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9 years of Points to Ponder on Parshiyos Matos/Maasei

(**Rav Moshe Wolfson**  notes that the reading of the Parsha of Nedarim during the 3 weeks is a response to the Talmud’s (Bava Basra 74) comment that a heavenly voice declared that it swore to create an exile and now there is no one to annul the Neder. Our reading of this section is a reminder that Hashem’s Torah contains exactly this concept – Neder annulment and it is available to be used by Hashem).

**אֶל־רָאשֵׁ֣י הַמַּטּ֔וֹת Matos (30:2)** - Why are the heads of the Shevatim referred to a Matos? When are they Shevatim and when are they Matos? **Rav Aharon Friedman**  (Rosh Yeshiva Kerem B’Yavneh) explained that the term Shevet refers to a young branch of a tree whose strength comes from its source. A Mateh is a branch that is stronger and more established than its Shevet counter-part. A Mateh has the strength to lead. Jewish leaders lead with a self-awareness that they are strong enough to lead -- and to have their words count. Hence, when speaking of the power of speech, the message is given to the heads of the Matos. (It is also why when Moshe didn’t believe in himself, Hashem asked him what was he holding and he answered a “Mateh…”)

**אֶל־רָאשֵׁ֣י הַמַּטּ֔וֹת And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes (30:2)** – Why did Moshe need to speak to the heads of the tribes first and the people afterward? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin**  commented (as a Drash), that sometimes, in an interest to inspire the people, leaders will make promises that they cannot fulfill. The Torah is telling us that even when one is a leader, and the word is for inspiration – K’Chol HYotzai MiPiv Yaaseh. The **Chazon Ish**  is reported to have started his learning of Nedarim with a younger student with the understanding that each word a person utters should have the requirements of a Neder – that it is only the Chessed of Hashem that people would not be ble to live by that rule and therefore he has created a stronger level of speaking called Neder.

**אֶל־רָאשֵׁ֣י הַמַּטּ֔וֹת Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes (30:2) – Rav Yehuda Gershuni**  notes that Moshe spoke to the leaders in particular because at times they think that they are allowed to make promises and then not live up to their words – for the good of the people. Hence the Torah notes that Moshe spoke to them in particular reminding them that they should follow that which comes out of their mouths. **Rav Kook**  would often quip that the sign for a True Tzaddik is not that he commands and Hashem fulfills but rather that he commands and HE fulfills.

**אֶל־רָאשֵׁ֣י הַמַּטּ֔וֹת** **To the heads of the tribes (30:2)** - Why is the section of Nedarim introduced to us through the Roshei HaMatos first? **Rav Chaim Cohen**  the Chalban, notes that the Torah is telling us that in the same way that Chachamim make Takanos for the community in general, a person has the responsibility to make Takanos for himself individually to help him handle his or her weaknesses. These are the ways that we come close to Hashem.

**זֶ֣ה הַדָּבָ֔ר**  **This is the thing (30:2) – Rashi** notes that Moshe is unique in that he introduced Nevuah not only with the phrase of Koh Amar Hashem as the other Neviim did, he also said Zeh HaDavar. How do you know the difference**? Rav Schachter**  quoted **the Kedushas Levi** who notes that all other Neviim saw a Chazon and needed to interpret the Chazon in his own words as opposed to Moshe for whom the language was given to him specifically. This, says Rav Schachter is that which is said that Moshe is the Adon HaNeviim, he alone has the ability to apply Mitzvos immediately and in future generations. So other Neviim were able to speak only with Koh Amar Hashem. Moshe does the same when he also speaks only to his generation. But when he spoke to future generations he said Zeh HaDavar.

**'איש כי ידור נדר לה When a man takes a Neder or a Shevuah (30:3)** – The Gemara (Nedarim 8a) notes that one is allowed to take an oath to guarantee that he will do a Mitzva. Although we are all technically sworn already to keep the Torah from our promise at Har Sinai, still it is a good Neder because of its inspiration. Why is it Ziruz to do something that has no value? **The Steipler**  explains that the reason many of us sin is because we fail to see the truth. Instead, we find reasons to permit ourselves to do something that we know is otherwise wrong. Taking a personal oath to strengthen a Mitzva is a means of saying that despite whatever logic that I might employ to erroneously allow myself to do an Aveira, I am doubling down not to use that logic and stick to the Mitzva.

**אִישׁ֩ כִּֽי־יִדֹּ֨ר נֶ֜דֶר When a man takes a Neder (30:3) – Rav Amital**  noted the Gemara’s comparison of one who makes Nedarim to one who makes a Bamah and the one who keeps his Nedarim to one who brings a Korban on that Bamah. According to Rav Amital, a bama represents a person's desire to depart from the standard route of worship in the Temple in order to establish his personal, alternate route. Likewise, self-imposed prohibitions taken on through vows also represent a retreat from the normal world of mitzvot; the person adopts an additional track through which to worship God. Rather than remaining content with the mitzvot that God gave, the person chooses the Torah-sanctioned track of vows, thereby isolating himself from the standard world of avodat Hashem (divine service). One needs to be exceptionally careful when taking this approach for one’s Chumra is another’s undoing.

**כִּֽי־יִדֹּ֨ר נֶ֜דֶר לַֽה אֽוֹ־הִשָּׁ֤בַע שְׁבֻעָה֙ When you make a Neder or a Shevua (30:3) – Ramban** notes that Neder is like swearing in the life of the king and Shevuah is like swearing in the king himself. What does that mean? **Rav Schachter noted that Rav Soloveitchik**  explained that Nedarim are a part of a course of the life created by Hashem (hence Nedarim are on Cheftzaos like Hekdeish) but a Shevuah which employs the name of Hashem, requires a person who understands the name of Hashem and knows Hashem. That Shaliach is a Gavra. When a child is about to be born we tell him “swear to be a Tzaddik not a Rasha” In other words, even if something seems ok to you to do, remember you are an agent of Hashem and need to live up to that standard even when unstated.

