

Congregation



*** 2108 Ocean Parkway Brooklyn, N.Y. 11223 ***

Rabbi Aharon Farhi
*Parashat **Matot Masei***
1st Av 5781

Maqam Nahwand
Issue #945

Mr. Eliyahu Levy, President
*Haftarat **Shimu Devar***
July 10th 2021

*Candle Lighting 8:10pm * Shekiah 8:28pm * Shir Hashirim 7:00pm followed by Minha Friday Night
Shaharit Shabbat 8:15am * Minha Shabbat 7:50pm * Shabbat Ends 9:10pm & Rabbenu Tam 9:40pm
Time for Talit 4:09am * Seasonal Hour 86:00 * Alot Hashahar 3:52am * Netz Hachama 5:35am
Weekday Minha 7:30pm * Earliest Time for Arbit 7:17pm * Tzet Hacochavim 9:05pm * Chatzot 1:01
Latest Time for Morning Keriat Shema 8:10am * Latest Time for Morning Amidah 9:36am*

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Parashat Matot: In this week's first Parasha, it is written: *Hashem spoke to Moshe – Take vengeance for Bnei Yisrael against the Midianites; afterwards you will be gathered unto your people.* Here begins the battle against Midian. This was the retribution that had been promised against the Midianites (25:17) because of their responsibility for the Jewish sins of immorality and idolatry. If we may ask: Why is this chapter written immediately after the chapter discussing vows and oaths – what is the connection? Our Sages of blessed memory explain: When Moshe heard the commandment, *One shall not desecrate his word*, he understood that although the one who vowed or promised cannot desecrate his word, nonetheless others may discover reasons to permit the oath or vow in order to have it nullified. Moshe then thought that perhaps Hashem will discuss with the heavenly court His swear not to allow Moshe into Israel, to nullify it, and then he will be allowed entry, as he was allowed into the lands of Sihon and Og. Hashem, however, immediately informed him that this could not happen. He was instructed to take vengeance and afterwards he will be *gathered unto his people*. Hashem had not sworn that Moshe would not be allowed into the lands of Sihon and Og, only that he will not pass the Jordan River. Hashem spoke to Moshe with harshness, as it says *Vaydaber* – to speak harshly. Why? Since Moshe did not rebuke the tribe of Shimon concerning the immorality committed in Shittim. Moshe had spoken words of rebuke when the sin of the golden calf was committed, when only the

tribe of Levi was on his side. Now that all of Bnei Yisrael was on his side, why did he not rebuke the tribe of Shimon? Moshe required a degree of atonement. Therefore, Hashem told him to take vengeance against the Midianites, who were involved in the sins of Shittim, and gain atonement as well for what he had done wrong, and afterwards he will be *gathered unto his people*, not to enter Israel, but to be clean from sins and fully atoned. Now a question arises: The sins committed in Shittim were enticed not only by the Midianites, but also by the daughters of Moab, as it says, *The people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab* – to teach that the sins began with the daughters of Moab and then continued with the daughters of Midian. Why then is vengeance only promised on Midian and not also on Moab? Also, last week, Parashat Pinehas began: *Harass the Midianites and smite them* – why was Moab not included there either? There are many answers given to these questions: 1- Since Rut would descend from Moab, they weren't included. 2- Moab was just defending themselves by causing Bnei Yisrael to sin, since they were threatened at the time and were afraid of losing their land, while Midian had joined a battle that was not their own. 3- Hashem overlooked Moab since they descended from Lot, who was guarded and protected by Avraham Avinu. Nonetheless, Hashem punished Moab by not allowing them to intermarry with Bnei Yisrael. 4- The daughters of Moab already ceased their enticement of immorality and left Bnei Yisrael alone, while

Midian continued to entice Bnei Yisrael to immoral acts. 5- The last and main reason: Hashem promised vengeance on Midian because they had caused Bnei Yisrael to commit idolatry, as it says, *They conspired against you in the matter of Peor (idol)*. While Moab had only caused Bnei Yisrael to sin with their daughters, Midian also caused Bnei Yisrael to worship idols. Midian knew Bnei Yisrael would not serve idols unless they were tricked into it, so they formulated a plan to cause them to stumble. When the Midianite would entice him, she would tell him to do a disgusting thing on the idol, which is actually its form of worship, and he would do it thinking that he was causing it disgrace, not knowing that he was actually serving it. This is why Midian deserved much worse of a punishment than Moab. May Hashem watch over us, Amen.

