



מטות- מסעי

CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

...FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN...

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE BATTLE OF THE PROMISES

לא יחל דברו ככל היצא מפיו יעשה,

“He shall not desecrate his word; everything that comes out of his mouth he shall do.” (*Bamidbar* 30:2)

Isn't this pasuk repetitive? If he shouldn't desecrate his word, obviously he has to do what he said!

Reb Avremele was distraught. He trudged home, rejected again, nearly in tears. For what seemed like the millionth time, he had asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for a child, and the Rebbe had refused to grant him a blessing. Why did the Rebbe, who was renowned for his kindness, sensitivity, and dedication to his *Chassidim*, continue to reject his pleas for a *bracha* to end his 20 years of childlessness?

He knew that the Rebbe's blessing would surely turn *mazal* in his favor. But how could he get a *bracha*? He must stand his ground next time and refuse to leave without the Rebbe's *bracha*—no, the Rebbe's *promise*—that he would have a baby. He was resolved. He would not take no for an answer any longer.

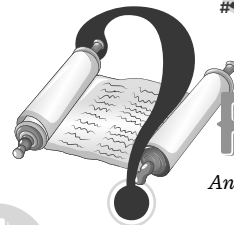
Several weeks later, Rev Avremele stood in the Rebbe's room, strengthening himself for the encounter to come. The Rebbe had not noticed his presence in the room; his mind was clearly in another world.

“Rebbe, I have come to ask for a *bracha* that my wife and I may be blessed with a son,” he said.

The Rebbe paid him no heed.

Reb Avremele repeated his request, louder and more firmly, again and again, until the Rebbe's

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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

- 1 Which three very rare *trops* appear in this week's *kriah*? Where else do they appear?
- 2 Can you find three consecutive *pesukim* that end with the same three words? Where are there 33 consecutive *pesukim* that all begin with the same word?
- 3 How many places were called יאיר חות? Why does the *pasuk* in *Mattos* (*Bamidbar* 32:41) call Yair “*ben Menashe*” when in *Divrei Hayamim* (I 2:22) it says clearly that he is from *Shevet Yehudah*?
- 4 Where does the word נחננו appear without an *aleph* (three times in the Torah and once in *Eichah*)? Can you give a reason for the missing *aleph* in at least one case?

GEMATRIA

ותהיינה מחלה תרצה וְחַגְלָה וּמְלָכָה וְנָטָה בְּנוֹת צִלְפָּחַד
לְבָנֵי דֹדֵיהֶן לְנָשִׁים
(במדבר ל"א)

The daughters of Tzelafchad were forced to marry their cousins in order to prevent the parcel of land they inherited in Eretz Yisrael from transferring to a different *shevet* (their husbands'). Does that mean they were stuck with bad *shidduchim*?

The *pasuk* says they were married לַבְנֵי דוּדֵיהֶן. That is the same *gematria* (171) as לֶהֱגוֹן לָהֶם, “fitting for them” (*Baal Haturim*).



CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Thomas, the church guard, has come on a clandestine visit to the Hamburg community leaders to report that Reb Shimon has been sentenced to be burned at the stake for cutting down the cross.



stunned silence filled the *rav's* study. Thomas's terrible words pierced each man like an arrow. Their good friend, Reb Shimon, loving father and dedicated husband, sentenced to a horrible fate for a moment of misjudgment... The men couldn't think or speak; they nearly couldn't breathe.

After a few minutes, the *rav's* voice broke the silence. "Thomas, why did you come here? You have nothing to gain just by keeping us informed. What do you want?"

Thomas's sharp eyes flashed. "I thought you'd never ask," he rasped. "There is a secret entrance to the church dungeons."

Hope began to tickle at the hearts of the assemblage. Could there be a way?

"You would never find it. It is hidden and guarded. But *I* am the guard. And I might be willing to save your friend...if it would be worth it for me."

The *parnas* leaped to his feet. If it was just a question of money, certainly the community would find a way! "How much?" he asked.

Thomas dropped his bombshell softly. "Three thousand gold coins."

The people in the room sagged in their seats when they heard the astronomical sum.

