

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

26 JULY 2025 | 1 AV 5785

VOLUME 38 | #46

DAF HASHAVUA

מִטּוֹת מַסֵּי | MATOT-MASEI

SHABBAT ENDS:

- London: 9.57pm
- Birmingham: 10.09pm
- Bournemouth: 10.05pm
- Cardiff: 10.14pm
- Dublin: 10.32pm
- Edinburgh: 10.43pm
- Glasgow: 10.47pm
- Hull: 10.20pm
- Leeds: 10.16pm
- Liverpool: 10.26pm
- Manchester: 10.20pm
- Nottingham: 10.16pm
- Sheffield: 10.21pm
- Southend: 9.52pm
- Southport: 10.29pm
- Jerusalem: 8.21pm

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Av



*"The border (of Israel) shall descend
to the Jordan and its outskirts shall
be the Salt Sea; this shall be the
Land for you"
(Bemidbar 34:12)*

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

מִטּוֹת מַסֵּי MATOT-MASEI

9th & 10th Sidrot in:

בְּמִדְבָּר BEMIDBAR

By Numbers:
244 VERSES
2,945 WORDS
11,425 LETTERS

Headlines:
**THE BATTLE WITH
MIDIAN AND THE
JOURNEYS IN THE
DESERT**

MATOT-MASEI:
Artscroll p.900
Hertz p.702
Soncino p.955

**MAFTIR (ROSH
CHODESH):**
Artscroll p.890
Hertz p.695
Soncino p.944

HAFTARAH (MASEI):
Artscroll p.1193
Hertz p.725
Soncino p.984

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 30:2-31:12.

Moshe (Moses) speaks to the heads of the tribes, telling them to relate the laws of vows and oaths to the Children of Israel. Contravening an oath or vow constitutes a Biblical prohibition. The Sidra details who may revoke a vow on behalf of others in his care, but only on the day that he first hears about the vow. A husband may also revoke his wife's vow in similar circumstances. God tells Moshe to wage war against the Midianites before his death. Moshe conscripts 1000 men from each tribe. They go into battle and kill all the Midianite males, as well as Bilaam. They take captive the women, the young children, their cattle and material possessions.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 31:13-54.

Moshe rebukes the officers for not killing the women, who had been the instigators of the immorality and idol worship that had led to the national catastrophe (see 25:1-9); he instructs them to now kill many of the women. Moshe tells those who have killed how to purify themselves from their state of *tumah* (ritual impurity). Upon God's instruction, Moshe and Elazar count up the spoils and divide them in half, between those who fought in the war and the rest of the nation. A small percentage of each of these spoils is given as a tribute, one to Elazar and another to the Levi'im. The military leaders approach Moshe to donate the jewellery that they had plundered, as an offering to God.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 32:1-19.

The tribes of Gad and Reuven ask to be given land on the east bank of the Jordan River, instead of crossing into the Land of Cana'an. Moshe rebukes them for their apparent cowardice, which seems to repeat the error of the spies 39 years previously. The two tribes clarify that whilst the women and children would settle on the east bank, the men would fight with the rest of the nation to conquer the Land and would not return to their families until the end of the war.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 32:20-33:49.

Moshe accepts their request and instructs Elazar and the tribal heads to allow them to keep the land they requested if they do battle as promised. Some of the tribe of Menashe are also apportioned land east of the Jordan.

Point to Consider: *why is some of the tribe of*

Menashe now mentioned, having not been cited in the negotiations with Moshe? (32:33)

Parashat Masei begins by recalling the 42 journeys that the Israelites made from leaving Egypt until the present time, when they are about to cross into the Land of Cana'an.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 33:50-34:15.

God speaks to Moshe in the plains of Moab, telling him to relate to the nation that after entering the Land, they must destroy the idols of the Canaanites and make sure to drive them out the Land. God tells Moshe the boundaries of the Land that the tribes will inherit.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 34:16-35:8.

God announces the names of the leaders of each tribe, who will take charge of apportioning land to his tribe's members. 42 cities are designated specifically for Levi'im to live in, surrounded by a designated amount of open space. These cities are also to provide refuge for a person who has killed accidentally and is fleeing from the relatives of the deceased.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 35:9-36:13.

In addition, six cities are designated as special 'cities of refuge', to which the accidental killer can flee. Instructions are given about what constitutes 'accidental' and how the community must endeavour to protect the accidental killer from those who are pursuing him. Men from the tribe of Menashe approach Moshe, concerned that the land given to the five daughters of Tzelofchad, a descendant of Menashe (see parashat Pinchas 27:1-8) would be lost from the tribe if they marry men from other tribes. Moshe responds that they should only marry men from the tribe of Menashe; this they do. This is the closing part of the book of Bemidbar. We stand for the final verse and then recite: "*chazak, chazak ve'nitchazek*", a phrase asking for continued strength to study the Torah.

