

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT MATOT-MASEI • 26 TAMMUZ 5766 • JULY 22, 2006 • VOL. 13 NO. 41

PARSHA INSIGHTS

A SLIP OF THE TONGUE

“They approached him (Moshe) and said, ‘Pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock, and cities for our small children.’” (32:16)

How often it is that we reveal our shortcomings to others, while we ourselves stay blissfully ignorant of our true selves! A slip of the tongue often speaks louder than a ghetto blaster.

The tribes of Reuven and Gad were blessed with large flocks. Recognizing that the terrain on the east bank of the Jordan was ideal for cattle grazing, they petitioned Moshe for this to be their share of the Land.

The Midrash says that their request to Moshe betrayed a materialistic orientation. In the order of their priorities ‘pens for the flock’ preceded ‘cities for our small children.’ Moshe, in his response, subtly corrected their priorities; “Build for yourselves **cities for your small children and pens for your flocks...**” (32:24)

It seems that Moshe’s subtle rebuke had its effect, for they replied, “Our small children, our wives, our livestock and all our animals will be there in the cities of Gilead.” (32:26)

Nevertheless, this Midrash is difficult to understand. How could it be that Reuven and Gad, two of the tribes, two of the progenitors of the holy nation of Yisrael, could have been more concerned with their possessions

than their children?

We should never make the mistake of relating our failings to the perceived failings of our Forefathers. Their smallest sin in our hands would appear like a jewel of mitzvah. On their level, the children of Reuven and Gad were considered overly materialistic, but if they were walking around today they would seem so spiritual as to be scarcely part of the planet.

CATCH MY DRIFT?

“They approached him (Moshe) and said, ‘Pens for the flock we shall build here for our livestock, and cities for our small children.’” (32:16)

None of us like criticism. None of us likes to hear that we are not the perfect person that we assume ourselves to be. Direct criticism is both unkind and ineffective.

When Moshe wanted to criticize the tribes of Reuven and Gad for their incorrect sense of priorities, he subtly rephrased their petition to hint to their mistake. He reversed the order of their request, “Build for yourselves **cities for your small children and pens for your flocks...**” (32:24)

Even though their scale of values was inappropriate, Moshe’s criticism was soft and subtle.

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.TARGUM.COM

LOVE of the LAND

VOLUME ONE - THE GLADSTONE EDITION

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

© 2006 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

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 Tzelafchad 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

A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

"We shall build corrals for our sheep and cities for our children" is what the heads of the tribes of Reuven and Gad declared they would do to provide shelter for their possessions and families in their portion of *Eretz Yisrael* while the men joined the rest of the nation conquering the rest of the Promised Land.

But when their leader Moshe repeated this condition, we learn in this week's Torah portion, he switched the order, cautioning them to show more concern for their children than for their animals.

It is difficult to imagine that Moshe actually suspected

these fine Jews of placing their animals above their children. Perhaps he was cautioning them not to make the mistake so many parents have made throughout the generations, up to our own day, of thinking that they will best care for the future of their children by first amassing wealth rather than placing priority on their education.

This was an important lesson and is an important one today. A society more concerned with the material comforts of its youth than in educating them in Torah values is mixing up its priorities.

Only when the spiritual security of its youth has top priority will there be a guarantee of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

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

"THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF STUDENTS: QUICK TO GRASP AND QUICK TO FORGET — HIS GAIN IS SURPASSED BY HIS LOSS. SLOW TO GRASP AND SLOW TO FORGET — HIS LOSS IS SURPASSED BY HIS GAIN. QUICK TO GRASP AND QUICK TO FORGET — HIS IS A POOR LOT". — (AVOT 5:12)

One who is quick to grasp and quick to forget should review his studies many, many times if he wishes to accomplish something in his learning. He must always bear in mind what our Sages (*Masechta Chagigah* 9b) tell us about the significance

of reviewing even one more time:

"There is no comparison between one who reviews his studies one hundred times and one who reviews them one hundred and one times".

• *Tiferet Yisrael*



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.