**לֹ֥א יַחֵ֖ל דְּבָר֑וֹ He shall not delay his words (30:3)** – He should not make his words Chullin (**Rashi from the Gemara**). This is the source for one’s need to watch his mouth from all Devarim Asurim. **Rav Volch**  tells a story of a young woman who had suffered from a potential blockage in a main artery in her head and was to undergo surgery. Prior to the surgery, she sought the blessing of **Rebbetzin Kanievski z”l** who told her to accept to study 2 Halachos from the Shmiras HaLashon daily. When the woman was in pre-op the doctor cancelled the surgery as it appeared unnecessary. When he went to ask Rebbetzin Kanievski for her secret she seemed unsurprised as the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva had noted that those who study Shmiras HaLashon are granted Yeshuos from the Sefer and its application.

**כְּכָל־הַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּ֖יו יַֽעֲשֶֽׂה According to that which emanates from your mouth you shall do (30:3)** – Why is this section of the Torah brought specifically here? Simply, we are coming out of a section of the Torah dealing with Korbanos and just like there the issue of keeping one’s word is essential (Korbanos and oaths are linked on many levels in the Gemara) the same is true here. However, **Rabbi Dr. Lord Sacks** explained that there is a deeper meaning here. As Bnei Yisrael were getting closer to the land they were about to embark on making a society that would be based primarily not on the use of force but rather on people honoring their moral commitments as they promised Hashem they would. The power of one’s word binds us and that bond is one that creates order out of chaos. Hence Nedarim comes before conquering the land setting the tone for the future governance of the land.

**כְּכָל־הַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּ֖יו יַֽעֲשֶֽׂה**: **When a person makes a Neder he must fulfill that which comes out of his mouth (30:3) – Rav Chaim Kohein (HaChalban)** explains that the concept of a neder is unlike any other prohibition in the Torah. For other prohibitions exist to keep a person away from a Tumah status associated with it. Nedarim are man-made and man-specific. How then are they correlated to Tumah? He answers that each person, at times, needs to understand that there are things in his life that are Mutar but not good for himself for he is weak in regard to them. He needs to be able to show and teach himself to stay away from those things. Other times he needs additional encouragement in other areas and Nedarim work for him there. The goal and the critical message is that the person himself is ultimately responsible to lead an upstanding Jewish life and that in order to lead that life, he must be true to knowing himself best first.

**כְּכָל־הַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּ֖יו יַֽעֲשֶֽׂה: When a man makes a Neder or a Shevuah… whatever comes from his mouth he must do (30:3) – Rashi** explains that Neder is defined as when he says Harei Alai or that I will not do something. The problem is that we know that a Neder is on the Cheftza not on the Gavra so what is Rashi talking about**? Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman** explains that there must be an error here. Rashi must have define Neder and meant to define Shevuah next. Sometimes an explanation can simply be an oversight…

**כְּכָל־הַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּ֖יו יַֽעֲשֶֽׂה: He shall not delay his words whatever comes out of his mouth he should do (30:3) – Rav Zaidel Epstein quoted Rav Yerucham Levovitz**  who noted that the power of speech is a strong one and that the Parsha of Nedarim is a reminder not to shirk it. Rav Yerucham explains that the power extended to man over animals is the power of being a Midaber and using the power properly makes man worth it.

**וה' יסלח לה And Hashem shall forgive her (30:9)** – The Gemara in Nedarim discusses the Heter Nedarim through Charata. How does this work? Why would this undo a Neder? **Rav Schachter**  explained in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik**  that when one argues that his Neder should be expunged he is really arguing that he is a different person from the one who took the Neder. The one who took the Neder was an angry or depressed individual (See Raavad Hil Shavuos 6:12) and now that I am not angry or depressed, I am a changed man and the Neder of the angry or depressed person should not apply. Rav Soloveitchik would add that the recitation of Kol Nidre works the same way – sometimes one seeks a technicality (a Pesach) on the grounds that they thought they would benefit from sin. Alas it was not true. This is a means of Teshuva on technical grounds and would affect the strict language of the Neder. Teshuva through Charata works differently – it argues that the person is a different person and the punishments set for the first, should be null to the “new” person.

**אֶ֚לֶף לַמַּטֶּ֔ה אֶ֖לֶף לַמַּטֶּ֑ה** **Elef LaMateh Elef LaMateh (31:4)** – Why do we need to double mention the 1000 per Shevet requirement? **Rav Elyashiv**  explains that for each 1000 on the battlefield there were 1000 covering for them in the Yeshivot and Battei Midrashot and 1000 taking care of the needs of the people (See Midrash Rabba here). This is the Gemara’s declaration (Sanhedrin 49a) that if Dovid was not studying Torah Yoav could not be successful at battle. We need all the parts to work harmoniously --- when we want to be successful.

**וַיִּמָּֽסְרוּ֙ מֵֽאַלְפֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל** **And the thousands of Bnei Yisrael were handed over (31:5) – Rashi** explains that when the people heard that Moshe’s death would follow the war against Midyan, they had to be forced to fight the battle. This, despite that Moshe had previously they were prepared to stone him**. Rashi** explains that this was a declaration of their great love for him. However, why does this demonstrate the “great love”? All it shows is a shallow commitment? **Rav Dovid Holzer**  explains that the praise is not of the people but instead of the leader. Moshe did not top loving the people no matter what they did or said to him. In the end, they didn’t give up on him either. This is the ultimate show of success by leader.

**וַיִּמָּֽסְרוּ֙ מֵֽאַלְפֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל** **Each tribe contributed Elef LaMateh (31:5)** – Wouldn’t a proportional contribution based on shevet size been more fair and equitable? Why the even number? The **Hegyonah Shel Torah** explains that the numbers were not a function of the proportions because the population was guaranteed. Indeed each soldier who went, came back. The reason for the numbers was to be a part of the even sharing of the opportunity for Kiddush Shem Shomayim and for Nikmas Hashem in Midyan. Each Shevet was entitled to an even share in these efforts.

