

Parshas Matos-Massei
in a Nutshell
(Numbers 30:2–36:13)

Moses conveys the laws governing the annulment of vows to the heads of the tribes of Israel. War is waged against Midian for their role in plotting the moral destruction of Israel, and the Torah gives a detailed account of the war spoils and how they were allocated amongst the people, the warriors, the Levites and the high priest.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh) ask for the lands east of the Jordan as their portion in the Promised Land, these being prime pastureland for their cattle. Moses is initially angered by the request, but subsequently agrees on the condition that they first join, and lead, in Israel's conquest of the lands west of the Jordan.

The forty-two journeys and encampments of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the land of Canaan.

(continued next column)



The three weeks focus on the mourning for the destruction of the Temple. The goal of this period of mourning is not merely to shed tears over the past, but primarily to focus on the future, to realize the spiritual faults that led to the exile, and to correct them so that the Redemption will come. ❖

-- The Rebbe

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The boundaries of the Promised Land are given, and cities of refuge are designated as havens and places of exile for inadvertent murderers. The daughters of Tzelafrach marry within their own tribe of Manasseh, so that the estate which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe. ❖

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Join us each weekday
morning Mon-Fri
as we delve into
the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.
5:55 am, followed
immediately by
Shacharis.



Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, July 30, 2022

Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis 4:45 AM
Latest Morning Shema..... 9:24 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) . 1:39 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 6:49 PM
Earliest Evening Shema.... 8:46 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos—July 29/Menachem Av 1

Candle Lighting..... 7:58 pm

Mincha 7:30 pm

Shabbos Day—July 30 / Menachem Av 2

Shacharis 10:00 am*

Torah Reading 11:00 am

Kiddush 12:00 pm

Mincha 8:00 pm

Rabbi's Drasha 8:20 pm

Shabbos Ends 9:01 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:24 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

Bulletin

This week's Bulletin
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Chassidic Masters

Twelve Sticks

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

*Moses spoke to the heads of the
matot (“tribes”) . . .*

-Numbers 30:2

The stick, it can be said, is a piece of a tree that has paid the price of leaving home. Indeed, one would hardly recognize it as the tender green shoot who departed the mother tree: its supple spine has stiffened into a column of inflexibility, its porous skin has hardened into a core-deep hardness. The springy bough has become, well, a stick.

The stick, it can also be said, is one who has reaped the rewards of leaving home. The tender shoot has gained backbone and stature. It has learned to stand its ground—no longer is it swayed by every passing wind and breeze. Its spell out in the cold has toughened it, made it a force to be reckoned with. The malleable sprig has solidified into the formidable staff.

Exile

The Torah has two names for the tribes of Israel: shevatim and matot. A shevet is a “branch” or “switch”; match means “stick” and “staff.”

Both names express the idea that the tribes of Israel are limbs of the “tree of life,” offshoots of the supreme Source of all life and being. But each represents a different state in the Jew’s relationship to his or her roots.

The shevet bespeaks a state of manifest connection to one’s source: the branch is still fastened to the tree, or at least still has its life-juices coursing through its veins. The shevet is the Jew in a state of visible connection to his G-d, sustained by an open divine involvement in his or her life.

The match is a shevet who has been uprooted from its tree. The match is the Jew in galut, a “child banished from his father’s table” to wander the cold and alien roads of exile. Deprived of its supernal moorings, the match is compelled to develop its own resistance to the storms of life, to look to its own frail heart for the strength to hold its own, far from the ancestral home.

The Torah Reading of Matot

There is a section of the Torah (Numbers 30:2–32:42) that carries the name Matot, as its opening verse describes Moses’ instruction to the “heads of the tribes” (rashei ha-matot) of Israel.

It is significant that the Tribes of Israel are referred to here as matot, and that the entire Torah portion is so named. This Torah section is always read during the “Three Weeks” from 17 Tammuz to 9 Av, during which we mourn and re-experience the destruction of the Holy Temple and the onset of our exile.

Every stick yearns to return to its tree, yearns for the day that it will once again be a fresh and vital branch, united with its siblings and nourished by its progenitor. When that day comes, it will bring with it its hard-earned solidity, the match-maturity it gained sticking it out in the lone and rootless environment of galut. ❖

Insights From the Rebbe

The Journey of Life

The journeys of the Israelites from Egypt serve as a warning against the two kinds of error into which a Jew can fall.