- When no one but the *kohen gadol* can be present in the Sanctuary
- The atonement feature of the incense
- The taking of coals from the outer altar for burning the incense
- The golden shovel and the superfine incense
- The honor accorded to the *kohen gadol*
- How many fires there were on the altar
- Parts of the early *olah* sacrifice not consumed before Shabbat
- Extinguishing coals from the altar
- Taking a fistful of incense and carrying it together with the coals
- Why Kimchit merited to have seven sons as *kohanim gedolim*
- The challenge of *kemitza* and *chafina* taking of incense
- The unresolved issues arising from the above
- The status of sacrificial blood spilled before application
- Left-handed transportation of sacrificial blood
- The *kohen gadol* who died before offering the incense he took or before applying the sacrificial blood he received
- How long is an animal considered as such
- Does the *kohen gadol's* bullock belong to his fellow *kohanim*
- Which sacrifices are offered even on Shabbat and despite ritual impurity

THE EXTRA COALS

When the *kohen* took burning coals from the outer altar to use for burning the incense on the golden altar he did so with a silver shovel that held four *kavim*. He then poured those coals into a golden shovel that held only three *kavim* which he would bring to the golden altar.

What happened with the *kav* of coals that would spill on the floor?

In our *gemara* we are taught that those coals were swept into the *amah*. Rashi's explanation of this is that this *amah* is the cubit-wide canal that carried the wastes of the *Beit Hamikdash* outside to the waters of Nachal Kidron.

Tosefot (*Yoma* 46b) raises the problem of how this could be done, since it is the position of the Sage Abaye

that if someone extinguishes a coal he has taken from the altar and placed on the floor, he is in violation of the Torah prohibition (*Vayikra* 6:5) against putting out altar fire.

One resolution suggested by Tosefot is that the *amah* mentioned in our *gemara* is not the watery canal to which Rashi refers, but a dry spot where the coals burned out by themselves.

Another approach is that the prohibition against extinguishing coals is limited to those coals that are going to be used for lighting the menorah or burning the incense, which are removed from the altar in a sacred vessel and placed on the floor. This prohibition does not apply to the extra *kav* of coals that was initially slated for falling on the floor and will not be gathered for any purpose. Such coals may indeed be extinguished by sweeping them into the canal.

• *Yoma* 44b

WHAT THE Sages SAY

"The incense offering in the *Beit Hamikdash* served as an atonement for the transgression of *lashon hara* (evil tongue, slander and gossip). Let something that was done in secret atone for a transgression committed in secret."

• Rabbi Yishmael
Yoma 44a

STRAIGHTJACKET OF STINGINESS

From: Anonymous

Dear Rabbi,

To be honest, I am not a very giving person. I know I am more of a taker than a giver. Most people consider this a bad thing, but really I think it makes more sense. Still, I was wondering if you had any insights for me.

Dear Anonymous,

There was once a certain miser who never gave but always took. One day he fell off a bridge into the river below. As he was about to drown, someone noticed him and shouted, "Give me your hand!" The miser answered, "I never give anything to anybody!" "In that case", replied the man as he stretched out his arm, "take my hand!" The miser took hold of the man's hand and was saved.

This story illustrates the Jewish outlook on the reciprocity between giving and taking. A person is apt to think that giving results in loss. But, in reality, without giving, one will ultimately drown in solitude and anonymity. Giving, on the other hand, initiates a dynamic process of mutual sharing with others that ultimately reaps great rewards. Giving is an investment with great dividends.

The Torah expresses this idea in the wording used to describe the Jewish People's contribution to the Tabernacle. The verse states: "And they gave" (Ex. 30:12). The Hebrew term used is "v'natnu" which is spelled vav-nun-tav-nun-vav. This word is spelled exactly the same read forward and backward, expressing the idea that giving initiates a reciprocal process resulting in receiving.

In fact, giving is so great that G-d's name yud-hey and -vav-

hey actually infuses the very act of giving. Consider a person giving a coin of charity to someone in need. The round coin in the hand of the giver corresponds to the round letter yud of G-d's name. The five fingers on the hand of the giver correspond to the letter hey whose gematria (numerical equivalent) is five. His outstretched arm forms the shape of the straight letter vav. The five fingers of the needy person's receiving hand correspond to the final hey of G-d's name. And so the circuit is completed, energizing giving with the Divine Presence.

I'll conclude with a very instructive parable:

Once a person was given a preview of the afterlife. In the chamber identified to him as Punishment, he saw people seated at a great banquet with the most aromatic and delicious-looking food. He thought to himself, "This doesn't seem so bad." However, as he got a closer look, he realized that everyone was craving for the food set before them, but they couldn't eat it because each person had poles fastened to his arms and couldn't bend his elbows to put the food in his mouth.

