosefot. Perhaps it also is rooted in the concept of honoring the congregation. The speaker leaves no doubt that the words read are not in any way incorrect since they are read from within the text.

Years ago I had the merit to attend an inspiring lecture by the Gaon HaRav Simcha Wasserman, *zatzal*, who was teaching *Gemara* at the Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Jerusalem and serving as the *mashgiach ruchani* (spiritual advisor, as well as a general mentor). The subject of the talk was the Oral Law and its role. He offered a metaphor. Imagine you are in an important lecture at an academic institution and want to be able to remember everything that was taught in the class. What would you do (before the proliferation of ubiquitous recording devices)? Take careful written notes, of course! So it is with the Written and Oral aspects of the Torah. Certainly the Torah is one. But whereas the Oral Torah is “the Lecture,” the Written Torah is “the Lecture-notes.”

• *Temura 14b*

## PARSHA Q & A?

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!

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

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

---

# ASK!

---

Your Jewish Information Resource – [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

## Direction Needed

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*I am a film director. I work in advertising. After much pressure and considerable preparatory work on my part, I reluctantly agreed to direct a TV advert. I felt very uncomfortable about my decision.*

*Meanwhile, although I had said "yes," no one was in a position to reciprocally confirm the job as mine – i.e. the actual client had as yet to say "yes." A weekend passed. I then said I was declining to pursue the job. I was accused of unethical conduct.*

*I reasoned that my doubts and discomfort about the project's outcome would seriously impair my creative performance, and that it was in the client's best interests that I withdraw, even though such a withdrawal would constitute a serious embarrassment for me, the production company and the client's ad agency. Was I wrong?*

Dear Name@Withheld,

This is a tough one. And since it is a financial issue that involves others, it requires a "real live Rabbi" to hear both sides. I can just give you basic guidelines based on your side of the story. (In my answer I will assume that you were not yet legally committed by implied contract or industry standard.)

The Talmud says: "Your saying 'Yes' should be righteous." Meaning that a person should stand by his word.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one who breaks a verbal agreement in a business transaction – even if the deal has not been *legally* concluded – is considered unfaithful and "out of favor" with the Sages.

So, for example, let's say I'm selling you my car, and we agree on a certain price. As you begin writing out the check,

someone comes along and offers me more money. It would be unscrupulous for me to cancel my deal with you and to sell it to the newcomer, even if *legally* I am able to do so.

Now, your case appears to differ from a standard "business transaction." You aren't selling a car. Rather, you're "selling" your talent and creativity. According to your description you agreed to take on the project thinking you would be able to put your creative talents to it, but later you realized that you don't have it in you. This is perhaps more like agreeing to sell someone a car which you later realize you don't own. In such a case, backing out wouldn't be as much a lack of faith as a mistake made in the beginning.

So, if you think you can do a good job without harming the client's interest you should reconsider in order to uphold your word. But if you can't, you can't. I'm sure you will make apologies to the appropriate parties, as well as a commitment to exercise more care in future agreements.

- Sources: Tractate Bava Metzia 49a; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 204:7

### Who Knows Etc.?

*In the song at the end of the Pesach Seder we describe the significance of the numbers from one to thirteen as they relate to Jewish life and thought. "Three are the fathers, Four are the Mothers...12 are the Tribes of Israel..." What about the next 13 numbers? And after those? What significance do they have in Jewish tradition?*

### Here are some reader responses:

- 18 is the amount of minutes it takes to turn *matzah* dough into *chametz* (leaven).
- 19 is the number of years in a Jewish calendar cycle.

**subscribe @ ohr.edu**  
**to receive Ohrnet directly to your email each week**

---

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

---

**T**he Torah names all 42 encampments of *Bnei Yisrael* on their 40-year journey from the Exodus to the crossing of the Jordan River into *Eretz Yisrael*. G-d commands *Bnei Yisrael* to drive out the Canaanites from the Land of Israel 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 Levites, 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 Tzlofchad 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.

