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VOLUME 39 | #45

DAF HASHAVUA

מִטּוֹת מַסֵּי | MATOT-MASEI

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 10.18pm
 Birmingham: 10.32pm
 Bournemouth: 10.27pm
 Cardiff: 10.38pm
 Dublin: 10.57pm
 Edinburgh: 11.14pm
 Glasgow: 11.21pm
 Hull: 10.48pm
 Leeds: 10.42pm
 Liverpool: 10.54pm
 Manchester: 10.47pm
 Nottingham: 10.43pm
 Sheffield: 10.48pm
 Southend: 10.14pm
 Southport: 10.58pm
 Jerusalem: 8.29pm

Shabbat Mevarechim

**Rosh Chodesh Av is
on Wednesday**



"The children of Reuven and Gad had abundant livestock... They saw the lands of Yazer and Gilad and noticed that this was a place for livestock" (Bemidbar 32:1)

SIDRA
BREAKDOWN

מַטּוֹת 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
Koren Sacks p.1081
Soncino p.955

HAFTARAH (MASEI):
Artscroll p.1193
Hertz p.725
Koren Sacks p.1589
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) – 31:13-34.
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) – 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) – 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.

HAFTARAH (YIRMIYAHU 2:4-28; 3:4; 4:1-2)
This haftarah, taken from Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) is the second of the three 'haftarat 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 brought them into the fruitful Land.



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'ELLO 'ELLO 'ELLO, WHAT'S GOING ON 'ERE THEN!

BY: **RABBI ZVI COHEN**

Kingsbury United Synagogue

In this edition, starting with Rabbi Cohen's article, we present four approaches to the pivotal request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad.

You may have been told off for the removal of the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ sound at the beginning of words or syllables (dropping your h's) or you may 'ave been born within the sound of the Bow Bells, making this your natural pronunciation! Either way, although acceptable in everyday speech, we would not expect the Torah to do this and yet we seem to have an example of this in our *sidra*! Instead of the usual word for 'we' – אֲנַחְנוּ (*anachnu*) – the shorted form נַחְנוּ (*nachnu*) is used (*Bemidbar* 32:32). What lessons can we draw from this?

The tribes of Reuven and Gad approach Moshe (Moses) and ask to remain on the East side of the River Jordan. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) in his *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Vol. 5, p.345) notes that these two tribes clearly understood the severity of their request, as hinted to in the paragraph break between the introduction to their request and the request itself. They were choosing to remain in an area where there would be no Temple, living away from the rest of the Jewish People and seeming to focus on their wealth more than anything else.

Yet, when Moshe rebukes them, he focuses on none of these but instead says, *"Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here?"*

(32:6). To Moshe, the far greater concern is the lack of feeling of brotherhood and communal responsibility. To this the two tribes respond נַחְנוּ נִעֲבֹר – we will pass! Not only would they cross over with the rest of the people, but they would be in the vanguard of every battle and remain in the land until it was not only conquered but had been distributed to the people. Seven years of battle followed by seven years of distribution. Even then they did not leave immediately but waited for Yehoshua (Joshua) to tell them to return home and then waited a further two days to receive his blessing. In an amazing turnaround, they went from focusing on self to showing a selfless responsibility to their brothers.

The Baal HaTurim (Rav Yaakov ben Asher, 1269-1343) points out that the word נַחְנוּ – we – missing the א – is used in two other places. When the sons of Yaakov (Jacob) went down to Egypt (*Bereishit* 42:11) *"we are all the sons of one man"* and in *Megillat Eich*a (3:42) *"we have sinned and rebelled"*. The Baal HaTurim brings all three examples together and explains that Reuven and Gad realised that they were one people (from one father) with a responsibility for each other and to not go would be a sin.

“ When we understand that we are equal in our humanity and imperfection, we can act as one, as children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, to achieve the tasks that God sets upon us. May we merit that this be the case.

Rabbi Aaron Fischel Herling (1912 – 1990) adds that God wishes us to dwell together in peace. This is only possible when we have no feelings of superiority over each other. The way to attain that is to realise that none of us is perfect. So, the three נַחְנוּ can be read as follows:

When we understand that we are equal in our humanity and imperfection, we can act as one, as children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, to achieve the tasks that God sets upon us. May we merit that this be the case.





FRENCH, JEWISH OR BOTH: THE PARDON OF CAPTAIN ALFRED DREYFUS, JULY 1906

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**

US Director of Education, Head of Research at the Rabbi Sacks Legacy



The French Revolution of 1789, a pivotal moment in European history with the overthrow of the monarchy, had enormous ramifications for Europe and its Jewish population which still endure in the politics and societies of today.