One is to believe that one has arrived. He may think: Having reached so far in my Judaism, I can rest content. But the truth is that the Jew was not created to stand still. There is always a new journey before him.

The other is to despair. He may feel: I know so little, I am capable of so little, that my religious efforts are in vain. But in truth, even a single journey is a liberation from some personal Egypt. And the direction in which one is traveling matters more than how far one is along the way.

Cities of Refuge

On the spiritual plane, there exist six “cities of refuge” for the spiritual “murderer.” Life, in the true and ultimate sense, is connection with the Divine source of being and vitality; an act of transgression against the Divine will is a subtle form of “murder,” as it hinders the flow of vitality from G-d to creation. The words of the Torah, say our sages, are the “cities of refuge” for the destroyer of spiritual life: if he flees into the Torah and immerses himself in it, the Torah will protect him from the adverse results of his deed.

(Continued next page)

There are six mitzvot—to believe in G-d, to avow His oneness, to renounce idolatry, to love G-d, to fear Him, and to avoid temptation to sin—that pertain to all times, to all individuals, to all places and in all circumstances, so that they are readily

accessible to one who seeks refuge from his faults and failings, whomever he might be and wherever and whenever the desire to rectify his life might strike him. These are the six readily accessible spiritual “cities of refuge” for the errant soul. ❖

From Our Sages – Matos-Massei

Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel upon the Midianites (Numbers 31:2)

Why only upon the Midianites, but not the Moabites (who also sent their daughters to cause Israel to sin)? Because the Moabites got involved because they feared Israel (cf. Numbers 22:2–6); but the Midianites entered a fight that was not theirs.

*Another explanation: G-d said to spare the Moabites because of “two fine creatures which I shall extract from them”—Ruth the Moabite and Naamah the Ammonite (wife of King Solomon).
-(Rashi)*

Avenge the vengeance (Numbers 31:2)

The Hebrew word midian means “strife.” Midian is the essence of divisiveness, which is the root of all evil.

Thus our sages speak of “groundless hatred” as the greatest of evils. In truth, all strife is groundless hatred: the so-called “grounds” that people and nations have for hating and destroying each other are but the various façades of the divisive “I” of Midian—the ego that belies the common source and goal of humanity, and views the very existence of others as an encroachment upon the self.

On the cosmic level, G-d is the ultimate oneness, and everything G-dly in our world bears the stamp of His unity. All evil derives from the distortion of this oneness by the veil of divisiveness in which G-d shrouds His creation.

So before the people of Israel could conquer the “seven nations” that inhabited the land of Canaan—which represent the seven negative traits of the heart—they first had to destroy Midian, which is their source and cause. This is also why the destruction of Midian could be achieved only under the leadership of Moses, who embodied the traits of utter self-abnegation, (and thus) harmony and truth.

-(Maamar Heichaltzu 5659)

Moses spoke to the people: “Arm yourselves . . . to take G-d’s vengeance on Midian” (Numbers 31:3)

*“To take G-d’s vengeance on Midian”—for whoever stands against Israel, stands against G-d.
-(Rashi)*

*G-d sees the war on Midian as avenging Israel, for G-d’s foremost concern is for His people; the people of Israel see the war as avenging G-d, for they are concerned only with the honor of G-d.
-(The Chassidic Masters)*

These are the journeys of the children of Israel . . . (Numbers 33:1)

*The forty-two “stations” from Egypt to the Promised Land are replayed in the life of every individual Jew, as his soul journeys from its descent to earth at birth to its return to its Source.
-(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov) ❖*

The Nine Days

The first nine days of the month of Av, and also the morning of the tenth, are days of acute mourning for the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples.