---

## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

---

*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### The Shining Sea of Galilee

**I**n delineating the borders of the Holy Land, the Bible says that a sea (technically, a lake in topographical terms) called the Kinneret runs along the Promised Land's eastern border (Num. 34:11, Deut. 3:17, Josh. 12:3, 13:27). The Targumim translate the Biblical name Kinneret into Aramaic as Ginosar, and Yam Kinneret into Yam Ginosar. Josephus (*War of the Jews*, Book III, ch. 10) similarly calls it the Lake of Genezareth (an Anglicization of the Greek version of Ginosar). However, the Talmud refers to the lake as Yamah/Yam Shel Tiveria – "The Sea of Tiberias." [The Babylonian Talmud uses the term Yamah Shel Tiveria (*Shabbat* 87a, 87b, *Mo'ed Katan* 18b, *Bava Kama* 81a, 81b, *Bava Batra* 74, and *Bechorot* 55a); while the Jerusalem Talmud calls it Yam Shel Tiveria (*Shekalim* 6:2, *Bava Batra* 5:1). Both of those terms mean "The Sea of Tiberias".]

Why does this one lake have three different names: Yam Kinneret, Yam Ginosar, and Yam shel Tiveria? And what is its "real" name?

This discussion actually has practical halachic ramifications. When writing a *get* (bill of divorce), one must mention the name of the city in which the *get* is written and verify its location by mentioning the closest body of water. Accordingly, when one writes a *get* in the city of Tiberias he must mention the Kinneret. But which exact name should he use? The question of how to refer to this lake was hotly debated by Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) and Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef of Trani (1505-1585), who jointly headed the rabbinical court of nearby Safed.

A popular theory claims that the pear-shaped lake gets its name from its physical resemblance to a *kinnor* (a musical instrument). However, there is no real source for this assertion.

Instead, it seems that the lake in question does not actually have its own name! Rather, it is identified by the most prominent city on its banks. For example, the Bible mentions a city called Kinneret, which was a fortified city in the tribal territory of Naftali that was captured in the time of Yehoshua (Josh. 19:35). The name of this city also appears in various ancient inscriptions. Thus, the Bible refers to Lake Kinneret as "the Sea of Kinneret" because at that time Kinneret was the most prominent nearby city.

In later times the city of Kinneret was called Ginosar. In fact, the Talmud (*Megillah* 6a) explains that the Biblical city Kinneret is the same city as Ginosar. The Talmud explains that the Bible calls Ginosar "Kinneret" because "its fruits are as sweet as the voice of a *kinnor*." Rabbi Nosson of Rome (1035-1106) defines *kinnor* as either a type of berry (which Jastrow identifies as a "thorn jujube," see also Rashi to *Bava Batra* 48b), or a musical instrument ("harp" or "lyre").

Indeed, the Talmud (*Brachot* 44a) speaks about the fruits of Ginosar in the most superlative of terms, and the Midrash (*Ber. Rabbah* §98:17) exegetically expounds on the word *Ginosar* as though it means *ganei sarim* ("gardens of officers"), because that land was especially fertile and valued for the fruits produced there. Thus, we see that by the Second Temple period Kinneret had come to be known as Ginosar but was still a highly prominent city. The nearby lake therefore came to be known as "the Sea of Ginosar" and that is the term used in works from that era (such as the Targumim and Josephus).

Another city on the sea's western shore is Tiberias, and when that city rose in prominence it became the sea's namesake. Thus, the fact that the Talmud refers to the lake as "the Sea of Tiberias" reflects a chronological shift when Tiberias surpassed Kinneret/Ginosar as the most prominent city in the area. Interestingly, the lake's name in Arabic is *Buhairat Tabariyya*, which means "Sea of Tiberias."

According to Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* (Book XVIII, Ch. 8), Herod (the Herodian tetrarch of the Galilee) established the city of Tiberias and named it in honor of the Roman emperor Tiberius (42 BCE-37 CE). The Talmud (*Megillah* 5b-6a), on the other hand, identifies Tiberias with one of two cities mentioned in the Bible: *Chamat* or *Rakat* (Josh. 19:35). The Talmud explains that the name *Chamat* (literally, "hot") refers to the natural hot springs found in Tiberias, while the name *Rakat* (literally, "empty") alludes to the fact that even the "empty" (i.e. ignorant) inhabitants of that city were still full of *mitzvot*, like a pomegranate is full of seeds.

