



# OD YOSEF HAI NEWSLETTER

ROSH YESHIVAH AND COMMUNITY RABBI  
DAYAN ABRAHAM DAVID SHLI"TA

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## **Thoughts on Parashat MATTOT MASEI**

**Year 23**

**by Dayan Abraham David**

There are interesting questions on the makeup of the army which went out to fight Midian. From the number of remaining captives the young female children amounted to 32,000; we see Midian was quite a large nation. There must have been tens of thousands of fighters against the army of Yisrael, yet Moshe is commanded to take only a thousand from each tribe, 12 thousand to fight the Midianites. Rashi comments on the words 'Hechaltzu Me-etchem "Anashim" Letzava', pick armed men for the army "Anashim" refers to 'Zadikim', the soldiers had to be tzadikim, righteous people. The army facing Midian had to be made up of tzadikim. Each tribe had to find a thousand righteous people to fight Midian. Midian was a nation that had sent out its daughters to corrupt the Jewish people, such a nation could, even in the battle, corrupt our soldiers so only tzadikim were entrusted with this battle, even if their numbers were small, a thousand from each tribe. Miraculously they succeeded to destroy all the army of Midian without the loss of a single soldier, for it is G-d who makes war and wins it. All we have to do is make a physical effort with faith in Him. There is a further difficulty, the pasuk says a thousand from each tribe and then says: 'Mikol Matot Yisrael', to include the Tribe of

Levy unlike at the preparations for inheritance of the Land when Levy was not counted among the tribes. So if the Tribe of Levy was included it should be thirteen thousand and not twelve. Some explanations say that since Levy was included here, Menashe and Efraim would be counted only as one, the Tribe of Yosef, but there is some difficulty with this since 'Mikol Matot' seems to come to include something more, not just to replace Menashe or Efraim to be counted only as one. The Sefat Emet gives a beautiful answer that when the pasuk says the count of 12 thousand, it says: 'Vayimasru mi alfe Yisrael Elef Le mate shnem Aser elef Chalutze Savah', twelve thousand were handed over as if by force. For when the Bnei Yisrael heard that the decease of Moshe depended on the battle of Midian 'Achar Teasef il Amecha' they refused to go to battle to prolong Moshe's life with them and they had to be forced: 'Vayimasru' but this was only 12 thousand of the other tribes. But the Tribe of Levy who always followed the command of Hashem even against their own families as with the golden calf when they answered Moshe's call, they went willingly and did not have to be handed over. There were thirteen thousand who went to battle but only twelve thousand had to be forced and handed over. We could give another answer to this question, for we find in the Yalkut according to certain opinions there were 24 thousand who went to war, some say 36 thousand because of the

repetition 'Elef Lemate', the 12 thousand mentioned in the pasuk were the actual fighters 'ChalutzeTsavah' the other 12 thousand to look after their belongings and weapons and 12 thousand for Tefilah to pray at the place of war. That is the makeup of a Jewish army. We could say, according to Rabe Akiva who says the Tribe of Levy was included. Levy's thousand was the chaplaincy corps to give spiritual guidance and support morally in battle, they were not the actual fighters. 'Chalutze Tsavah' who numbered 12 thousand. In the old days when an army went to battle, they had the drummers who led the charge and the flag bearers before them to inspire the soldiers to battle. The thousand Levites were the drummers and the flag bearers who inspired the Jewish army with faith and spiritual inspiration to victory.

For G-d does battle for us and we must fight with faith and in purity so he can be close to us 'Ve Haya Machnecha Kadosh'. And your camp should be Holy.

## **TORAH GEMS**

In Parashat Masei the Torah counts the journeys of the Bnei Yisrael in the desert during their 40 years. There were 42 journeys and every place is named. The Midrash Rabah and Tanchuma explain the mentioning of the journeys with a parable of a king who recounts the journeys he took with his ill child and all difficulties and experiences he went through with his son to save him: This happened here, and there you had an attack etc: to show the love and caring of our King for us.