**אֶת־אֱוִ֤י וְאֶת־רֶ֨קֶם֙ וְאֶת־צ֤וּר וְאֶת־חוּר֙ Zur (31:8)** - Among the kings of Midyan was Zur. We last find his name as the father of Kozbi. **Midrash Tanchuma** notes that he was the greatest of the kings of Midyan but he was demoted because he sold his daughter out to prostitution and thus he is listed third in the Torah. But does Zur care where he is listed in the Torah of the Jews? What kind of punishment is that? **Rav Yissoschar Frand**  noted that the question is based on the assumption that this world is real and Olam Haba is the fantasy. However, in the world of truth, where one rates is the source of continuous embarrassment for those demoted.

**וַיִּקְצֹ֣ף משֶׁ֔ה עַ֖ל פְּקוּדֵ֣י הֶחָ֑יִל** **Moshe got angry at the soldiers and asked them if they allowed the women to live (31:14) – The Shelah HaKadosh** asks why Moshe got angry at the soldiers. After all, when ere they told to annihilate the women? Weren’t they doing what they were told to do**? Rav Mordechai Greenberg**  explains that they should have not only intuited the message in the law but also the spirit of the law as well and not assumed special dispensation for the women this time. A true Chosid learns to not only observe the law but the spirit contained in it as well.

**וַיִּקְצֹ֣ף משֶׁ֔ה עַ֖ל פְּקוּדֵ֣י הֶחָ֑יִל** **Moshe got angry at the officers of the soldiers (31:14)** – Why did Moshe get angry at the officers and not at Pinchas who was the Mashuach Milchama at the time? **Rav Dov Eliezerov**  explained that after Moshe was reminded of the Halacha of HaBoel Aramis Kaanaim Pogin Bo BY PINCHAS, he insisted on treating Pinchas like a Rebbe. To one’s Rebbe, one does not demonstrate anger.

**ויקצף משה And Moshe got angry (31:14)** – Moshe got angry 3 times and each time, his anger caused him to forget a Halacha. **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz**  explains that this is a normal course of events and not a punishment. Rav Chaim explains that since the study of Torah involves not only the amassing of knowledge but also changes the person. The Torah cannot live in a body that is filled with bad Middos, in fact, even the Torah knowledge already there, runs away. The same concept exists in the realm of prophesy. When a Novi is unsettled, he cannot serve as a conduit for the spirit of prophesy.

**וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אֲלֵיהֶ֖ם משֶׁ֑ה Moshe said to them (31:15)** – If we know that Moshe was the one who got angry, we also know that he is the one who spoke to them. Why does the Possuk repeat it? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin**  explained that we learn that when one gets angry, s/he needs to put some space in before speaking and addressing the situation. Speaking too early out of anger is not a wise move.

**הַֽחִיִּיתֶ֖ם כָּל־נְקֵבָֽה You kept the women alive? (31:15)** – Why was Moshe upset about this if Hashem never told them to get rid of the women? **Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop**  cites the **Shelah** who explains that when you see something that is obviously going to challenge you to the point that it will destroy you, you do not need Divine command to take action not to fail. It should just come from Seichel. It is like what happens when you know what a parent needs, do not wait until s/he asks for it.

**וַיֹּ֨אמֶר אֶלְעָזָ֤ר הַכֹּהֵן֙ אֶל־אַנְשֵׁ֣י הַצָּבָ֔א**  **Elazar spoke to the soldiers who were coming to war (31:21)** – Should the proper language be “going” not “Coming (HaBaim)” to war? Why the change? **The Shach** explains that when Elazar promised them that the spoils will stay in their hands it gave the army the motivation to go to war in the future. This too stresses the idea that when we reward behavior, it makes it more likely that we will see that behavior again.

**זֹ֚את חֻקַּ֣ת הַתּוֹרָ֔ה This is the Chok of the Torah (31:21)** – The introduction of the concept of Hagaalas Keilim with the words, Zos Chukas HaTorah is strange. Why not Zos Chukas Hahagaala? **Rav Moshe Feinstein**  explained that just like when a Kli becomes so Tamai that it is absorbed in the walls, so too, the Tumah in a person who wants to become Tahor can become Tahor as well. K’Bolo Kach Polto. **Rav Zilberstein**  adds that the Teshuva for sinners needs to be like the sin – if the Taava for Avaira was a strong as fire so too, must be the fervor of change.

**כָּל־דָּבָ֞ר אֲשֶׁר־יָבֹ֣א בָאֵ֗שׁ תַּֽעֲבִ֤ירוּ בָאֵשׁ֙ וְטָהֵ֔ר  That which went through fire shall go through fire and be Tahor** (31:23) - Why are the laws of Hechsher Keilim connected to the battle with Midyan? **Rav Soloveitchik**  noted that in Midyan the Jews got too close to the Midyanities to the point where they were almost indistinguishable. Having distinguishing marks is critical and crucial for our survival and the survival of our Tzelem HaKadosh. **Rav Yaakov Neuberger**  added that the war with Midyan came because Midyan tried to destroy the Jewish family. By wiping away their involvement in our Jewish home, we are attempting the antidote.

**וַיַּ֣עַשׂ משֶׁ֔ה וְאֶלְעָזָ֖ר הַכֹּהֵ֑ן** **And Moshe and Elazar the Kohein did as Hashem commanded Moshe (31:31)** – The **Brisker Rav** and **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev** both note that we only find the phrase of Kaasher Tziva Hashem Es Moshe when the command was for something that was to be followed in future generations. But the Terumas HaMeches here was a command only in regard to the spoils of Midyan? Why use the phrase Kaasher Tziva Hashem? **Maran HaRav Schachter**  explained that the Kiyum of the actions continue for many generations…the idea of separating Taxes is something that is Noheig L’doros.

**וּמִקְנֶ֣ה | רַ֗ב הָיָ֞ה לִבְנֵ֧י רְאוּבֵ֛ן וְלִבְנֵי־גָ֖ד Bnei Reuven and Gad had a lot of cattle (32:1) – Ramban** notes that everywhere else Gad precedes Reuven in the discussion of Eiver HaYarden except for this one. Why? **Rav Chaim Kanievski**  suggested that while both wanted to settle in Eiver HaYaden, Reuven’s primary reason was the fact that he had a lot of cattle. Gad knew that Moshe was destined to pass in Eiver HaYarden and wanted his burial place to be in their midst. Since their reasoning was more L’Shem Shomayim, then they get listed first – except for here when their reasoning was not primarily for cattle as was Reuven’s. Here they get listed second.