MAFTIR – (BEMIDBAR 28:9-15)

The reading for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh is taken from parashat Pinchas and details the additional Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh offerings in the Temple.

HAFTARAH (YIRMIYAHU 2:4-28; 3:4; 4:1-2)

This haftarah, taken from Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) is the second of the three 'haftarot of affliction' read in the build up to Tisha B'Av. God rebukes Israel for turning away from Him and towards idols, forsaking the opportunity He gave them when He bought them into the fruitful Land.



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The unsung hero: Why the tribe of Menashe was split



RABBI MICHAEL ROSENFELD

Muswell Hill
Synagogue

As the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad requested to settle on the far side of the Jordan River. Moshe (Moses) was deeply concerned. He feared their request signalled a fracture in national unity, a prioritising of tribal self-interest over the larger collective destiny. They reassured him, pledging to fight alongside their brothers first. Moshe agreed, but with a twist: half the tribe of Menashe must join them. This unique division of a single tribe raises a key question: why Menashe?

The rabbinic commentators offer different perspectives. Ibn Ezra (Spain, 1089–1167), a master of textual analysis, provides a practical explanation: a portion of Menashe, through

its own military prowess, had already conquered and settled parts of the territory. Moshe was simply formalising an existing reality. The Malbim (Russia and Europe, 1809–1879), however, probes for a deeper, values-based motive, suggesting a deliberate spiritual strategy. He argues Moshe sent Menashe, known for its devotion, to be a 'spiritual anchor' for the other tribes, ensuring they would not drift from their heritage while living apart. Being separated from the central tribes, Menashe could be a positive influence and role model for the geographically isolated tribes, Reuben and Gad.

Perhaps the most profound reason, however, lies not in strategy, but in character. We must cast our minds back to the book of Bereishit, when Jacob is on his deathbed and blesses his grandsons. In a dramatic gesture, he crosses his hands, bestowing the primary blessing on the younger son, Ephraim.

In a world rife with sibling rivalry – Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau – Menashe's reaction is astonishing. He remains silent. He accepts his grandfather's decision with a quiet humility that is almost unparalleled. There is no protest, no resentment.

Could it be that Moshe, the ultimate leader, remembered this extraordinary display of character? He needed a tribe

that could live peacefully with others, one that would foster harmony rather than seek dominance. Menashe had demonstrated this quality for generations. Their defining characteristic was the ability to accept a supporting role for the greater good. They were chosen because their tribal DNA was encoded with the values of humility and peace.

This message is a powerful guide. We live in a society that often celebrates the loudest voice, but the Torah here champions a different kind of strength. In our families, our shuls and our workplaces, we are constantly presented with opportunities to be a Menashe. We can be the ones who gracefully accept a decision that does not go our way. We can be the colleague, friend or family member who prioritises the harmony of the whole over personal ambition, acting as a quiet anchor of stability and integrity.

The story of Menashe is an eternal lesson. It teaches that while the world may notice grand gestures, our tradition values the quiet heroes – those who, with grace and humility, ensure the strength and unity of the entire nation.

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Hallel: A Triumphal March



**SHIRA
JACKSON**

US Education

In this series, we focus on the meanings and relevance of our prayers and how they offer us opportunities to connect with God at any time, not just during formal services.

Have you ever met a militant harpist? A tranquil warrior?

Here in the UK, most of us will have seen a marching band at some point; this genre of music was composed to unite the troops as they marched in unison.

In recent times, we may have seen videos on our newsfeed of Israeli soldiers strumming their guitars, singing in a circle, as they prepare to be deployed. Often, they will gather together to sing prayers and *Tehillim* (psalms) as a way to mentally and spiritually prepare themselves to go into battle.

How do you picture King David? Is he shepherding his flock? Plucking at his harp strings as he composes psalms? Or is he at the head of the Israelite army, leading his men into battle? Perhaps, as the author of the majority of the psalms, he teaches us to channel our emotions into song, then send them heavenward in prayer, to calm our racing hearts and

soothe our souls. Maybe, some of the psalms were his marching tunes, and some his songs of triumph.

David had a very difficult life. As the youngest of Yishai's eight sons, he was very much overlooked, until he was unexpectedly singled out and anointed to become the second king of Israel, to follow his predecessor and father-in-law King Saul. As he reflects in Psalm 118 in Hallel (p626 in the green/blue siddur), "The stone that was rejected by the builders has become the main cornerstone."

