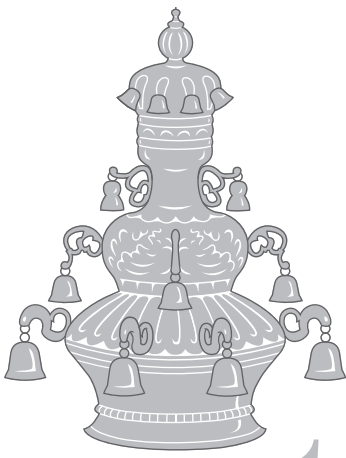




THE  
TORAH

חומש

במדבר

∞  
TORAH

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

## *Parshat Matot*

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based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
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*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEMIDBAR**

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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TORAH

# חומש במדבר

# THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*  
וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

*Parshat Matot*



**Kehot Publication Society**  
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## GENESIS

Bereishit  
Noach  
Lech Lecha  
Vayeira  
Chayei Sarah  
Toldot  
Vayeitzei  
Vayishlach  
Vayeishev  
Mikeitz  
Vayigash  
Vayechi

## EXODUS

Shemot  
Vaeira  
Bo  
Beshalach  
Yitro  
Mishpatim  
Terumah  
Tetzaveh  
Tisa  
Vayakheil  
Pekudei

## LEVITICUS

Vayikra  
Tzav  
Shemini  
Tazria  
Metzora  
Acharei Mot  
Kedoshim  
Emor  
Behar  
Bechukotai

## NUMBERS

Bemidbar  
Naso  
Beha'alotecha  
Shelach  
Korach  
Chukat  
Balak  
Pinchas

# Matot 42 מטות

Masei

## DEUTERONOMY

Devarim  
Va'etchanan  
Eikev  
Re'eh  
Shoftim  
Teitzei  
Tavo  
Netzavim  
Vayeilech  
Ha'azinu  
Vezot Habrachah



# מַטּוֹת Matot

## Overview

*Parashat Matot* covers three main subjects: the laws of vows and oaths, the war against Midian, and the settlement of the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

The second and third of these three fit well into the historical flow of the Torah. The war against Midian is the third and final act in the drama of Israel's confrontation with the Moab-Midian alliance whose story began in *parashat Balak*. The settlement of the two tribes of Reuben and Gad is the next phase of the conquest of the Land of Israel, begun at the end of *parashat Chukat* and continuing through the Book of Joshua and beyond.

What, then, of the laws of vows and oaths? Like the other legal passages of the Torah, we would expect to find these laws in Exodus or Leviticus. So why are they in fact here? It must be that these laws have a particular relevance to the subject of conquering and settling the Land of Israel. This will be clear when we review the events that preceded this *parashah* and which lead into it, as follows.

As we explained previously, the Jewish people's slide into the idolatry of *Pe'or* and their harlotry with the Moabite-Midianite women actually began as a misunderstanding of the way they were meant to be involved in the physical world. They knew that their parents' generation had been sentenced to live in the desert for forty years (after the incident of the spies) because they had shunned the challenges of such involvement. Standing at the threshold of the Promised Land, they were poised to accept this challenge and had resolved not to repeat their parents' errors; they were ready to attack the materiality of the physical world and infuse it with God-consciousness.

However, their impetuous enthusiasm led them to err, and they overlooked the need to be cautious. As Eve had done with the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they fell into the trap of overestimating their holiness and thinking that their sublime spiritual consciousness and zeal made them invincible and immune to the machinations of evil. They knew that the purpose of life is to make all of reality into a home for God, and they had learned from Jethro's conversion and Balaam's prophecies that in order for this to happen, even the lowest, most anti-holy elements of reality must be elevated into holiness. Thus, they reasoned that they, too, must experience these dangerous but powerful energies of lust and unholy spirituality—in order, of course, to elevate them back to their source in holiness.

But of course, they were wrong. If one is to throw caution to the wind and risk everything, it should be in the opposite direction, to *combat* evil, as Pinchas graphically demonstrated.

Although we should not shun the challenge of engaging the materiality of this world directly, we must be duly aware of its potential to divert us and corrupt our intentions. Hence the pertinence of the laws of vows and oaths: through these laws a person can set up boundaries for himself where he feels they are needed, as we will explain further on.

The next subject of this *parashah*, the war with Midian, can now be seen as a logical follow-through from the laws of vows and oaths. Those laws are the spiritual correction of the error of *Pe'or*, and the battle with Midian is the effort to uproot the source of this error.