**הַֽאַחֵיכֶ֗ם יָבֹ֨אוּ֙ לַמִּלְחָמָ֔ה וְאַתֶּ֖ם תֵּ֥שְׁבוּ פֹֽה**: **Moshe asked Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven “Do you think your brothers will go to war and you will dwell here?” (32:6)** – Later, Moshe refers to them as sinners**. Ramban** explains that he thought they were sinners for they lacked belief in Hashem like the Miraglim did. That is why they agreed not only to fight but to lead the troops in battle. But why did Moshe not trust them? Why was he not Dan L’Kaf Zechus (See Shabbos 127b**)? Rav Simcha Zissel Broide**  explained that a Manhig must always balance Dan L’Kaf Zechus together with the responsibility not to be a patsy. A leader must first confirm that the commitment to Torah in any philosophy or new action must be strong and only thereafter to look to the individuals and be able to judge them favorably.

**וְהִנֵּ֣ה קַמְתֶּ֗ם תַּ֚חַת אֲבֹ֣תֵיכֶ֔ם תַּרְבּ֖וּת אֲנָשִׁ֣ים חַטָּאִ֑ים  You have arisen…a group of itinerant sinners** (32:14) - Why does Moshe get angry with them? How does he dare refer to them as Tarbut Anashim Chataim, itinerant sinners? **Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski**  noted that it was the fact that they came together B’Irbuviya, like a mob, as their father did with the Miraglim when the young were pushing the old, that demonstrated the lack of respect. Even good ideas are doomed to failure when that happens.

**וְהִנֵּ֣ה קַמְתֶּ֗ם תַּ֚חַת אֲבֹ֣תֵיכֶ֔ם תַּרְבּ֖וּת אֲנָשִׁ֣ים חַטָּאִ֑ים And now you have risen in place of your fathers a society of sinners (32:14) - Targum** notes that they learned from the spies. When would this generation have learned from the Miraglim? **Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira**  explains that people occasionally are influenced by legends of people who lived before them and are “like” students even though there was a 40 gap between them. Thus, we need to be carefully mindful of negative influences even if not present lest they ruin us.

**גִּדְרֹ֥ת צֹ֛אן נִבְנֶ֥ה לְמִקְנֵ֖נוּ פֹּ֑ה וְעָרִ֖ים לְטַפֵּֽנוּ: Pens for our Sheep and cities for our children (32:16)** - Moshe needed to reverse their order of priority because nothing can be more important than the children. **Rav Schachter**  notes that raising the children is really making the means for the extension of one’s own life. Relaying Torah values to them is the best and most important thing we can do.

**לֹ֥א נָשׁ֖וּב אֶל־בָּתֵּ֑ינוּ** **We won’t go back until it is settled (32:18)** – Why do Bnei Gad and Reuven need to wait until the land was divided? Why isn’t the settling of the land something that can be done not on their watch? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**  answers that there is value in making sure everyone finds his/her place. Until you get there, no one has the ability to go home.

**וִֽהְיִיתֶ֧ם נְקִיִּ֛ם מֵֽיהֹוָ֖ה וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵ֑ל You shall be freed [of your obligation] from the Lord and from Israel והייתם נקיים מה’ ומישראל (32:22) – Rav Soloveitchik**  explained that this means that a Jew is not the true owner of his reputation. He doesn’t have the right to forfeit his standing. The character of a Jew is sacred and he must uphold it with dignity.

**בְּנֽוּ־לָכֶ֤ם עָרִים֙ לְטַפְּכֶ֔ם וּגְדֵרֹ֖ת לְצֹנַֽאֲכֶ֑ם וְהַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּיכֶ֖ם תַּֽעֲשֽׂוּ Build pens for our flock here and cities for our children” (32:24)** - In their negotiations with Moshe, the tribes of Reuven and Gad offered to “build pens for our flock here and cities for our children” Moshe answered that they should “build for yourselves cities for your children and pens for your flock, and that which comes out of your mouths you shall do” (ibid. 24). **Rav Shaul Yisraeli**  noted that it is surprising that Moshe got angry at the tribes even before hearing their whole plan, when it turned out that they apparently intended to join their brothers in battle after all. Rav Yisraeli explains that before Moshe heard the rest of their proposal, he was sure they would not come over the Jordan to fight because he knew that they were blessed with many children and those children needed to be educated. The tribes answered Moshe that they had not thought in those terms, as we see from their response. After all, they spoke first about building pens for their flock and only afterward cities for their children. While Moshe accepted the basic proposal, he corrected them about the order of the pens and the cities. Moshe added that they should take his correction seriously and not claim that the order of how you do things does not make a difference. “That which comes out of your mouths you shall do.” In other words, just the fact that you said these words is impactful, and it is impossible to know how impactful something said in passing can be.

**וְנִכְבְּשָׁ֥ה הָאָ֖רֶץ לִפְנֵיכֶ֑ם** **And the land shall be conquered before you (32:29)** – Why doesn’t the Possuk use the phrase Lifnei Hashem instead of Lifneichem as a condition for where the land will be conquered**? Rav**  **Yechezkel Abramsky**  explains that despite the fact that Moshe set the conditions with Bnei Gad and Reuven as Lifnei Hashem, was a result of his speaking WITH THEM in order to impress upon their how far their obligation extended. However, when speaking to Yehoshua and Elazar, he used the phrase Lifneichem to highlight to them that the decision as to when the job was done for Bnei Gad and Reuven was to be made by the Jewish leadership. If they didn’t need them anymore, they could release them.

**וַיִּבְנ֣וּ בְנֵי־גָ֔ד אֶת־דִּיבֹ֖ן וְאֶת־עֲטָרֹ֑ת The Bnei Gad built Divon, Ataros and Aroer (32:34)** – The Talmud usues this verse to remind us that one needs to complete Stayim Mikra V’Echad Targum even on words that have no translation like Ataros and Divon. Why these words and not Reuven and Shimon? **Rav Yitzchak Hutner**  explained that one can extend Kodesh nto Chol through boundaires. Shabbos can be extended into the week both at the beginning and the end. Theoretically this should extend to the borders of the land of Israel including Ataros and Divon. Lest one think that Ataros and Divon need no Targum as they are already sanctified we do. We learn how important the opportunity to increase Kedusha is, even if seemingly superfluous. The chance to create Kedusha instead of having it happen, is a big plus to a Jew.