The Midrash Rabah besides this brings another explanation for the repetition of these journeys that a person is permitted and it is accepted practice that people run away from danger even to the extent of 'Chilul Shabbat' to save life. The Midrash brings many examples, of great people who had to run away, Yaakov Avinu from the wrath of Esau, Moshe

from Pharaoh, David from Shaul and many other examples; The Gedoleh Tzipore who were advised by Rebbe Eliezer Ben Prata to run away and escape the Gezerot of the Romans. G-d told Moshe to draw our attention to the fact that in those 40 years in the desert, the Bnei Yisrael were treated with great kindness and did not have to run away from their enemies: 'Your enemies fell before you because I (G-d) was with you, even though the desert is a dangerous place of snakes and scorpions you were not harmed'. But what we need to understand is where do we find enemies who attacked them, besides Amalek and at the end when they conquered Sichon and Og and fought the Midianites. But in the other 38 years we have no mention in the Torah. Maybe the Midrash is drawing our attention to a different kind of salvation we are not even aware of, but we have to appreciate. Moshe was told to draw their attention to this type of salvation through the mention of these journeys. There is a Pasuk in the Hallel. 'Halellu Hashem kol goyim, shabchuhu kol, ha umim ki gavar alenu chasdo'. Let the gentiles say 'Hallel' and the nations praise Him for the good He has done for us.

Rab Chaim Volozin asked the question: "Why the goyim praise Hashem and not us?" He brings an interesting story of an anti-Semitic Polish Duke who was always trying to harm the Jews in Poland. Somehow the Jews were able to talk or bribe their way out of the 'Gazerot' he tried to make. Once he got together all the other princes and dukes, locked them all together in a room in his palace and got them to issue new decrees in the laws of the country against the Jews. He made sure the Jews would not hear about it until it was finalised. He locked the princes and dukes in, they wrote down the decrees and they all signed; only then did he allow them out. He locked the room with the signed edicts, held the key in his pocket, put two guards outside the door and went to bed. The next morning he unlocked the room and entered to find all the edicts burned in the fireplace. He questioned the guards: "Who did you

allow in at night?" They answered: You, yourself, came back at night with your key, you entered for some time and then left. He knew he had not left home, it could only have been a salvation for the Jews from G-d who had sent Eliyahu Hanavee or a ;malach', looking like him to do the job. He told this story to Rab Chaim. The Jews knew nothing of the decrees and the salvation but the goyim knew their plan and how

G-d undoes it. So Rab Chaim explained the Pasuk, in the Hallel the goyim will praise G-d for our salvations which will take place and we know nothing about. Rashi in Bamidbar (21:15) brings the Talmud in Berachot (54:1) about the plot of the Emorites who hid in caves and the mountains to ambush the Bnei Yisrael who were passing in the valley under. Hashem made a miracle and the mountains came together crushing the Emorites who were hiding there. The Bnei Yisrael were unaware of this miracle and only when they saw the blood and body parts flowing in the river in the valley did they realise the miracle G-d had done for them and they said a 'Shirah'. The snakes and scorpions were not in the path of the Bnei Yisrael and only because G-d had removed them before. Yes, even in our days

G-d saves us from the plots of our enemies, some we realise about immediately and others only after some time. We should look out and see the hand of Hashem in what we might pass off as accidental or political accords which could have done us harm and saved us from. We could look at Mr Trump's election against all the odds as one of such. The message of the previous Midrash we have mentioned is that on our journeys in the galut and in our personal life there are messages to help us correct faults we may have.

### **STORIES OF TZADDIKIM**

This story was said by the onetime editor of a religious weekly newspaper called 'Erev Shabbat'. When I became editor, I decided to be more careful about articles which might constitute lashon harah

especially against Rabbis. My newspaper in the past had been guilty on numerous occasions of permitting lashon harah about Rabbi Mordecai Eliyahu z"l but the Rabbi never went to the civil courts to claim damages as it might encourage Jews to go to them instead of Beth Din. Once when I was on a trip to America, one of the reporters wrote an article containing Moshe shem ra about one of the sons of Rabbi Mordecai. Since I was abroad I did not check it out. His son, to teach the paper a lesson for its previous articles of lashon harah against the Rabbi, took the paper to court. He won the case and was awarded considerable damages. As editor I was responsible and I had to pay, but I did not have the means to do so.