Parashat Masei: *“These are the Journeys of Bnei Yisrael”* Twenty four journeys are recorded in summary in the beginning of this week’s Parasha. Why has the Torah documented them? *“Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem... and these were their journeys according to their goings forth”* Why was the order switched between the word meaning ‘their goings forth’ and the word meaning ‘their journeys’? Also, why was only the first time *“at the bidding of Hashem”*? The *Keli Yakar* explains: sometimes the journeys were an advancement forward, towards Israel, and sometimes Bnei Yisrael backtracked a little bit, towards Egypt or other parts of the desert. This is why the order was switched in the Pasuk. As well, it is understood that the journeys they embarked on which took them forward were *“at the bidding of Hashem”*, while the journeys that took them backward were not. All of the journeys are documented in order to spread praise and acknowledgement for Hashem’s honor, a remembrance of Hashem’s immense kindness he has shown our nation during the forty years we have spent in the desert. Each journey includes and manifests Hashem’s love for our nation and a specific form of His great kindness, as well as a lesson. The *‘Ba’al Ha’Akedah’* lists and explains at length each of the twenty four journeys. Reading through them carefully and visualizing the situations, with their difficulties and hardships

along with Hashem’s heaven-sent salvations, will strengthen your belief and trust in our creator. The exodus out of Egypt, the splitting of the sea, Elim with its twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, the Mana, the wellspring of Miriam, the times they tested Hashem, the episode of Miriam, the argument of Korach, the episode of the spies, the passing of Miriam, the lack of water and their complaints for food and water, the passing of Aharon, the battle with Amalek, the battle with the Canaanite, and many other occurrences are recorded and documented in the Torah and summarized in the beginning of this week’s Parasha. Why is it important to learn in depth what had transpired during the forty years Bnei Yisrael had spent in the desert? To teach us a great lesson: Hashem is always there for us, watching over us and caring for us. We may not always realize that He is there with us, and we may complain at times, but the fact is clear – Hashem was always with our holy nation during the forty years in the desert, and He is still with us today. May Hashem always protect us from harm, Amen.

Insights on the Parasha

1 – *“He shall dwell in it until the death of the Kohen Gadol”* What is the connection between an unintentional murderer’s freedom and the death of the Kohen Gadol? The *Chida* writes: when the holy and righteous Kohen Gadol passes away and his soul ascends to heaven, all souls that have not yet found rest, as well as the victim of the unintentional murder, gain a sense of tranquility and ascension. Therefore, the murderer may then be free. The *Rashbam* explains another reason: The Kohen Gadol controls and governs the cities of refuge. Just as when a new king claims the throne he releases all previous prisoners, as they have not committed any crimes against his laws or under his jurisdiction, so too, when a new Kohen Gadol is anointed after the death of a previous one, all of the unintentional murderers are set free, as they have not done anything during his time.

History in Brief

60 years after the Temple’s destruction, in the year 128AD. The Caesar Hadrian wanted to break the Jewish people, to dispel them from their lands and spread them scattered throughout the corners of the Roman empire. Jews were sent far away to

Germany, France, and England. Then more Jews were spread even further, settling in northern Africa, from Egypt to Morocco. What would be with Israel, with Jerusalem? They would rename it, and inhabit it with all different nations, so that it would no longer be known as Jewish land. In place of the Bet Hamikdash, they would place idolatry, as well as a large statue of the Caesar. These remained for the next two hundred years, until the year 328AD, when the mother of the new Caesar, Constantine, removed the idolatry and statues from those holy areas.

Health and Recovery

Some people have a pear-shaped belly, a type of obesity usually the result of drinking water or other drinks during or near a meal. Such a belly can also be the result of using of a loose belt or suspender straps instead of a belt. When the belt is not relaxed and properly presses on the abdomen slightly, then the brain gives a command to the abdominal muscles to pull in the abdomen, but if the belt is loose, then the brain gives a command to relax the abdominal muscles, to come out and form a prominent belly. Therefore, it is preferable to use a belt that presses on the abdomen and pulls it in. It should be known that the abdomen begins to grow between 40-50 years of age. As the advanced age of the muscles in our bodies begin to weaken, some tend to lengthen and some tend to shorten. The back muscles tend to lengthen and the chest muscles tend to shorten, and the result is that a person of advanced age begins to bend. The abdominal muscles also tend to lengthen, which is why, even though a person does not necessarily overeat in amount or intake of fat, and may even be eating properly, and even though he is careful not to drink during the meal, nonetheless as a result of the weakening of the abdominal muscles that come with age, the belly starts to grow. This is also one of the causes of lower back pain. The way to prevent this is by strengthening the abdominal and back muscles.