**אֵ֜לֶּה מַסְעֵ֣י בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל** **These are the travels of Bnei Yisrael (33:1)** – Why are the 42 stops offered here? **The Rambam** suggests that each stop further solidifies the truth to the stories mentioned in the Torah. By making a case for each part of the story, it lends credence to the truth of the story as a whole. **Rav Chaim Sabato**  offered a different perspective: he suggests that the point of mentioning the stops is to note that even intermediary steps on a spiritual journey are important. It is not just the harbor but the voyage that has significance.

**אֵ֜לֶּה מַסְעֵ֣י בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל These are the travels of Bnei Yisrael (33:1)** – Why do we mention the travels of Bnei Yisrael here? **Ramban** cites **the Rambam** who notes that the mentioning of the travels is as an antidote to future denials of the authenticity of Jewish history. For if someone should rise in the future and deny the major steps that the Jews took in the Midbar, these stops will serve as a reminder of the major miracles that sustained the nation during the 40 years in the desert. Recalling the Derech is identified as a mitzvah in the book of Devarim (V’Zacharta Es Kol HaDerech). **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide**  noted that there are different aspects to the Mitzva of Zechirah – knowing the Hashgacha in the miracles that happened, knowing that in keeping the Mitzvos there is Sachar, the value of emunah etc. He adds that this also shows the dual importance of analyzing our lives as well – not only to do Teshuvah but also to appreciate the hand of Hashem in our daily lives – why certain episodes happen to each of us – how we came to where we came, what we can do with these experiences etc. If we can appreciate the Hashgacha, we won’t only appreciate the destination but the journey as well.

**אֵ֜לֶּה מַסְעֵ֣י בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל  These are the travels (33:1)** – Why do we stress each of the steps along the way? **Meor Einei Yeshanim** explains that before the people entered Eretz Yisrael they had to understand that the capturing and inheriting of Eretz Yisrael was based on the sacrifices they had made collectively as a nation in the process of growth during their time in the desert. When the Jewish people first left Egypt they were in dire need of development and growth as a nation. By the time they were ready to enter Eretz Yisrael that process had blossomed as they had learned from many mistakes.

**אֵ֜לֶּה מַסְעֵ֣י בְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל  These are the travels (33:1)** Why eleh masei bnei yisroel” (travels) and not eleh machanot, (stops)? The **Degel Machanei Efraim** explains that it’s not about where you are but where you are going in life, the experiences you have along the way and your life mission. My friend Rav Judah Dardik explains this can also be read in to the words of the pesukim: B’Yad Moshe V’Aharon– who came along on the journeys – friends, family, leaders? Each companion adds different flavor to the experience and also creates shared memories. Al Pi Hashem – These were not ordinary travels but spiritual journeys that allowed the Jews to grow each step of the way L’Motza’eihem – It is the journeys symbolize a purpose and mission.

**וַיִּסְע֖וּ מֵֽרְפִידִ֑ם And they left Refidim and they came to Midbar Sinai (33:15)** – How could it be that every negative implication of their sojourn receives notation in the parsha and no reference to Maamad Har Sinai appears? Wasn’t that the MOST important part of the trip? **Rav Dov Elieizorov**  explains that the purpose of the list was to remind the future generations of things that happened on the trip that needed to be underscored. Maamad Har Sinai is a seminal event that will never be denied and thus, never needed to be mentioned.

**וַיִּסְע֖וּ מִמִּדְבַּ֣ר סִינָ֑י And they travelled from Sinai and they camped in Kivrot HaTavah (33:16) – Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank** explains that one who moves away from the Torah that was received at Sinai will find himself in the burial ground of Taava – desire. The Talmud (Bava Metzia 85) notes that Hashem answered the question “Why was the land destroyed?” with the answer that it was due to the fact that the people left the study of Torah. Now, elsewhere, other Avairos are utilized as the reason for the destruction and the exile. Why does Hashem say it was because they left my Torah? Rav Frank answers that it was the leaving of the Torah that allowed us to find the other activities “acceptable” within society.

**וַיִּסְע֖וּ מֵֽחֲצֵרֹ֑ת וַיַּֽחֲנ֖וּ בְּרִתְמָֽה: They left Risma and camped in Rimon Peretz (33:18)** - Why do we spend so much time knowing where they left and then immediately where they camped only to repeat where they had camped before knowing where they left -- the same place that they camped. Why waste the space? **Rav Akiva Tatz** noted that when we journey through life, to so successfully we need to know where we are coming from and where we are going. Hence, the Torah tells us that even if it seems obvious, each step in the journey needs us to be clear where we are coming from and where we are going.

**ויעל אהרן הכהן הר ההר Aharon went up on Hor HaHar on the first day of the 5th month (33:38)** – Why does the Torah repeat this specific information about Aharon’s death which is not mentioned anywhere else? **Rav Moshe Wolfson**  explains that Aharon was the physical embodiment of the holiness of the Jewish people – a human Beis HaMikdash. This section of the Torah highlights the travels during the Galus as the Jews made their way to the land of Israel. Herein the Torah details the death of Aharon to tell us that his death in the context of exile is similar to the loss of a Beis HaMikdash and the subsequent exile. It belongs in the section dealing with the travels through the desert too.

**This is the land that shall fall to you (34:1**) – Why does the Torah use the word “Fall” in describing the boundaries of the land of Israel**? Rashi** notes that either it is the result of Lottery where the concept of Nefila – falling out – is relevant or because 7 kings had to fall in order for us to receive the land. The **Sfas**

**Emes** adds a third possibility: He explains that the connection between Eretz Yisrael (which is LEE) and Bnei Yisrael (Lee Bnei Yisrael Avadim) highlights the Kesher between 2 things that Hashem considers uniquely his. He shares his uniqueness from Eretz Yisrael Shel Maaleh when the jackpot of Am Yisrael B’Eretz Yisrael is achieved. Thus, the word Tipol – to fall from Eretz Yisrael Shel Maaleh is relevant and correct.