Deprived of rights and attacked for centuries, Jewish communities now hoped that the battle cry of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* would apply to them too. Their hopes were quickly dashed. The Counte of Clermont-Tonnerre, gave a speech to the new French Assembly later that year, which was to prove massively consequential for Jews.¹

At stake was the place of non-Catholics, especially Jews, in the new France. Excoriating the Jews for having their own laws and practices, the bedrocks of Jewish life since the Revelation at Sinai, the Counte infamously declared, *"we must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals... It is repugnant to have in the state an association of non-citizens, and a nation within the nation."*

French Jews faced an impossible, existential choice: were they French Jews (with "French" primary), or were they members of a religion with its own legal system and

homeland? Failure to comply, he stated, would lead to refusal of citizenship and expulsion.

Here was a cruel reworking of the Biblical Ruth's fateful words to her mother-in-law Naomi when insisting that she, as a non-Jewish Moabitess, accompany Naomi back to the Land of Israel, *"for where you go, I will go...your people are my people, your God is my God."* (Megilat Rut 1:16).

Ruth understood the twin pillars of religion and peoplehood, which exist together with modern citizenship such as in the UK today; Clermont-Tonnerre did not.

Much was at stake for French Jews, including whether they would be allowed to serve in the French military. Fast forward to 1894 when the re-emergence of this question – could French Jews be loyal Frenchmen – became a fateful moment.

Born in 1859 at Mulhouse, then part of France before its annexation by Germany after the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish, French military officer, was falsely accused of espionage for Germany by the actual culprit, Ferdinand Esterhazy, in 1894.

The prosecution case was made in a climate of virulent antisemitism, triggering the revolutionary work of a young,

assimilated Jewish Viennese journalist covering the trial, Theodore Herzl. He established Zionism as a political movement to save Jewish lives, starting with his book *Der Judenstaat* and the first Zionist Congress at Basel in 1897.

Despite compelling grounds for his acquittal, Dreyfus was convicted, publicly humiliated, stripped of his military honours and rank in January 1895, prior to his exile to prison on Devils Island in French Guiana.

A proud officer and Frenchman, Dreyfus vigorously protested his innocence. The terrible pain, humiliation and loneliness which he felt is evident from his book, *Letters of An Innocent*, (English translation) and cannot be forgotten amidst the broader significance of his ordeal.

Alongside Dreyfus' family, the celebrated non-Jewish writer Emile Zola who was convinced of Dreyfus' innocence, advocated for his release. For Zola, this was to occasion severe personal and professional cost. Finally, they succeeded and, in July 1906, Dreyfus' conviction was overturned by a civilian court. His military pardon only came posthumously, in 1995.

Dreyfus tried to rebuild his life. Meanwhile, the questions for Europe and its Jews remained.

¹ An English translation is available at www.revolution.chnm.org/d/244/

ISRAEL IN THE PARASHA

This series is an adaptation of short ideas written by former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits z"l in the 1960s, which were later reprinted in a compilation of his writings, 'Mishnat HaSar'.

MATOT: FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

The dispute between Moshe and the tribes of Reuven and Gad over their dwelling east of the Jordan River did not, according to one commentator, undermine their desire to assist their brothers in securing the rest of the Land of Israel. They declared: "We will lead the way before the children of Israel" (*Bemidbar* 32:17), acting out of national responsibility and for the common good.

Moshe, however, reframed their commitment. He insisted that they lead the way and go "before God" (*ibid.* vv.20-22), so as to be

"absolved before God and Israel" (v.22); otherwise, they would have "sinned before God" (v.23). In effect, Moshe accepted their position, but found it insufficient: their motivation could not rest solely on national or moral reasoning.

Rather, their role had to be grounded in a sense of obligation to God and a fulfilment of His will. Only then would their participation

truly meet both their divine and national responsibilities (*Haketav V'Hakabbalah*).

The Jewish national goal can only be realised as an expression of God's will, not as a product of social or political considerations. This important principle, articulated here in the context of the settling of the Land, is a great principle in the service of God.

“The Jewish national goal can only be realised as an expression of God's will, not as a product of social or political considerations.”

PHRASE OF THE WEEK

BY: **RABBI ALEX CHAPPER** | Borehamwood & Elstree United Synagogue

Each week, working our way through the alphabet, we explore a Jewish word or phrase, bringing clarity and deeper understanding to its meaning.

A
B
C

Does **B'SIYATA D'SHMAYA** mean:

1. The other side? | 2. A Moroccan rice dish? | 3. Heavenly assistance?

This Aramaic phrase means "with the help of Heaven".

We're most likely to see it as the three-letter acronym **בס"ד** at the top of a document, as an alternative to the letters **יה"ב**.