Mussar: The Month of Av

Av, the fifth month from Nissan, has the Mazal of a lion. “Av” could stand for: *Alef* - Edom, and *Bet* – Babel; Rome and Babylon – the two nations responsible for the destruction of the two temples that were destroyed during this month. *When Av*

arrives, we decrease our happiness – The happiness is only decreased during the first half of the month, for it is then that we mourn for our loss of the temples; however, the second half of the month is a time of joy. This is hinted within the name “Av” – *Alef* - Arur, and *Bet* - Baruch, curse and blessing, teaching us the significance of the two halves of the month. The *Chatam Sofer* would only call the first half of the month “*Menachem Av*”, but by the 15th he would call it just “*Av*”; since the days of mercy and solace have already begun. Our Sages of blessed memory teach us: If the temple was not rebuilt in a generation, it is as if it was destroyed in that generation. How could this be? Great Tzaddikim have lived throughout the years. Could it be that they are also responsible for its destruction? No. On the contrary: One who is righteous is actually helping its rebuilding, and is adding bricks to the unfinished structure waiting in heaven. When it is completely rebuilt, it won’t only be because of the current generation, but it will be a result of all the righteous people who have contributed to its rebuilding throughout the generations. This is why we pray, *Who* builds *Yerushalayim* – for each day it is slowly being rebuilt. May Hashem merit us to see its glory with the coming of Mashiach, quickly in our times, Amen.

Rishon LeSion:

R’ Chaim Nissim Abulefia 1776-1861

After the Sheikh’s passing many years later, his son became the Sheikh in his place. The young Sheikh had great plans for expanding and improving Tiberius, and he would fulfill his wishes with great energy. One night as the Sheikh lay in bed, he had a dream, in which an old respectable looking man told him that he should populate his city with Jewish people. Of course he didn’t even remember the dream the next morning, but the dream kept repeating night after night, to the point that it did not allow him to ignore it as just a dream anymore. He reached out to the Rabbi of Tzefat in order to better understand the meaning of the dream, and he was advised to reach out to the thousands of pious Jews living in Turkey and invite them to move to Tiberius. The Sheikh immediately wrote letters of invitation, promising to build Shuls, Yeshivot, and to provide them with their needs for three years.

Story

R' Tzvi Hersh continues his story, when he was young and didn't have enough money to travel to the Belz Rebbe: As he went to the first merchant's booth and asked for some assistance, the merchant gave him a choice: would he prefer coins, or merchandise? He looked at the two choices and chose the merchandise, some small amount of threads and ropes. When he went to the second merchant and explained his need, he was presented with the same choices, and he made the same choice – he preferred merchandise over coins. The same exact thing happened with the third merchant. Finally, when he approached the fourth merchant's booth, he couldn't even talk and just began crying in despair. When the compassionate merchant asked what was wrong, he told him about everything he had been through so far.

Laws: The Nine Days

1 – The laws for the week of Tisha B'Av do not apply this year, as the 9th of Av begins on Saturday night. Haircuts and shaving are allowed the entire previous week. However, some are strict not to shave or take a haircut Erev Shabbat Chazon, Parashat Devarim.

2 – Laundry and wearing freshly laundered clothing is allowed as well, and one may take normal hot and full showers, even on Erev Shabbat Chazon in honor of Shabbat.

3 – Meat and poultry are prohibited to consume after Rosh Chodesh until and including the tenth of Av Monday July 19th. On Rosh Chodesh and on Shabbat you are permitted. Fish is always permitted.

4 – You are not allowed to eat a dish cooked with meat, even if the meat is no longer there. If you used a meat pot to cook the dish, now cooked without meat, even if you may have used the pot on that day, you may eat the dish that was cooked without the meat.

5 – One may taste on Erev Shabbat a dish cooked with meat for Shabbat Chazon (Devarim), in honor of Shabbat. Those who are strict will be blessed. As well, it is advisable to taste the dish without swallowing.

6 – There are those who permit meat that was left over from Shabbat Parashat Masei to be eaten for the fourth meal, Melave Malka. However, this Melave Malka is only permitted as long as extra food was not prepared for this purpose. Young children who cannot grasp the ideas behind the destruction of the temple are allowed to eat meat.

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