**זֹ֣את הָאָ֗רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֨ר תִּפֹּ֤ל לָכֶם֙ בְּנַֽחֲלָ֔ה אֶ֥רֶץ כְּנַ֖עַן לִגְבֻֽלֹתֶֽיהָ Boundaries of Eretz Yisrael (34:1)** - Why do we need the various accounts of the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael both here and in Sefer Yehoshua? **Rav Schachter**  quoted the **Vilna Gaon** who explains that studying the geography of Eretz Yisrael is a part of the mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Moreover, the Talmud had a tradition that *Eretz Yisrael* was endowed with properties of *kaparah* (Kesubos 111a). Those who are buried there gain atonement, but those that live there gain an even greater degree of *kaparah*. In the opening *pasuk* of the book of *Eichah* the special relationship between the Jewish people and *Eretz Yisrael* is compared to that of a married couple. While the Jewish people are in *galus* the land behaves like a faithful wife who waits for her husband to return. Rashi, in his commentary on *Parshas Bechukosai* (26,32), points this out as well. In the midst of the bitter *tochacha*, the Torah has a few soft words, stating that when the Jews go into *galus* the land will remain desolate, and our enemies who in *Eretz Yisrael* will never really be satisfied there. The land will remain forever loyal and faithful to "her husband."

**זֹ֣את הָאָ֗רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֨ר תִּפֹּ֤ל לָכֶם֙ בְּנַֽחֲלָ֔ה  This is the land that shall be given to you as inheritance (34:2)** – Why does the Torah spend so much time identifying the specifics of the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael? **Maran Harav Schachter**  explains that Eretz Yisrael has an effect on the people and the people, on the land. The knowledge of where is Eretz Yisrael and the awareness of what is ours, is critical to establishing our bond with the land. Rav Schachter adds that when we are not in the land, our enemies can and never will be satisfied with it.

**אֶ֥רֶץ כְּנַ֖עַן לִגְבֻֽלֹתֶֽיהָ: Eretz Canaan to its borders(34:2)** - The borders of Israel are not only geographic ally significant for these borders can expand. Rather, **Rav Elyashiv**  notes that these borders highlight the land promised to Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov. The closer one gets to these areas, the more they teach us about its holiness and this is clearly the case in regard to proximity to Yirushalayim.

**לְמַטֵּ֣ה יְהוּדָ֔ה כָּלֵ֖ב בֶּן־יְפֻנֶּֽה: For the tribe of Yehuda Calev Ben Yifuneh (34:19)** – in regard to the listing of the other Nesiim in Parshas Maasei, the names are preceeded by an identification as Mateh Bnei except for Yehuda and Binyamin. Why? **Rav Shlomo Zalman Zelasnick**  explains that Yehuda and Binyamin had Nesiim who were not new but rather continuing on from the first generation – Yehuda was to be represented by Kalev and Binyamin represented by Elidad Ben Kislon who, according to Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon as cited by the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, is none other than Eldad of the famous episode of the Torah and certainly worthy of serving as a Nasi at any time.

**וְהִקְרִיתֶ֤ם לָכֶם֙ עָרִ֔ים You shall designate for you cities (35:11**) - The word for designation should be related to Zamen -- what is the intention with the word V’Hikreesem here? **Rav Gifter**  explained that the use of the word which sounds more happenstance than prepared teaches us an important lesson. These things are not supposed to happen within the Jewish camp. We cannot accept the loss of life inadvertently as a new way of living -- but it does not mean that we are not prepared for it. By highlighting the Mikreh status while at the same time knowing what to do, we are setting ourselves appropriately to handle tough situations while not accepting them as normal. **Rav Pam**  would often cite the fact that to a Jew, every life must be considered sacred --- and even accidental death needs to be shocking which will further keep the occurrence rate of these types of death to a minimum. As Rav Gifter explains here --- one needs to see accidental death as an aberration but the governmental system needs to be prepared to know what to do when it happens by having the Arei Miklat.

**והקריתם לכם ערים And you shall set up cities of refuge for yourselves where one who takes a life inadvertently shall run there (35:11)** – The Talmud (Makos 10a) notes that signs to the Ir Miklat were to be established at the intersections so that whomever was running there should not have to stop (See Rashi there). **The Brisker Rav**  commented that the Torah employs sensitivity to the one travelling to Ir Miklat. The Torah recognized that the man would be in fear of those pursuing him and might not have bothered to get exact directions. Considering his fears, the Torah commands us to established proper public works projects which included hanging the signs at each intersection so that the one traveling would not need to stop and be in fear for a moment longer. This is in stark contrast to the one going up to Yirushalayim who is not granted the sign because we WANT him to have to stop to ask for directions. In doing so, he might get others to travel WITH him to fulfill the great Mitzva of Aliyah L’Regel.

**ְהָי֨וּ לָכֶ֧ם הֶֽעָרִ֛ים לְמִקְלָ֖ט The cities will be Miklat to you (35:12)** - The Torah notes that Arei Miklat stop the Go’el HaDam from being able to act on his anger -- the place serves as the boundary. **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz**  Explains that in life too, the protection of Jewish life is the erection of boundaries which helps a person realize where s/he will and will not go in life and what s/he will and won’t do.

**וְיָ֣שַׁב בָּ֗הּ עַד־מוֹת֙ הַכֹּהֵ֣ן הַגָּדֹ֔ל**  **And he would stay there until the death of the Kohein Gadol (35:25)** – the Gemara informs us that it was the mothers of the Kohanim Gedolim who would feed the people in Ir Miklat in order to take care of their needs. The **Tiferes Yisrael** explains why. If the Kohein were to do it on his own, it would take away from his Kavod and appear as if he was afraid of a murderer. The mother doesn’t look afraid. She looks concerned for her son. Moreover, if the Kohein were to pay for everyone, then every poor man would run to Ir Miklat for 3 hots and a cot. They would not benefit for if she passed, they would be stuck in Ir Miklat with no food to eat.