ה"ב stands for *Baruch Hashem* – with God's blessing – or *Be'ezrat Hashem* – with God's help. Since, according to some opinions, the letter 'ה' represents God's Name and therefore possesses a degree of holiness, it shouldn't be used on something that will be disposed of, and therefore some say it's

preferable to use **בס"ד**.

The concept of Divine Assistance is where success is attributed to God. It's an acknowledgement that our accomplishments aren't solely a result of our own efforts and ability, but that we're also dependent on God's will. Therefore, in some way, this is a prayer that we should enjoy Divine favour.

In discussing our Free Will, the Talmud explains that if a person wants to make themselves

impure through transgressing, then Heaven provides them with an opening. In other words, the opportunity is made available and nothing will prevent them from choosing this path. The other side of the coin is that if someone wants to purify themselves, they receive heavenly assistance in doing so. That is what we call *Siyata d'shmaya*.

Rashi uses the term "They are assisted from Heaven" to explain the words in *Mishlei* (Proverbs) "God grants them favour."



THE COMMENTATORS:

THE CHATAM SOFER

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**
US Education

As rabbi of Pressburg, Rabbi Moshe Sofer led a community navigating the religious upheavals due to the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and the early stirrings of the Reform movement. In the second part of his life, Jewish identity, communal authority and halachic commitment were being renegotiated across Europe. The broader European Enlightenment — with its emphasis on reason, individual rights and secular culture — had reshaped the intellectual climate of Europe. The *Haskalah* emerged as its Jewish counterpart, challenging long standing frameworks from within. In this shifting world, the Chatam Sofer, as Rabbi Sofer became known (after his main work), was an internationally renowned leader and scholar of principle, insisting that Torah remain at the centre of Jewish life, even as life changed.

Famously, in several responsa¹, he metaphorically used the phrase “*chadash assur min haTorah*”. He used this halachic principle — which forbids use of new grain prior to the *Omer* offering brought in the Temple on Pesach — to argue that religious innovations justified by external ideologies, rather than by halachic reasoning and process, are forbidden.

Crucially, he did not advocate

for a stagnant or antiquated Judaism. His responsa revealed remarkable examples of the dynamic application of *halacha* to new realities: the rise of printing, questions of inoculation, the early debates over machine-made matzah, changing communal structures, economic pressures such as state taxation and conscription, and the political pressures of a rapidly changing Europe. What he insisted upon is that *halacha* responds to new circumstances not by altering its foundations to reflect cultural fashions, but by instead drawing on its deep internal mechanisms and reasoning to guide a changing world.

This balance between fidelity and dynamism is evident in his commentary on the episode of Reuven and Gad, which we read this Shabbat (Bemidbar 32:6–7). When those two tribes request to settle east of the River Jordan, Moshe (Moses) fears a loosening of national solidarity at a decisive moment. The Chatam Sofer reads this through the lens of his own era: the danger of partial belonging. Just as Moshe worries that tribes living outside the Land’s borders might drift from the shared mission, the Chatam Sofer worried that Jews embracing European culture might slowly

THE CHATAM SOFER

Name: Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Schreiber)

Known as: The Chatam Sofer

When: 1762-1839

Where: Born in Frankfurt, lived in Pressburg, Hungary (now known as Bratislava, Slovakia)

Writings: Talmudic teachings, Halachic responsa and commentary on Chumash and Haftarat



detach from Torah.

Yet his reading is not a rejection of diversity. He emphasises Moshe’s insistence that, if Reuven and Gad commit to stand alongside their brothers west of the Jordan as God has commanded, in order to establish the Jewish people there, they will still be part of the collective destiny. For the Chatam Sofer, this becomes a model for Jewish life in an ever changing world: circumstances may differ, but communities can adapt and respond to new realities — so long as they remain anchored in the same covenantal framework.

He reads the Torah with sensitivity to language and halachic nuance, yet he allows the text to speak directly to the anxieties and aspirations of his own generation. The Chatam Sofer speaks with the pastoral voice of a leader trying to hold a people together — cognisant that each generation must navigate its own path.

Our task as the world around us evolves is not merely to preserve the past but to carry it forward with integrity — shaping a future that remains anchored in the covenant that shaped us.

¹ *Orach Chaim* 28, *Yoreh Deah* 19 & 116

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT MATOT-MASEI

10-11 JULY | 26 TAMUZ

LET'S MAKE A DEAL



BY: **YONI NEMKO**

Tribe Gap year student

The Jewish people have reached a critical moment. Now that the wandering in the desert is nearly over, the nation is preparing to finally enter the land together, fight together, and build a successful Jewish future together.

But two tribes have other plans: "Let this land be given to your servants [the tribes of Reuven and Gad] as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan [into Israel]."