I was desperate and went to the home of Rabbi Mordecai. I told him that I had to pay his son a considerable amount and I did not have it. The Rabbi was quite firm, "It is your responsibility and you have failed and caused damage, pay." Then he gave me reproach, "You do not realise the seriousness of speaking against Rabbis which could affect the Torah and halacha they disseminate. When people hear Lashon Harah about a Rabbi whether lies or even the truth they might stop hearing halacha from them and lose out, they might stop going to shiurim from Rabbis at all saying Rabbis are like that and cause chillul Hashem. He might have sheilot to ask this Rabbi about shabbath, nidah and refrain and stumble in their observance. I put my head down saying I would be most careful in the future. He took out his cheque book and covered the whole amount, he told me go and cash the cheque and pay in cash, do not reveal it to my son that I have paid. I never revealed it until now after his passing away. Zecher Tzadik l'beracha.

### ***Shabbat Shalom***

## **HALACHOT**

### **Laws concerning Rosh Chodesh AB 2018**

1) Rosh Chodesh Ab falls on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August. Even though there are those who refrain from eating meat from the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz the beginning of the 3 weeks but the accepted minhag is to refrain from Rosh Chodesh onwards. The minhag in Baghdad and most Sephardi communities is only to refrain from the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Ab, and meat and wine would be allowed on Rosh Chodesh itself as it is a semi Yom Tov. The minhag Ashkenaz is to refrain on Rosh Chodesh.

2) We are allowed to eat meat and have wine on Shabbath even Shabbath 'Chazon'. For those who have the minhag to taste the food of Shabbath on Friday erev Shabbath to fulfil the Pasuk 'Ve Toameha Chayim Zachu those who taste it receive life, it would be permitted to taste meat foods of Shabbath on Erev Shabbath.

3) We Sepharadim make Havdalah on wine and drink it. The Minhag Ashkenaz is to give it to a child to drink.

4) The Ben Ish Hai permits having meaty foods left over from Shabbath on Motzei Shabbath and only for Seudat Reveit and Melave Malka. But the minhag Ashkenaz is not to permit it.

5) The restrictions of not eating meat apply even to foods cooked with meat even if you do not eat the meat. Chicken is also forbidden.

6) Someone unwell or a pregnant or feeding mother who is weak and needs to eat meat is permitted to eat even in the week of Tisha B'Ab but they should try eating only chicken where possible. Young children who are weak and need meat are also permitted.

**We have a regular Youth  
Minyan organised by Jason  
Ibrahim and Jordan Moses  
followed by a kiddush**

**Mazal tov to  
Tsion and Diana Cohen  
on the birth of a baby boy  
Mazal tov to the grandparents  
and to all the families**

**Mazal tov to Baruch Nahum  
on the birth of a granddaughter  
and to the parents  
Yosef and Maya Bassilian  
and to the grandparents and the  
families**

*If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush  
Please contact  
Nathaniel Bendayan 07825 871749  
For Seuda Shlishit  
or to rent the  
Nancy Reuben Hall  
for a Simcha  
Please contact  
Yanky David 07725 408724*

## **SHABBAT TIMES**

Shabbat commences	8:58 pm
Shabbat terminates	10:23pm
Mincha Erev Shabbat for the summer	7:15 pm
Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat Shacharit	8:30 am
Shiur Pirke Avot	7:30 pm
Mincha on Shabbat followed by Seuda Shlishit & Arbit	8:30 pm
Shacharit Sundays	7:00 am
Shacharit Weekdays	6:50 am
Mincha followed by Arbit Arbit for the summer	7:30 pm

**DO NOT LIGHT YOUR SHABBAT  
CANDLES BEFORE PLAG HAMINCHA  
WHICH IS 7:31PM**