**וְיָ֣שַׁב בָּ֗הּ עַד־מוֹת֙ הַכֹּהֵ֣ן הַגָּדֹ֔ל He shall live there until the death of the Kohein Gadol (**35:25) - This isn’t just to protect him, it’s an actual punishment. Why is his fate tied to the death of the kohen gadol? **Rav Yaakov Nagen**  suggested that there is only one thing that can atone for murder: blood. For someone who kills intentionally, it is the murderer’s own blood. For someone who kills accidentally, we don’t take his life and therefore, it needs to be someone else’s blood — the kohen gadol, who represents the entire community. Just like to the kohen gadol can provide atonement for klal Yisrael on Yom Kippur, he too can provide atonement for the רוצח בשוגג. However, this atonement can only take place if the individual is so connected to the klal such that the death of the kohen gadol is something that affects him — it is as if part of him has died.

**וְיָ֣שַׁב בָּ֗הּ עַד־מוֹת֙ הַכֹּהֵ֣ן הַגָּדֹ֔ל He shall remain there until the death of the Kohein Gadol (35:25)** – **The Rambam** in Moreh Nevuchim explains that waiting until the death of the Kohein Gadol because when he dies it will shake the people up and they will forgive one another. **Rav Shmuel Turovitz (Rosh Yeshiva l’Tzirim Be’er Yaakov)** noted that this is the power of the kohein Gadol. As the focal point of the Jewish people, he can cause people to forgive issues and squabbles that have been in place sometimes for decades.

**ולא תחניפו את הארץ You shall not bring guilt onto the land (35:32)** – The word Tachanifu comes from the word for flattery. **Onkelos** explains it to mean that you should not give the land a bad reputation. **Ramban** adds that when a person engages in the 3 cardinal Aveiros in Eretz Yisrael banishes Kedushas HaAretz making the Issur even more severe. **Rav Haim Sabato**  explains that this is the intent of the word Yachanif here – it takes the land assumed to be more holy and it makes it into a hypocrite. This is the land that is supposed to be the source of human life and the source of Kedusha and it must be held to a higher standard. When that does not happen, the land naturally expels those who do not let it function the way it is supposed to.

**ולא תחניפו את הארץ You shall not bring guilt upon the land in which you are for the blood will bring guilt upon the land (35:33)-** Why does the Torah use this unusual expression of L’Hachnif to refer to bloodshed? Doesn’t the word refer more to the concept of presenting an external appearance that does not correspond to the inner reality? **Rav Chaim Sabato**  noted that the land of Israel is only in its natural state when the people of Israel dwell within it. When they desecrate its holy nature through the cardinal sins including bloodshed, they are having the land act against the nature of the land, bringing guilt upon itself and exile on its inhabitants.

**וְלֹא־תַֽחֲנִ֣יפוּ אֶת־הָאָ֗רֶץ And you shall not corrupt the land (35:33)** - After teaching us about the Arei Miklat, the Torah reminds us not to confuse this issue with that of the murderer who cannot be allowed to live. But what does this have to do with corruption of the land? **Rav Bernard Weinberger**  recalled the outrage after a successful transplant of a monkey heart into a human being. He was surprised at the outrage from the public which questioned why a human life was more precious than that of an animal and that the transplant was indeed unethical. He added that in Oregon the sap of certain trees which was being used in cancer treatments was being withheld on the grounds that it was unethical to take from a tree’s life in order to sustain a human’s. Rav Weinberger explained that this is the intent here too -- the Torah is teaching us that when we lack the Torah’s guidance on the definition of ethical, we come to corrupt definitions of what is indeed murder and the land cannot be quieted except by the hand of those spilling the blood -- in the name of preseving nature!

**וְלֹא־תַֽחֲנִ֣יפוּ אֶת־הָאָ֗רֶץ And you shall not defile the land that you are in (35:34) – Rav Shaul Yisraeli**  would often cite the midrash (Sifrei Bamidbar 1)that Hashem dwells among Bnei Yisrael even when they are Tamai. He adds that the same is true for the land – even when it looks like the land does not have kedusha to it, Hashem’s Kedusha is there. It is not always pretty and not always pretty apparent but Hashem does not leave his people or his land. This statement alone provides us with a tremendous opportunity to declare Chazak Chazak and derive strength from it.

**כן מטה בני יוסף דברים Bnei Yosef are correct (36:5 ) – The Ohr HaChaim** points out that similar to Bnos Tzlofchad, the Torah again uses the word Kein – that they are correct. Why? The Or HaChaim explains that the intent here is to honor Bnei Yosef (as by Bnos Tzlofchad to honor them) because they spoke a truth. The point of these words from Hashem to Moshe was specifically to honor the Bnei Yosef for being able to assess truth. **Rav Modechai Gifter**  added how important it is to honor and value those who uncover the truth in the Torah – being Torah true is an important value to the point that Hashem literally adds to the Torah by speaking to Moshe to highlight “Kein” yes, these people were correct. Seeking and finding Truth in the Torah is an important endeavor and helps us find truth in Hashem himself.

**זֶ֣ה הַדָּבָ֞ר אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּ֣ה This is the word of Hashem commanded to the daughters of Tzlofchad (36:6)** - The Torah’s version of events seems confusing -- were they permitted to marry anyone or only to their own Shevet? The Talmud (Bava Basra 120a) notes that they were indeed allowed to marry anyone they wished -- just that Hashem gave them advice to marry within their Shevet. **Rav Shimon Schwab**  added that while this seems to be the case, when Hashem offers advice, it is perceived by those with Yiras Shomayim to be a command from Hashem. After all, if the purpose of Mitzvos is to do the will of Hashem, taking His advice as to what one “should” do, seems like a command.

**זֶ֣ה הַדָּבָ֞ר אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּ֣ה This is the thing that Hashem commanded to Bnos Tzelofchad (36:6)** – Usually Zeh HaDavar speaks to things that apply in the future but this was the Halacha only for that moment for those women? **Rav Schachter**  explained that this was what bothered the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh too – but that the Torah set the Halacha that they could marry whomever they wanted and that applied to all future generations. The recommendation was to marry from a similar background but that this last point was not a Halacha. **Rav Schachter**  added that the Gemara here notes that the issue was not whether women get Yirusha but rather could they get the Pi Shnayim of Tzelofchad based on the fact that the land was already handed over to them from Avraham Aveinu (Was Eretz Yisrael Raui or Muchzak).