Towards the end of King Saul's life, he became deeply suspicious and resentful of David and tried to kill him many times. As such, David was often on the run.

Even after ascending the throne, life threw many challenges at him. He lost an infant son. Another son, Avshalom, rebelled against him and died in battle. He fought and won many wars against his surrounding enemies over the course of his life.

Hallel is primarily psalms of praise but was perhaps inspired by the difficult challenges David had to face; they express beautifully his mixed emotions. The feeling of terror, combined with unshakeable faith. Perhaps the most iconic of these psalms, that feels very relatable at present is "*Min Hameitzar*," Psalm 118, where King David

reflects that God answered him at a time when he felt surrounded by his enemies.

"In my distress I called on the Lord. The Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?... It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. The nations all surrounded me, but in the Lord's name I drove them off."

As he fights for his life, he finds strength and tells himself, "*I will not die but live, and tell what the Lord has done.*" Similarly, many of the hostages who have returned, have felt compelled to share their stories of miracles they experienced firsthand in the tunnels of Gaza. Like King David, they literally lived in order to tell their tale.

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Sanctuaries in Jerusalem



**RABBI
BARUCH DAVIS**

Daf Hashavua
Editor-in-Chief

Our sages teach us that God allowed the destruction of the Second Temple to happen because we failed to respect each other properly and even hated each other.

In trying to envisage what a redeemed Jerusalem and Israel might look like, I am drawn to the well-known words by the prophet Micha (6:8): "What does God want from you? To perform justice, to love kindness and go modestly with Hashem, your God". In Israel today, there are such institutions, of respect, dignity and cooperation, which show what is indeed possible, if people are motivated to create them.



Matanya with his graduation poster

One such place is Beit Rachel Strauss, Jerusalem, a high school for students with Down Syndrome, Autism and other disabilities. I recently interviewed Sara M., just before the graduation of her 21-year-old son, Matanya.

Sara, an experienced educator herself, was full of praise for the school. "They have a unified, committed team, and it's clear that the staff love their work and care deeply for the students. They empower the students, making them feel heard, seen and significant. Their voices matter. Their presence matters.

When you walk into Beit Rachel Strauss, you immediately sense it – the calm in the hallways, the serenity in the classrooms, and the pure joy radiating from the children who love being there."

"But what really sets the school apart," said Sara, "is that the students and their parents come from every sector of Israeli society – religious, secular and Arab. While not officially a religious school, there is a *Kabbalat Shabbat* programme on Fridays, and boys are helped to put on *tefillin* if they want to. But beyond that, there is respect for every student's traditions". The sense of unity within the parent body prompted Sara to say, "If every parent had a special needs child, and only wanted the best for their child, we would realise how insignificant our differences truly are. At Beit Rachel Strauss, we are all focused on getting the best

provision for our precious children, and that creates an unbelievable atmosphere of unity."

Beit Rachel Strauss is a small school, with 6-8 students in each year group. Between the class teachers, assistants and young people doing National Service, the ratio is close to 1:1. The school is a (free) state school that follows the national curriculum as much as possible; Sara and family were very surprised when Matanya started saying some English words at home!

Another aspect of Matanya's life has been the huge role played by Shalva, a non-profit organisation that supports and empowers individuals with disabilities and their families in Israel. Matanya and his family have benefitted from Shalva since birth. As well as professionals, there are many teenage volunteers who even invite the children for Shabbat at times, no small undertaking!

When Dr. Ariel Tenenbaum, Director of the Hadassah Centre for Intellectual Disability and Development at Hadassah Mount Scopus Hospital, visited Shalva, he looked around the vibrant, joy-filled building and said, "Here you have built the *Beit Hamikdash* - a sanctuary of dignity, love and inclusion for individuals with disabilities and their families."

So when we think of what a redeemed Jerusalem and Israel might look like, I think of the words of Rabbi Sacks, zt"l: "A nation is strong when it cares for the weak. It becomes rich when it cares for the poor. It becomes invulnerable when it cares about the vulnerable. That is what makes great nations."

Texts of the Three Weeks

Eicha



**PNINA
SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and
US Educator

Megillat Eicha (Lamentations) is the third and final biblical text written by Yirmiyahu HaNavi (Jeremiah the Prophet). This is traditionally read aloud in shul on the evening of Tisha B'Av, whilst sitting on the floor in mourning.