The settlement of the tribes of Reuben and Gad is also a development of the same theme. These tribes wished to settle in the territory that Moses had conquered from Sichon and Og, on the east side of the Jordan River. God did not intend the Jews to settle this land at this point in history. These tribes reasoned, however, that the holiness of the Land of Israel proper was greater than the land outside its boundaries; therefore, it was crucial to elevate the unholy land as well. Their argument was therefore a variation on the same theme as before. As we shall see, however, this time they were partially right, and their understanding is an important lesson for us regarding our relationship to the physical world.

All three subjects of *parashat Matot*, then, are relevant to the impending entry into the Land of Israel. On the personal level as well, they are relevant to each of us individually in our encounter with the material world and to our generation collectively, standing as we are on the threshold of the messianic Redemption.

This explains how the name of the *parashah*, *Matot*, can be justifiably used as the name for the entire *parashah*. The word itself means “tribes,” but there are two words used in the Torah for “tribe,” the other one being *shevet*. Interestingly, both synonyms for “tribe” are also synonyms for “tree branch.” Just as branches stem from a tree trunk, a “tribe” is a branch or division of the people rooted in its common ancestor (in this case, Jacob).

The difference between the two synonyms is that while *shevet* refers to a soft, pliable twig, *mateh* (the singular of *matot*) refers to a hard stick. The *shevet* owes its pliability to the fact that it is freshly cut from the tree (or even still connected to it), in contrast to the *mateh*, which has long been severed from the tree and has therefore lost its elasticity. Thus, *shevet* refers to the Jewish tribe (or individual Jew) when it is consciously connected to its source, whereas *mateh* refers to the same tribe (or individual Jew) when it is not so consciously connected.

Spiritually, *shevet* can be considered to refer to the soul before it descended into the body, when it was fully conscious of Divinity and its own connection to its source. *Mateh* would then refer to the soul as it has entered the body and lost this conscious connection—at least temporarily—and been charged with elevating the body and the portion of reality under its purview. In such a state, we must evince the inflexibility of a hardened stick in our devotion to principles and resistance to evil. If successful, we can face the challenges of life confidently and proceed to fulfill our purpose on earth and make reality into the home for God it was intended to be.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Based on *Reshimot* 51 and *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 382, vol. 28, p. 281, etc.

— ONKELOS —

30:2 ומליל משה עם רישי  
שבטיא לבני ישראל למימר דין  
פתגמא די פקיד יי: 3 גבר ארי דר  
נדר קדם יי או קנים קנים למיסר  
אסר על נפשה לא יבטל פתגמה  
בכל דיפוק מפמה יעבד:

2 וידבר משה אל־ראשי המפות לבני ישראל לאמר  
זה הדבר אשר צוה יהוה: 3 איש כי ידר נדר ליהוה  
אזהשבע שבועה לאסור אסר על־נפשו לא יחל דברו  
בכל־היצא מפיו יעשה:

— RASHI —

הל'לה", והנביאים נתנבאו ב"כה אמר ה'", מוסף  
עליהם משה שנתנבא בלשון "זה הדבר". דבר אחר:  
"זה הדבר", מעוט הוא, לומר שהחכם בלשון "התרה"  
ובעל בלשון "הפדה" בלשון הכתוב כאן, ואם חלפו  
— אין מתר ואין מופר: 3 נדר. האומר: הרי עלי קונם  
שלא אוכל או שלא אעשה דבר פלוני. יכול, אפלו  
נשבע שיאכל גבלות, אני קורא עליו: "בכל היוצא  
מפיו יעשה" תלמוד לומר: "לאסור אסר" — לאסור את  
המתר, ולא להתיר את האסור: לא יחל דברו. כמו "לא  
יחל דברו" — לא יעשה דבריו חלין:

2 ראשי המפות. חלק כבוד לנשיאים ללמדם תחלה,  
ואחר כך לכל בני ישראל. ומניין שאף שאר הדברות כן?  
תלמוד לומר: "וישבו אליו אהרן וכל הנשאים בעדה  
וידבר משה אליהם, ואחרי כן נגשו כל בני ישראל".  
ומה ראה לאמרה כאן? למד שהפרת נדרים ביחיד  
ממחה, ואם אין יחיד ממחה — מפר בשלשה הדיוטות.  
או יכול, שלא אמר משה פרשה זו אלא לנשיאים  
בלבד? נאמר כאן: "זה הדבר", ונאמר בשחוט חוץ:  
"זה הדבר", מה להלן נאמרה לאהרן ולבניו ולכל בני  
ישראל, שנאמר: "דבר אל אהרן וגו'", אף זו נאמרה  
לכלן: זה הדבר. משה נתנבא ב"כה אמר ה'" כחצת