He was then taken to the chamber of Reward. There he saw the same scene. There were people seated around a great banquet of aromatic and delectable food. He expected them to be enjoying and partaking of the food, but to his surprise, they all had rods bound to their arms as well. However, here they didn't starve. Even though nobody could feed himself, each was able to reach across the table to feed, and to be fed, by the person opposite to him.

Those who view giving as a loss and are only concerned about satiating their own desires will be perpetually frustrated by their paralyzing pursuit of pleasure. But people who give to others will develop a habit that ensures eternal receiving.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A TISHA B'AV RENDEZVOUS

The wedding of a child of D. L., a one-time student of the Hebrew-speaking department of Yeshivat Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, who is today the head of a kollel, brought back memories of the unusual way this Torah scholar found his way to Torah Judaism.

Raised in a very secular kibbutz, he had virtually no knowledge of Jewish tradition. One Tisha B'Av, the 9th day of Av when Jews fast night and day and mourn the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, he passed a synagogue while visiting Haifa. Out of curiosity he peeked inside the hall from which wailing sounds could be heard. When he saw the congregants sitting on the floor reading Lamentations, he asked

one of them what the meaning of all this was. He was invited to sit down and hear an explanation of the day and the laws and customs associated with it.

This experience aroused his curiosity about Torah Judaism, and eventually led him to Ohr Somayach. It was only at a later stage that he took a serious look at the family tree so revered by his parents, and discovered that he was a descendant of the great Chassidic leader known as the Chozeh of Lublin. What came as an even greater surprise was the discovery that the Yahrzeit (day of death) of the Chozeh was on Tisha B'Av, the day that his descendant came to life.

ABOVE SUSPICION

Question: When I go shopping for groceries I sometimes fail to find everything I'm looking for in a single store. Entering a second store while carrying my bag of items I purchased in the first one may raise some suspicion that I am a shoplifter when I fail to pay for them. I know the truth, but what is the right thing to do?

Answer: When the tribes of Reuven and Gad were told the condition for receiving their desired portion of Eretz Yisrael, they were cautioned to conduct themselves in a manner which would allow them to "be blameless before G-d and Israel." This set a standard of

behavior for everyone to always avoid suspicion even though you are perfectly honest.

In the situation you describe you may be the object of suspicion in the eyes of the storekeeper or other shoppers. Although it may be uncomfortable for you to reveal to the second storekeeper that you did preliminary shopping elsewhere, your only way of remaining "blameless before Israel" is to deposit your bag at the checkout counter upon entering and claiming it only when you are ready to leave the store after paying for what you bought there.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

National Service

In the Chukat-Balak issue of Ohrnet, the "Ask" response titled "Divine Draft Dodgers" gives the impression that national service performed by religious women in hospitals and social services is acceptable. I would like to remind you that a large body of Torah leaders waged a major battle against making such service under military authority compulsory for all young women. The result was that such service is voluntary but is still discouraged by those leaders.

• C. Greenberg

Completely Clean

In Ohrnet for Parshat Chukat you wrote: "They compare this to the situation of a child dirtying the palace of the king, requiring the mother to clean up. The golden calf spiritually contaminated the Jewish People, and its virtual mother — the red heifer — was called upon to remove the filth."

I was once struck by a thought on this subject. It seemed to me that if a child dirtied the king's palace, there really are a lot of servants there who could clean up the mess. It does not require the child's mother to do so.

However, if the child's mother cleans up the filth, the result is greater than the sum of its parts. This is because, the child's mother, by the fact that she takes responsibility for a sin that is not her own, is showing that it is not

really the child's fault either, it is just the fact that he is a small child and that this is what small children do.

Thus when a mother cleans the mess, it actually removes the degradation of the crime. In contrast to this, when a servant cleans it, the mess is removed but the memory of the crime remains.

The mother is showing, firstly, that the child has an advocate. In addition, she takes responsibility for her own part in it. Understanding that amongst adults even, a large part of what they do wrong is out of their control. The fact that the mother cares shows that the child did not intend to do as much bad as seems to have been done.

I think that this is a timely message for our times. So often kids slip up. We have to remember - they're only young, only kids, or teenagers, they don't have experience, we have to help them to be able to do better. If we act maternal, by trying to understand what others are thinking and feeling, then our sympathy alone, or some gentle guidance of where to turn to for help, could resolve so many issues.

We may then see that all the things that enrage us that others do wrong were nothing more than the innocent actions of a little child who didn't realize he was a beloved guest in the palace of the King.

• N. Shine