Yirmiyahu, often called “the weeping prophet”, himself witnessed the tragic destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple) and the exile of the Jewish people. *Eicha* is a hauntingly poetic account of Jerusalem's destruction and, as such, it would make sense that Yirmiyahu wrote it after the destruction. However, there is an interesting opinion in the *Midrash* that he actually wrote most of it in the lead up to the destruction. Rabbi Yehuda therefore explains that *Eicha* is an expression of rebuke.¹ Once again, the prophet is urging the people to repent to avoid the approaching punishment. This *Midrash* states that Yirmiyahu was in jail when he wrote *Eicha* and sent a copy to the king, who threw it into the fire! Neither he nor anyone else was interested in what Yirmiyahu had to say.

Whilst we cannot know for certain when Yirmiyahu wrote the text, the ambiguity surrounding its time of writing indicates that it *could* have been written beforehand. This approach gives strength to the idea that it is never too late to repent. The prophet keeps hoping for people to change, even in the final moments before the destruction.

The distressing description of the hardships and punishments make *Eicha* very difficult for us to read. However, despite all this, Yirmiyahu still stands as a beacon of hope. He urges us to have faith in God.

As noted by Dr Yael Ziegler, the centre point of the *Megilla's* chiasmic structure is “the Lord does not reject forever” (*Eicha* 3:31)²; there is always a chance to return and to reconnect with God. This is a fundamental theological message. God may be angry with us, but He will never totally abandon us. The world may not make sense, and we may not understand, but God is still there.

The penultimate line of *Eicha* reinforces this idea: “Return us to You, God, and we shall return; renew our days as of old.” (*Eicha* 5:21). In this verse we ask God to help up in this journey. We acknowledge that we cannot return to God on our own. It is a mutual relationship; we express

Even in the midst of destruction, we remember that it is not the end of the Jewish story.

readiness and know, without a doubt, that God will help us.

Chazal (our Sages) were so determined that the *Megilla* not end on a note of hopelessness that they instituted a custom: after reading the final verse, we repeat the penultimate verse aloud. Even in the midst of destruction, we remember that it is not the end of the Jewish story. Even at our lowest point – sitting on the floor on Tisha B'Av, surrounded by the ashes of history – we reaffirm our faith that return is possible, that renewal will come.

We know, with the benefit of hindsight, that the renewal promised by Yirmiyahu did come. Seventy years later we returned to Jerusalem and began building the second *Beit HaMikdash*, against all the odds.

Let us hope and pray that this year we witness another miraculous renewal, and see redemption from both our national and personal sufferings.

¹ *Eicha Rabba* 1:1.

² Yael Ziegler, *Lamentations: Faith in a Turbulent World*, pp.515-528.

The weight of a word



HARRISON COHEN

Tribe Madrich

"If a person makes a vow to God or takes an oath to accept a prohibition upon themselves, they shall not desecrate their word; everything that comes from their mouth, they must do." (Bemidbar 30:3)

Matot, the first of our double *parashiot*, opens with a striking mitzvah: to take our words seriously. A vow or an oath isn't just between us and ourselves - it's a bond with God. When the Torah commands: "They shall not desecrate their word," it's teaching that speech has sanctity. The words we say matter.

Rabbi Yitzchak Arama (known as the *Akeidat Yitzchak*, 1420-1494) explains that the way we speak reflects the kind of person we are. He sees this verse as a reflection of our entire purpose in life: to live with integrity in how we treat ourselves, others and God. And central to all three is our use of language.

He draws our attention to the prophet Michah (6:8), who summarises our mission in life as: "Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." That last phrase - walk humbly - can be especially relevant to how we use words. It reminds us to be aware of the danger that comes with making vows and promises.

How often do we speak too quickly, assume too much, or make promises we later regret? And how

often do we hesitate to repair our words because of pride?

That's why the Torah cautions us: If we speak, we must mean it. And if we're unsure, better not to speak at all.

But more than just warning us, the Torah is offering us a path to holiness. Words can destroy - but they can also heal, comfort, uplift and sanctify. When we use our speech with thought and care, we reflect the Divine image in which we were created - just as God created the world through words, so too we build our lives with them.

So, this week let's ask ourselves: Do my words respect and uplift the people around me? Do they reflect the kind of person I want to be? And am I treating my words with the care and meaning the Torah says they deserve?