But Rav Yonasan Eibshutz snapped to attention. That figure sounded very familiar... "We'll do it," the *parnas* said firmly. "Give us a week and we will get the money together."

"Week? What week?!" Thomas snapped. "You have three days. This is a tremendous risk for me. I know you Jews have hidden riches. Go collect the money!"

"Three days? How can we do it in three days?"

"If the money is not in my pocket in three days I cannot guarantee your friend's safety," Thomas said coldly. "The priests are likely to carry out the sentence anytime, even before the scheduled execution. Three days! You know where to find me."

With that, the guard gathered his black cloak about him, swept from the room, and slammed the door.

"Quick, there's no time to waste!" the *parnas* announced urgently. "I'll organize volunteers to go door-to-door to collect from everyone in the city. Pairs of *yungeleit* will knock at every home."

"I will send messages to *rabbanim* in nearby cities to ask for help from the *gevirim* in the various towns," the *rav* added.

Rav Yonasan was no longer listening. He knew this was all unnecessary, because he knew where the entire sum of three thousand gold coins could be gathered instantly, without delay. It was a wild idea, but these were wild circumstances...

Buoyed by his plan, Rav Yonasan slipped out the door quietly, right behind the church guard.

TO BE CONTINUED....



LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a dvar Torah, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. Can be split between the three seudos.

נָקָם נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת הַמִּדְיָנִים אַחַר תְּאֵסֹף אֶל עַמִּי,

"Avenge the revenge of Bnei Yisrael against the Midyanim after you will be gathered to your people (i.e., after you die)." (*Bamidbar* 31:2)

Shouldn't the *pasuk* say וְאַחַר, "and afterward (you will die)"? What does "take revenge after you will die" mean?



REBBE SHIMSHON OF OSTROPOLI:

Moshe's revenge on Midyan happened after he died! Moshe could not take direct revenge on Midyan because he owed them gratitude for the years he had lived among them with Yisro. In fact, Moshe did not participate in the war, Pinchas led it. But he did take a bit of revenge hundreds of years later. *Chazal* (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b) link Moshe with Gidon, who had a piece of Moshe's *neshamah*. Gidon *did* go to war with Midyan, as detailed in *Sefer Shoftim*. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*: Take revenge on Midyan *after you die*—as Gidon!



APERION (RAV SHLOMO GANZFRIED, KITZUR SHULCHAN ARUCH):

The word *achar* in this context means "since." Hashem said, "Take revenge on Midyan *since* you will die." The purpose of punishing Midyan was to teach the nations that they will all eventually be punished for starting up with Bnei Yisrael (and therefore, they should think twice before they do it). But had Moshe not died in the desert, *Klal Yisrael* would have entered the era of Mashiach as soon as they arrived in Eretz Yisrael, and no one would ever attack *Klal Yisrael*. It was only necessary to take revenge on Midyan *since* Moshe would die and Mashiach would be delayed!



RAV MOSHE GALANTI (MASHAL U'MELITZAH):

One must be careful when using the *middah* of vengeance, because he is liable to take revenge against someone out of personal offense and think it is Hashem's *middah* of *nakei lo yenakeh*. Only when one has cleansed all his *middos* and is pure and ready to join the *tzaddikim* in *shamayim*—when he is אַחַר תְּאֵסֹף אֶל עַמִּי—only then can he know that his revenge is purely motivated by his desire to bring about *kvod Shamayim*.

PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

PARSHAH SUMMARY

A common theme in *Parshiyos Mattos* and *Massei* is that of taking an accounting, specifically before a big step—making a reckoning of how things have gone thus far and applying lessons learnt to new challenges.

Parshiyos Mattos-Massei describe some of *Klal Yisrael's* final activities before entering Eretz Yisrael. (*Chumash Devarim* contains three speeches made by Moshe to the people; it takes place in a matter of days.)

The *parshah* tells us about Moshe's reckoning with the forces that went to war against Midyan. Moshe points out and corrects their mistakes and calculates and divides the spoils, teaching future protocols. When *bnei Gad* and *bnei Reuven* approach, Moshe revisits the mistakes of the *Meraglim* and applies lessons learnt to their requests. The *parshah* then gives a complete accounting of the travels of all 40 years in the desert, including the major events. Lessons are applied for the future life in Eretz Yisrael: to destroy all bad influences that may remain and to set up Cities of Refuge. A man also makes an accounting of his daughter's or wife's vows before the day is done.