Moshe (Moses) spots the danger straight away - how could these two tribes abandon their

responsibility in fighting and contributing to build up the land of Israel? As Moshe responds: "Are you going to sit here while your brothers go and fight?"

Despite the tense situation, Moshe teaches us a clear and simple lesson in negotiation. Rabbi Sacks zt"l explains that the first step Moshe takes is to *separate the people from the problem*. Moshe assures the Reubenites and Gadites that it is nothing personal. Moshe simply recognised the disastrous historical precedent of putting one's own interest above that of the nation, namely the incident of the spies, and is unwilling to take the risk that something similar could happen again.

Moshe is able to achieve a compromise with the tribes. He

teaches us the principle of *zeh neheneh, vezeh neheneh*, you benefit and I'll benefit. We will work together to help each other with our respective aims.

This is exactly what happens - Moshe allows the tribes to create a temporary outpost for their cattle and families. In exchange, the Reubenites and Gadites not only fight in the army, but become the advance guard, an even more demanding military role.

So from this *parasha* we learn the importance of playing our part in serving the community and not just doing what's best for ourselves. Only through compromise and striving to genuinely help each other as much as we can to achieve mutually beneficial solutions can we move forward when we disagree.

Parasha Word Scramble!

Unjumble the letters to uncover words connected to the *parasha*.

1. MISEPCOMRO
2. SERIAL
3. BISTER
4. HOMES
5. WARDENING
6. RESTED





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

MATOT - MASEI: FROM SAMURAI TO SINAI!

THE SECOND OF THIS WEEK'S TWO PARASHOT, MASEI, LISTS THE JOURNEYS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE DESERT. CHECK OUT THIS AWESOME JOURNEY THAT LED MOSHE CHAIM SHINOHARA FROM A JAPANESE SAMURAI FAMILY TO JUDAISM!



I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT SAMURAI MEANT 'WARRIOR WITH A SWORD'. BUT IT TURNS OUT SAMURAI IS FROM THE JAPANESE WORD 'TO SERVE', BECAUSE A SAMURAI'S JOB IS NOT JUST TO THINK ABOUT THEMSELVES, BUT TO SERVE OTHERS AND LIVE FOR SOMETHING BIGGER.

HIROMICHI, YOUR NAME MEANS 'THE RIGHT PATH'. OUR SAMURAI HERITAGE TEACHES THAT STRENGTH IS NOT JUST BRAVERY. IT IS HONOUR, DISCIPLINE, DUTY AND COURAGE. IT MEANS BEING HONEST, HUMBLE AND CLEAR-THINKING - AND DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, EVEN WHEN IT IS DIFFICULT.



I FEEL DIFFERENT. NO ONE LIVES WITH THEIR GRANDPARENTS! IN MY FAMILY, TRADITION REALLY MATTERS. LOTS OF MY FRIENDS DON'T CARE ABOUT THE OLD WAYS, BUT I KNOW THOSE SAMURAI VALUES ARE IMPORTANT.

1998, University in California, USA.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE? MONEY? FAME? FANCY TITLES? OR IS LIFE REALLY ABOUT PURPOSE AND CHARACTER?

HEY, THAT SOUNDS JUST LIKE THE BIG QUESTIONS MY FAMILY IN JAPAN CARE ABOUT!



DAD, I'VE FOUND SOMETHING AMAZING. THE SAMURAI VALUES I GREW UP WITH: TRADITION, PURPOSE, RESPECT, KINDNESS, DOING THE RIGHT THING - I'VE FOUND THEM ALIVE IN JUDAISM!



HIROMICHI'S JEWISH JOURNEY CONTINUED. LIKE THE JOURNEYS IN PARASHAT MASEI, MOSHE CHAIM'S JOURNEY HAD MANY STEPS. SLOWLY HE STARTED LEARNING ABOUT JUDAISM, KEEPING KOSHER, GOING TO SHUL, LEARNING TO READ HEBREW AND PREPARING FOR CONVERSION TO JUDAISM.

AND NOW WE'LL EAT APPLE IN HONEY AND ASK GOD FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR!

EVERYONE IS SO WARM AND KIND. EVEN THE MEAL FEELS SO FULL OF MEANING. I MUST FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS!



TODAY I GO BY MY JEWISH NAME, MOSHE CHAIM. I HAVE A JEWISH FAMILY HERE IN AMERICA, AND MY JAPANESE SAMURAI FAMILY ARE PROUD THAT I AM CONTINUING THE VALUES OF OUR HERITAGE THROUGH MY JEWISH LIFE. EVERY JOURNEY HAS STOPS, STARTS AND SURPRISES. KEEP WALKING THE RIGHT PATH, ONE STEP AT A TIME.



SON, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING.



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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.