1. שמות לד, לא־לב. 2. ויקרא יז, ב. 3. שמות יא, ד.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

But when a person sees that a particular indulgence affects him negatively, he should at least temporarily renounce it. If he feels incapable of resisting the urge to overindulge, he can make a formal vow, which forbids the indulgence to him just as if it had been forbidden by the Torah. Thus, the sages say, "vows foster abstinence."<sup>10</sup> If, on the other hand, he feels that he is capable of controlling himself, it is better to abstain from the indulgence without the formality of a vow. Regarding this, the sages say, "sanctify yourself with that which is permitted to you."<sup>11</sup> In either case, every individual must be honest with himself about which aspects of life he is ready to elevate and which he is not, and what lengths he must go to in order to curb his appetites.<sup>12</sup> By guarding himself from things that would be detrimental to his Divine consciousness, a person both weakens materialism's power over him and increases the power of holiness within him. This, too, gives him more power to resist evil.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, the Torah states that there are specific individuals who can annul vows that others make. This means, in effect, that such individuals are able to grant someone who, on his own, might not be ready to tackle a certain aspect of reality, the ability to do so. Certainly, this is the preferred approach, inasmuch as it both elevates the spiritual stature of the individual and enables him to elevate the spiritual level of a greater part of his environment.

This further explains why the laws of vows and oaths were taught now, as the Jewish people were preparing to enter the Land of Israel. The purpose of their entry, we know, was to make the physical world a home for God. This they were to do by engaging in the physical work of occupying and working the land and, in general, earning a living and sustaining themselves from the earth's raw materials—all for holy purposes and with holy intentions. Thus, although a person's involvement with physicality may on occasion require him to swear off some aspect of it, he must always remember that the purpose of his life is ideally accomplished by annulling such vows and partaking of life's bounties in holiness.<sup>14</sup>

**If a man makes a vow:** If a person consecrates fruit as a sacrifice for the Temple, even though fruit cannot be used for such a purpose, it becomes holy and it is forbidden to eat it. This is because he can indeed sanctify an animal for sacrificial purposes and cause it to be forbidden for other mundane uses.<sup>15</sup> The power to consecrate extends beyond the realm of its fundamental sphere of influence.

This teaches us the magnificent power of speech. We are empowered to transform the mundane into the holy, to elevate a simple beast into a sacrifice simply by stating such an intention. Certainly, we must then be careful to use this gift only for the loftiest and most desirable ends.<sup>16</sup>

10. Avot 3:13. 11. Yevamot 20a; Sifrei, Reeh 14:21 (104); see Tanya, ch. 30 (39a) and 27 (34b), where it is stated that this injunction is rooted in the written Torah; Nachmanides on Leviticus 19:2. 12. Likutei Torah 3:83b, 84b; Reshimot 51; Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, pp. 186 ff. 13. Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, p. 1077. 14. Likutei Sichot, vol. 13, pp. 108-109, vol. 33, p. 197. 15. Mishneh Torah, Nedarim 1:7. 16. Address of Shabbat Matot-Masei, 5748.



## Vows and Oaths

**30:2** Having mentioned vows in the preceding laws<sup>1</sup>—those of the additional festival offerings—Moses now elaborates on the laws of vows.<sup>2</sup> As has been seen,<sup>3</sup> when Moses taught the people a lesson in the Torah, he taught it first to Aaron, then to Aaron's sons, then to the princes, then to the rest of the people, and so on. In the following section—the laws of vows and oaths and the laws of their annulment—the Torah highlights the princes' distinction over the rest of the people in order to imply that when it is necessary to release an individual from a vow he has taken, it should preferably be done by a single person of distinction, i.e., an expert sage, and only when this is not possible should release be carried out by three non-experts.<sup>4</sup> **Moses spoke to the princes, the heads of the tribes of the Israelites, as a unit, in the course of teaching the rest of the people, saying, "This is the thing God has commanded:**

**3** A minor's vows are not legally binding. **If an adult man, over 12 years old,<sup>5</sup> makes a vow to God or makes an oath to prohibit himself from doing something otherwise permitted to him, he shall not profane his word; rather, he shall fulfill whatever he said.**<sup>6</sup> A *vow* is a declaration of intent with regard to a specific *object*, whereas an *oath* is a declaration of intent with regard to *oneself*. In either case, a person may not break his vows or oaths. However, if an expert sage or a tribunal of three non-experts deems it necessary, he or they can declare the vow to be retroactively void;<sup>7</sup> this is called *releasing* the vow.