The Talmud also offers two explanations for the name Tiberias. First, it alludes to the fact that the city sits at the *tabur* ("navel" or "belly button") of the Land of Israel (not in a geographical sense, but in terms of its importance). Second, that name is a portmanteau of *to'vah reiyatah* ("its sight is good"), which *Tosafot* explains to mean that it is aesthetically beautiful with its luscious gardens and orchards.

The Christian Bible occasionally refers to the lake as the "Sea of Tiberias," but more commonly calls the Kinneret "the Sea of Galilee" – the name by which the lake is more commonly known to English speakers. Galilee, of course, was the administrative name of the entire northern region of the Holy Land in Hasmonean and Herodian times. So again, the sea was named after its geographical surroundings.

I found another, fascinating theory to explain why rabbinic sources do not use the Biblical name Yam Kinneret. Archeologists at the site of ancient Ugarit (Ras Shamra in modern-day Syria) found a list of old Canaanite gods, and on that list was a god named Kinnaru. The word *kinnor* also appears in Ugaritic texts to mean a stringed musical instrument. (It bears the same meaning as the Hebrew word *kinnor*.) Based on this, some academic scholars have argued that Kinnaru was actually the Canaanite god of music, and the ancient city of Kinneret was originally named after that god. With this in mind, the late Dr. Dov Ginzberg of the Geological Survey of Israel argues that perhaps the Rabbis eschewed the name Kinneret found in the Bible because of its idolatrous origins, and instead renamed the lake by connecting it to one of the Jewish cities nearby (Ginosar or Tiberias). If nothing else, perhaps this theory explains why the city Kinneret was later renamed Ginosar.

*For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)*

## LOVE OF THE LAND

---

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

### A Lesson for Guests

Should one avail himself of the hospitality of others or, rather, should he make every effort to fend for himself?

The Talmudic Sages point out that there are models in the Tanach for either approach. The Prophet Shmuel made his rounds of Eretz Israel each year, judging and guiding his people. However, he always took his home along with him so that he would not be dependent on anyone. (*Shmuel* 7:16-17)

The Prophet Elisha, on the other hand, accepted the hospitality of a "great woman" in Shunam, who not only provided him with food but also built for him a special guest-room that she furnished for his comfort.

Elisha was the perfect guest who insisted on repaying the kindness shown him. Upon discovering that his hostess was childless, he blessed her to give birth to a child. When that child was the victim of a sudden death some years later, the prophet brought him back to life. (*Melachim II* 4:8-37)

---

# LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S. R. Hirsch

---

by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

## Journeys and Decampments

**T**he final *parsha* of the book of Bamidbar recounts the travels of Israel in the wilderness. The list is introduced as follows: *Moshe recorded their decampments for their journeys at the command of G-d, and these are their journeys for their decampments...*

Notice how the order of “decampments” and “journeys” is inverted in the second half of the verse. G-d regards the nation’s travels as “decampments for their journeys,” whereas Israel regards them as “journeys for their decampments.”

The journey and the encampment were always at G-d’s command, signaled by the clouds that led the way. Whenever G-d ordered them to break camp, His intention was that they should attain a new goal, and His educative guidance would seek out for them a new resting place which was suitable for the attainment of that goal. Each journey entailed progress – the journey was the purpose of the decampment. Hence, “decampments *for* their journeys.”

To the people, it was just the opposite! Wherever they stayed, they were dissatisfied. When the time came to leave a place, for them the decampment was the purpose. It did not matter to

them where they were going next. The main thing was the leave the place in which they had been staying. They journeyed forth in order to leave their place of encampment. Hence, all of their journeys were “journeys *for* their decampments.”

Indeed, the initial description of the travel guidance system in the wilderness (9:16-22) makes clear that the most challenging aspect of the unpredictable guidance was the waiting at the lengthy stops. Nothing is said of the duration of the journeys, but the prolonged waiting is mentioned several times in these verses.

So it is with our individual journeys and Israel’s journey as a nation. We mistakenly think that progress only comes when we leave the place we are in – we *journey* so that we may *decamp*. But G-d teaches us here a radically different perspective: progress is in the journey. The purpose of the journey is not to decamp. The journey itself leads to the attainment of goals, if only we had the patience and endurance to allow it.

- Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 32:2

**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

Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, ז”ל • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO ז”ל / DANIEL FREEDMAN

© 1992 - 2019 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Editor’s disclaimer: Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for a ruling.