The *nesi'im* are also revisited and listed, and an adjustment is made to the arrangement for the *bnos Tzelafchad* to solve a problem that was raised by their *shevet*.

This Shabbos is also the middle Shabbos of Bein Hametzarim, the three-week period of intense mourning for Eretz Yisrael and the Beis Hamikdash. Rosh Chodesh Av and the end of the year are close at hand.

AVODAH FOR THIS WEEK:

The *Mesillas Yesharim* stresses that *cheshbon hanefesh* is one of our greatest tools against the instinct to do wrong.

- 1. Take time just before going to bed every night this week to review the day. Find at least one thing that needs fixing and prepare for it for tomorrow.**
- 2. During your nightly moments of introspection, take time to think about and mourn the loss of the Beis Hamikdash. Ask yourself, what am I doing to fix the problems, to bring the Third Bayis?**

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

- 1.** Where in the Torah does a *parshah* (paragraph) end in the middle of a *pasuk*? **After the plague in Parshas Pinchas (Bamidbar 26:1) and after the "sin" of Reuven (Bereishis 35:22)**
- 2.** Where in the Torah is there a broken letter? Why? **The *vav* in Hashem's promise to reward Pinchas with *ליון* is broken. The Baal Haturim gives several reasons. One is that Pinchas is also Eliyahu Hanavi, who is sometimes called Elya because his *vav* was taken as collateral until Mashiach arrives. So Pinchas's *vav* is also broken.**
- 3.** When the Torah describes the *korbanos* for the various days of Sukkos, it uses identical sets of words for each day, with three exceptions: three words have an extra letter. What are the extra letters? **וּנְסִיָּה וְנִסְיָהּ וְנִסְיָהּ** – two *mems* and a *yud*. What word do they spell? **Mayim, water.** To what is it hinting? **The *nisuch hamayim* on the *Mizbe'ach* on Sukkos (Shabbos 103b)**
- 4.** Why were Bnei Yisrael counted again in this week's *parshah*? **1) To see how many were left after the plague. 2) Moshe was about to die and return his flock to Hashem. It was time to inspect the condition in which they would be returned (Rashi).**

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

This week's haftorah is the one designated for *Parshas Massei*. It is the second of the three warning *haftaros* preceding Tishah B'Av, and it picks up right at the end of last week's haftorah.

SUMMARY:

The *navi* Yirmiyahu blasts *Klal Yisrael* for abandoning Hashem and following idols. He lists several of Hashem's kindnesses to us and contrasts them with our ingratitude, our pretending that Hashem doesn't exist, and our allegiance to other "gods" despite their foolishness.

The Navi says we have acted worse than the other nations and that we are defiling our noble lineage with our actions. He decries our foolishness and describes the consequences for our actions.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH:

The primary message of the haftorah relates to the Three Weeks. It also contrasts sharply with the *parshah*. In the *parshah*, we look back at our previous actions to learn from our mistakes and resolve to be better (see "Avodah of the Week"). The haftorah decries our willingness to ignore the past, to ignore Hashem's *chessed*, to ignore the uselessness of stone idols, and to insist on doing wrong despite the clear consequences. It makes the same point as the *parshah* by underlining the tragic results of failing to learn from the past.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES:

With regard to both coronavirus recovery and police reform, the importance of learning from past mistakes is as great as ever. The temptation to engage in decisions born of knee-jerk reactions or general frustrations faces all of us as individuals as well as countries and leaders.



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eyes settled on him. "Reb Avremele, this is not the time!" the Rebbe exclaimed. "I am working on something that concerns all of *Klal Yisrael*..."

"I refuse to leave until the Rebbe promises me a child!"

"I warn you, Reb Avremele, this is not the time... Do not push the issue. You will regret it."

But Reb Avremele was convinced that this *was* the time. He repeated his insistence again and again until the Rebbe burst out, "I promise you, Reb Avremele, you will *never* have a child!"

Shocked and terrified, Reb Avremele fled.