During this time, we don't:

- Eat meat (including poultry) or drink wine, for during this period the sacrifices and wine libations in the Holy Temple ceased. The exceptions to this rule are meat and wine consumed on Shabbat or as part of a meal that celebrates a mitzvah, such as a circumcision, bar mitzvah, or the completion of a tractate of the Talmud.
- Launder clothing (except for a baby's)—even if they will not be worn during the Nine Days— or wear freshly laundered outer clothing. Those who wish to change their clothing daily should prepare a number of garments and briefly don each of them before the onset of the Nine Days. Then it is permitted to wear these “non-freshly laundered” garments during the Nine Days. We don't consume meat or wine, for during this period the sacrifices and wine libations ceased
- Swim or bathe for pleasure.
- Remodel or expand a home.
- Plant trees to be used for shade or fragrance (as opposed to fruit trees).
- Buy, sew, weave or knit new clothing—even if they will be worn only after the Nine Days.
- Exceptions to this rule: (a) If you will miss a major sale, or if the garment will be unavailable later. (b) For the purpose of a mitzvah, such as purchasing new clothing for a bride and groom.
- Cut nails during the actual week of the fast of Tisha B'Av —i.e., starting from the Saturday night before the fast until the conclusion of the Nine Days.

The Sephardic custom is to observe the stringencies regarding bathing only in the week of Tisha B'Av.

Some more observances:

The Sanctification of the Moon is postponed until after Tisha B'Av.

There is no law forbidding traveling during the Nine Days; however, it is customary to refrain from traveling (or engaging in any potentially perilous activity) during these days, unless it is absolutely necessary.

One may become engaged to be married during this period, but no celebration should be held until after Tisha B'Av.

Note: All these restrictions are in addition to the restrictions that apply during all of the Three Weeks.

Shabbat Chazon

The Shabbat preceding the Ninth of Av is called Shabbat Chazon—“Shabbat of the Vision.” This Shabbat's reading from the Prophets begins with the words Chazon Yeshayahu, the “vision of Isaiah” regarding the destruction of the Holy Temple. The legendary chassidic master Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev said that on this special Shabbat, every Jewish soul is shown a vision of the third Holy Temple. The purpose of this vision is to arouse within every Jew a yearning to actually see this edifice which will be built by G-d, and to do as many mitzvot as possible in order to realize this dream. While this vision may not be sensed with the physical eyes, the soul certainly experiences this vision, and it affects the person on the subconscious level.

There is no mourning on Shabbat. If possible, this week's *havdalah* wine or grape juice should be given to a child—younger than bar/bat mitzvah age—to drink. ❖

Haftorah for Parshas Matos-Massai in a nutshell

Jeremiah 2:4–28; 4:1–2

This week's haftorah is the second of a series of three "haftaros of affliction." These three haftarot are read during the Three Weeks of mourning for Jerusalem, between the fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.

The prophet Jeremiah transmits G-d's message to the Jewish people, in strong tones chastising all the sectors of the people, including the leadership, for their abandonment of G-d. "What wrong did your forefathers find in Me, that they distanced themselves from Me, and they went after futility and themselves became futile?" He reminds them of the kindness G-d did for them, taking them out of Egypt and leading them through the desert and settling them in the Promised Land, yet they repaid kindness with disloyalty. "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, [and furthermore, this was in order] to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water."

G-d asks them to view the actions of their neighboring nations, the Kittites and Kedarites, "and see whether there was any such thing, whether a nation exchanged a god, although they are not gods. Yet My nation exchanged their glory for what does not avail."

Jeremiah then goes on to foretell the suffering the Jewish people will suffer at the hands of their enemies, and also their erstwhile allies: "Your evil will chastise you, and you will be rebuked for your backslidings; and you shall know and see that your forsaking the L-rd your G-d is evil and bitter."

The haftorah ends on an encouraging note, assuring the people that if they return to G-d with sincerity, they will be restored to their full glory. ❖

"When the month of Av enters, we reduce our joy . . ."

—Talmud, Taanit 26b

The entire month of Av is considered to be an inopportune time for Jews. Our sages advised that a Jew who is scheduled to have a court hearing — or anything of a similar nature — against a gentile during this month should try to postpone it until after Av, or at least until after the Nine Days.

On the positive side, as we get closer and closer to the messianic era, when these days will be transformed from days of sadness to days of joy, we start to focus on the inner purpose of the destruction, which is to bring us to a higher level of sensitivity and spirituality, and ultimately to the rebuilding—with even greater grandeur and glory—of all that was destroyed.

We therefore try to moderate the sadness through participating in permissible celebrations. It is therefore the Chabad custom to have someone complete a tractate of the Talmud each day of the Nine Days, in order to infuse these days with permissible joy. ❖

שבת שלום גוט שבת!



Good Shabbos to all!