Parasha Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

F	I	J	A	P	Y	T	G	B	J	Z	K
U	S	A	M	V	M	B	S	D	V	A	G
L	R	Q	Y	B	G	A	H	H	A	Y	X
I	A	S	I	W	R	R	C	Q	E	V	N
H	E	M	I	D	I	A	N	I	T	E	S
M	L	R	B	M	O	O	B	L	T	P	P
J	I	W	P	F	P	C	M	I	V	R	H
K	T	Y	N	N	V	S	I	O	J	F	O
Y	E	N	R	U	O	J	O	R	S	J	B
M	S	R	R	H	W	L	E	K	E	H	S
B	K	W	B	P	N	R	M	L	N	T	E
B	O	R	D	E	R	U	H	Y	S	J	L

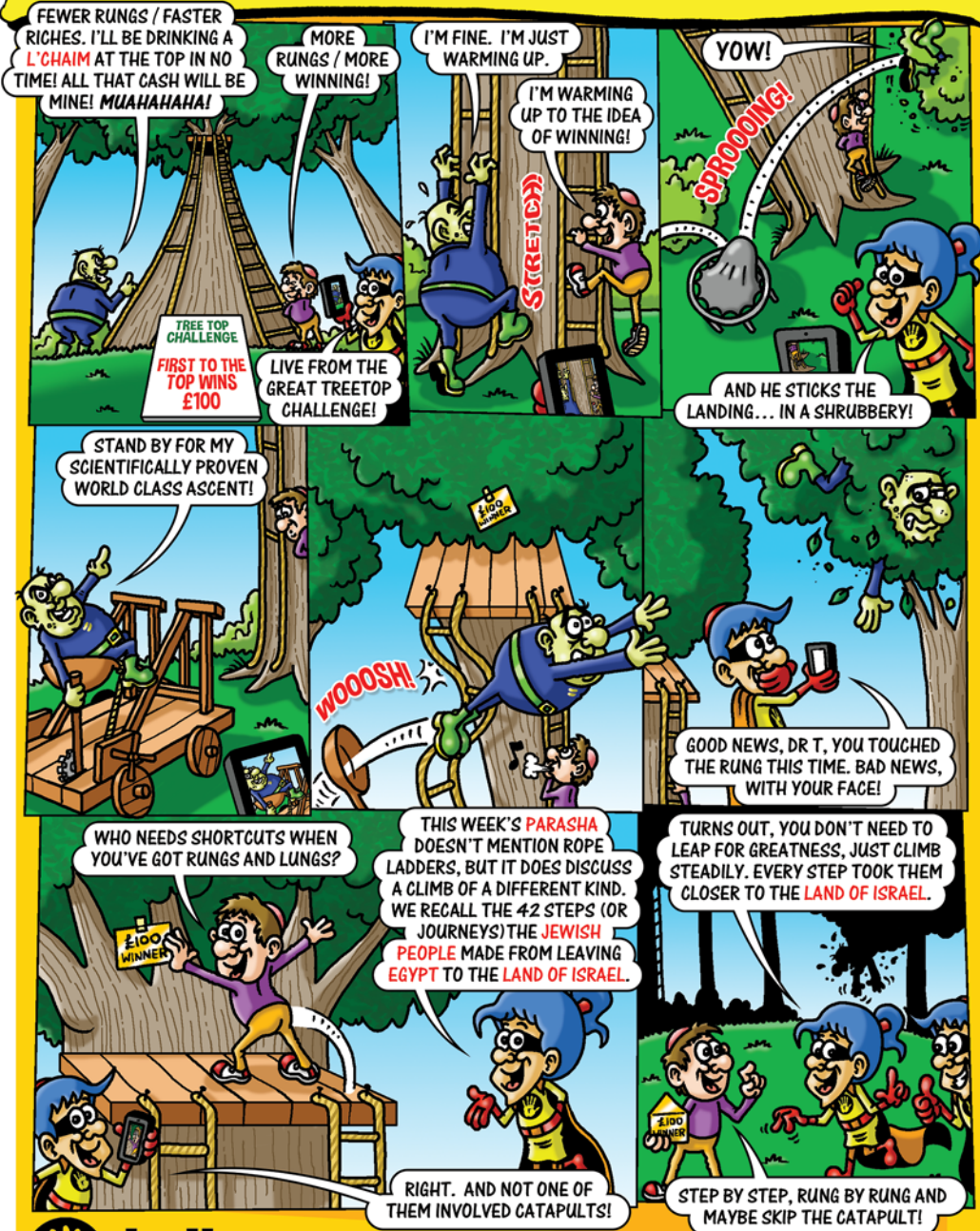
- MIDIANITES
- SHEKEL
- CAMP
- LAMB
- ISRAELITES
- BORDER
- SHEEP
- VOW
- JOURNEY
- MOSHE





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

MATOT-MASEI: STEP BY STEP!



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.