If he had known misery before, it was nothing compared to this. The Rebbe had vowed he would never have a child!

What was he to do? He went about his daily business in a daze, bewildered and despondent, until one day, just before Pesach, when his business travels took him to the town of Koritz.

In the *beis midrash* of Koritz, Reb Avremele spotted a young man named Reb Pinchas. He was not yet known as the famous Rav Pinchas Koritzer, but Reb Avremele had a good eye, and he saw greatness in the young man.

Reb Avremele made a few inquiries and discovered that Reb Pinchas had not a cent with which to make Pesach and had locked himself in the *beis midrash* until Yom Tov. He hurried to Reb Pinchas's home.

"I will pay for a full Pesach, including food, dishes, furniture, candles—everything!" he told Reb Pinchas's shocked wife. "All I ask is that you not reveal any of this to your husband until the Seder night, and invite me to be your guest."

She agreed.

Reb Pinchas came home Pesach night expecting to find a cold, dark, and bare home. To his surprise, it was filled with light, joy, and the aroma of fresh Pesach cooking! He beheld his benefactor calmly and began to lead a Seder...from *shamayim*!

At *Shulchan Orech*, Reb Pinchas turned to the guest. "What is it that you seek?" he asked.

Reb Avremele poured out the whole story. He told of his 20 childless years, his pleas for a *bracha*, and the ultimate terrible promise the Rebbe had made.

"I swear to you, you will have a son within the year!"

Reb Pinchas had promised. And so it was.

Many years later, Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin related the story. "In that moment, there was a terrible commotion in *shamayim*," he explained. "Conflicting promises from two holy people! Whose word would be fulfilled?"

"The *Beis Din shel Maalah* decided to follow the *pasuk* 'He shall not desecrate his word; everything that comes out of his mouth he shall do.' 'He shall not desecrate his word,' meaning, he who does not make promises cheaply and has never made a promise before, 'everything that comes out of his mouth he shall do'—Hashem will ensure that his word is fulfilled. The *beis din* decided to listen to Reb Pinchas because he had never, ever made any promise before!"

HALACHAH

Parshas Mattos opens with a discussion of *nedarim* and their cancellation. Here are some surprising modern applications of this area of halachah.



AVOIDING

NEDARIM

It is customary to always say “*bli neder*” when stating one’s intent because making *nedarim* is very serious. Even one who fulfills a *neder* he made is called a *rasha* for making it.

One should not even make a pledge to give *tzedakah*, he should just give it without pledging. According to one Rishon, as soon as one has decided to give *tzedakah*, even without verbalizing his decision, he is already obligated to give it! The Ritva writes that it is permitted to make appeals in shul and praiseworthy to announce pledges because this may be the only way to raise sufficient funds. Also, it will encourage other people to give.

Some people make *nedarim* when they are in trouble. Such *nedarim* are serious, and according to some, cannot be canceled; if you made a “deal” with Hashem, you can’t back out!



UNDER

OATH

Sometimes a secular court requires a witness to take an oath. One should try to avoid doing so, even though he will tell the truth. Often, one may be offered the alternative to “affirm” that their words are true. The Chazon Ish says that this is no different from an actual oath. Others say that if one proclaims that they affirm because they cannot swear, it is clear that the intent is not of a real oath. One should always add the words “*bli neder*.”



HAFARAS

CHALLAH

What happens when the *challah* separated from dough is accidentally mixed or confused with other bread? One is forbidden to eat the *challah*, and it is not *battel* in the regular amount. What can be done?

If the *challah* was taken by a woman, it is considered a *neder*. Her husband or father can be *mafir neder* and make the *challah* back into regular dough! *Challah* can then be taken again (*hataras nedarim* also applies, if necessary). This *eitzah* should not be used in Eretz Yisrael when someone has eaten from the dough or breads already because retroactively, the food they ate will become forbidden when the *challah* designation is canceled.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“THE DEFINITION OF “LAASOS,” KEEPING TORAH, IS BEING SURE NEVER TO OFFEND ANY PERSON, [AT] ANY TIME, [IN] ANY PLACE, IN ANY WAY, EVEN WITH JUST WORDS.”

-Chazon Ish

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