**לַטּ֥וֹב בְּעֵֽינֵיהֶ֖ם תִּֽהְיֶ֣ינָה לְנָשִׁ֑ים To the best in their eyes they shall marry (36:6)** – Why is the word L’Eineihem written in masculine? **Rav Sorotzkin**  suggests that when it comes to a good shidduch goodness of fit is important too. It is not only ok for people to marry based on their own emotions, knowing what the family would say helps guarantee long term marital bliss.

ו**ְכָל־בַּ֞ת יֹרֶ֣שֶׁת נַֽחֲלָ֗ה And all women inheriting land should marry within her father’s tribe (36:8) – Ramban** notes that it was a Horaas Shaah not to marry anyone out of the Shevet until the 15th of Av of the 14 year after kibbush. Once the division of the land was achieved, it was not necessary to worry about the land moving from one Shevet to the next. The Gemara notes that the Bnos Tzlofchad WERE allowed to marry whomever they want. That’s why we find the words “Zeh HaDavar” only by Bnos Tzlofchad as opposed to the other women. **Rav Hershel Schachter**  added that in general, it is a good idea to marry L’Tov B’Eineiheim – this is a good idea L’Doros.

**HAFTARAH:**

**וַיֵּֽלְכ֛וּ אַֽחֲרֵ֥י הַהֶ֖בֶל וַיֶּהְבָּֽלוּ They followed that which is nill and engaged in it (Yirmiyahu 2:5)** - Why the double language? **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi**  explained that there is a double lesson here. The first is that when you follow nothingness, you become a nothing. The second point is that it is not because we DO nothing that we BECOME nothing. Rather, in Shomayim they will hold us accountable for the fact that we were endowed with a heavenly piece and we wasted it on nothing. When we waste potential on nothingness, we ae liable for the wasted result not only for the way and time we wasted.

**וְתֹֽפְשֵׂ֚י הַתּוֹרָה֙ לֹ֣א יְדָע֔וּנִי The bearers of the Law have not known Me (Yirmiyahu 2:8) – The Targum Yonasan** explains that this means that the teachers of Torah never bothered to teach Yiras Shomayim. **The Alter of Kelm** used this to explain the idea that Torah without Musar and Yirat Shomayim instruction is a disaster. It is the undoing of the teachers of the time. Dry Torah knowledge without the opportunity to know Hashem does not bring about Torah commitment. The requirement is to get the proper mix of Torah and Yiras Shomayim.

**וְתֹֽפְשֵׂ֚י הַתּוֹרָה֙ לֹ֣א יְדָע֔וּנִי The educators knew me not (Yirmiyahu 2:8**) - The language used to identify the educators -- Tofsei HaTorah -- needs explanation. What does Tofsei Hatorah have to do with educators? **Dr. Scott Goldberg** notes that teachers who function in a spoils of education approach where the creative process is stifled cause the students to not find Hashem in their studies. Citing **Rav Wolbe** , Dr. Goldberg suggests that ideal learning begins first, where one needs to have the creativity in personalizing their learning and then to make sure that these thoughts are  consistent with our derech by studying and checking with our Rebbeim and Meforshim. That way we all develop a means of Knowing Hashem.

**- הַכֹּֽהֲנִ֗ים לֹ֚א אָֽמְרוּ֙ אַיֵּ֣ה The Priests did not say “Where is Hashem?” (Yirmiyahu 2:8)** – Yirmiyahu rebukes the generally lax attitude toward Avairah allowed by the Jewish leadership. He begins with the Kohanim because, **as Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau**  explains, the education responsibility for the people begins with them. In the end of the Bayis Rishon period, the Kohanim merely focused on their roles as Ovdim in the Beis HaMikdash. Allow me to suggest that this is a follow up to the story of Ir Miklat in the parsha wherein the freedom of the Rotzeiach is dependent upon the death of the Kohein Gadol who never turns his back on any of the members of Am Yisrael.

**כי שתים רעות עשה עמי For my nation did 2 bad things to me – they left ME, the source of life giving water (Yirmiyahu 2:13) – The Alshich** explains what the 2 evils were. He notes that when one cuts off the source of water – not only do we lose the water there and in the water system served by it, we also look for other systems to replace the lost water which eventually turn out to be ineffective and run out too. Similarly, leaving Hashem and then replacing His effect on our need for spiritual purpose with foreign elements were indeed 2 separate issues – leaving a path that was positive and fulfilling and replacing it with a path that is underwhelming, wasteful and limited. This is what Yirmiyahu later refers to as the double sin that needs the double Nechama which we speak about when we say Nachamu, Nachamu Ami.

**הַעֶ֙בֶד֙ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל אִם־יְלִ֥יד בַּ֖יִת ה֑וּא  Is the Yisrael a slave? (Yirmiyahu 2:14) – Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky**  explains that a slave, no matter how human is not at the same kedusha status as a Yisrael. Hence when a person is an Eved and marries a Shifcha which is the right of the Adon when he is sold by Beis Din, it is a terrible situation when he sells himself. For in those moments, he is removing the Kedushas Yisrael from his offspring. The same is true for the Jewish nation? Are we Avadim who do not see our Kedusha value? How do we allow ourselves to be debased?

**כִּ֚י אִם־תְּכַבְּסִי֙ בַּנֶּ֔תֶר** No matter how much lye & soap you wash yourself with, your sin is sealed (Yirmiyahu 2:22) – In the 4th Perek Yirmiyahu encourages the washing. How does he encourage cleaning if it is futile? The **Talmud in Rosh Hashana** explains that there is a difference between surface cleaning which is limited and described in the Haftorah and the cleansing of the heart that can effect a Teshuva even when things are deeper. **Rabbi Allen Schwartz** reminds us that Yirmiyahu’s goal in his Sefer and prophesy was to get the people ready for the Geulah at the end of the 70 years. But it is up to the people to see the word of Hashem the way it is meant to be seen.