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### — CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

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**3 If a man makes a vow:** By taking a vow, a person forbids himself from some activity that the Torah otherwise permits. In a sense, then, these laws can be seen as a continuation of the lesson of Pinchas: that there are times and exigencies that dictate going beyond the prescriptions and proscriptions of the Torah. What are these circumstances?

In general, the Torah divides all we can do in this world into three categories: what we *must* do, what we *may* do, and what we *must not* do. The things we *must* do are essential for our fulfillment of our role as bearers of God's message on earth. The things we *may* do are not essential but can, if used properly, enhance our spiritual lives and the fulfillment of our purpose. The things we *must not* do are detrimental to our purposes. Under normal circumstances, these aspects of reality cannot be elevated to Divine consciousness by our efforts.

The middle ground is obviously the most fluid. As mentioned, things that fall into this category can become positive forces in life if we use them with the proper intentions. To do so, however, a person has to possess sufficient spiritual fortitude not to be sucked into the sensuality of the material experi-

ence and thereby lose his Divine orientation.

On a collective scale, the ability of the Jewish people to elevate certain aspects of this neutral ground has fluctuated throughout history. When the Temple stood, for example, the revelation of the Divine presence in its precincts imbued even the common folk with a certain amount of holiness that was lacking in subsequent eras. This is the reason behind the various rabbinic decrees and prohibitions that have been added to Jewish observance over time. Most of these originated after the loss of the holy Temple.

Similarly, every individual goes through periods in his life when he is more or less fit to indulge in this or that material pleasure. In general, if a person can indulge in a pleasure that God has put in this world for our enjoyment without compromising his Divine consciousness, he is encouraged to do so. "In the future, every person will be called to account for the pleasures that he encountered but did not partake of,"<sup>8</sup> the sages said. And of a person who took too many vows, they said, "Is that which the Torah has forbidden not enough for you, that you must seek to prohibit yourself from other things as well?"<sup>9</sup>

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1. Above, 29:39. 2. Rashi on 30:1; Rashbam on 30:2. 3. Exodus 34:31 ff. 4. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 191. 5. Normally, men become legal adults at the age of 13 and women at the age of 12. With respect to vows and oaths, however, the year before this point (after a man's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday and a woman's 11<sup>th</sup>) is an intermediary period between minority and majority: if they understand the concept of God enough to know to whom they are vowing or swearing, their words are legally binding, and if not, not. 6. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 105, note 6. 7. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 189. 8. *Y. Kidushin* 4:12. 9. *Y. Nedarim* 9:5.

## ONKELOS

4 ואתתא ארי תדר נדר קדם  
 5 ותיסר אסר בבית אבוקא  
 6 וישמע אבוקא ית  
 נדרה ואסרה די אסרת על נפשה  
 וישתוק לה אבוקא ויקומון כל  
 נדרהא וכל אסרי די אסרת על  
 נפשה יקומון: 6 ואם אעדי אבוקא  
 יתה ביומא דשמע כל נדרהא  
 ואסרהא די אסרת על נפשה לא  
 יקומון ומן קדם יי ישתבק לה ארי  
 אעדי אבוקא יתה:

4 וְאִשָּׁה כִּי־תִדְרֹךְ נָדָר לַיהוָה וְאָסְרָה אֶסֶר בְּבֵית אָבִיהָ  
 בְּנִעְרֶיהָ: 5 וְשָׁמַע אָבִיהָ אֶת־נִדְרָהּ וְאָסְרָה אֲשֶׁר אָסְרָה  
 עַל־נַפְשָׁהּ וְהַחֲרִישׁ לָהּ אָבִיהָ וְקָמוּ כָל־נִדְרֶיהָ וְכָל־אֶסֶר  
 אֲשֶׁר־אָסְרָה עַל־נַפְשָׁהּ יָקוּם: 6 וְאִם־הִנִּיא אָבִיהָ אֶת־הָ  
 בֵּיּוֹם שָׁמַעוֹ כָּל־נִדְרֶיהָ וְאָסְרָהּ אֲשֶׁר־אָסְרָה עַל־נַפְשָׁהּ  
 לֹא יָקוּם וַיהוָה יִסְלַח־לָהּ כִּי־הִנִּיא אָבִיהָ אֶת־הָ:

## RASHI

אִשָּׁה יְנִיא אוֹתָהּ וְהִפֵּר, הוּא אוֹמֵר: "הִנָּאֵה" זוֹ הַפֶּהָ.  
 וּפְשׁוּטוֹ: לְשׁוֹן מְנִיעָה וְהִסְרָה, וְכֵן: "לְמָה תְּנִיאֵנוּךְ", וְכֵן:  
 "שָׁמַע רֹאשׁ אֶל יְנֵי רֹאשִׁי", וְכֵן: "יִדְעֶתֶם אֶת תְּנוּאֲתֵינוּ"  
 — אֶת אֲשֶׁר סָרְתָם מֵעָלַי: וְהָ יִסְלַח לָהּ. בְּמָה הַכְּתוּב  
 מְדַבֵּר? בְּאִשָּׁה שֶׁנִּדְרָה בְּנוֹי וְשָׁמַע בְּעָלֶיהָ וְהִפֵּר לָהּ,  
 וְהִיא לֹא יָדְעָה וְעוֹבְרָת עַל נִדְרָהּ וְשׁוֹתָה יַיִן וּמְשַׁמָּאָה  
 לְמֵתִים, זוֹ הִיא שְׁצִרְיָהּ סְלִיחָה, וְאֵף עַל פִּי שְׁהוּא  
 מוֹפֵר. וְאִם הַמוֹפְרִים צְרִיכִים סְלִיחָה, קֵל וְחֹמֶר לְשִׁאֲרֵי  
 מוֹפְרִים:

4 בְּבֵית אָבִיהָ. בְּרִשׁוֹת אָבִיהָ, וְאֶפְלוּ אֵינָה בְּבֵיתוֹ:  
 בְּנִעְרֶיהָ. וְלֹא קִטְנָה וְלֹא בּוֹגֶרֶת, שֶׁהַקְטָנָה אֵין נִדְרָה  
 נָדָר, וְהַבּוֹגֶרֶת אֵינָה בְּרִשׁוֹתוֹ שֶׁל אָבִיהָ לְהִפֵּר נִדְרֶיהָ.  
 וְאֵי זוֹ הִיא קִטְנָה? אָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ: בֵּת אֶחָד עָשָׂה שָׁנָה  
 יוֹם אֶחָד נִדְרֶיהָ נִבְדָּקִין, אִם יָדְעָה לִשְׁם מִי נִדְרָה וּלְשֵׁם  
 מִי הִקְדִּישָׁה — נִדְרָה נָדָר. בֵּת שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂה שָׁנָה יוֹם  
 אֶחָד, אֵינָה צְרִיכָה לְהִבְדֵּק: 6 וְאִם הִנִּיא אָבִיהָ אֶת־הָ.  
 אִם מֵנַע אוֹתָהּ מִן הַנָּדָר, כְּלוֹמֵר שֶׁהִפֵּר לָהּ. "הִנָּאֵה"  
 זוֹ אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ מָה הִיא, כְּשֶׁהוּא אוֹמֵר: "וְאִם בֵּיּוֹם שָׁמַע

4. נדה מה, ב. 5. במדבר לב, ו. 6. תהלים קמא, ה. 7. במדבר יד, לד.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

can annul vows his wife makes *after* her marriage. A fiancé, since he acts together with the father, can annul vows his fiancée made *before* her betrothal, i.e., even before he established any connection with her. Thus, in this sense, a man possesses greater power over his wife's vows when he is only her fiancé than he will when he becomes her husband.

Allegorically, the relationship between God and the Jewish people is analogous to that of a married couple. Exile is similar to the state of betrothal: the relationship has been established, but it will only be consummated with marriage, the Redemption. This idea applies to each Jew's own personal relationship with God. When his consciousness of God is full and consummate, he is in a state of redemption, and is "married." When his Divine consciousness is suspended or latent, he is in exile, and is only "betrothed." Since he is "betrothed" to God, he has indeed renounced all other "relationships," and the world's various diversions have no sway over him. But he can produce no "offspring" — truly good deeds, which increase Divine consciousness in reality — until he is "married."

Still, there is an advantage to the state of "betrothal." A fiancé knows that he cannot annul his fiancée's vows on his own; he needs the help of the father in

order to do this. He is thus protected from falling into the trap of self-reliance and egocentricity. Similarly, one who knows that he has not yet consummately united with God knows that he still needs His help in elevating the world's materiality. He is spared the feeling of self-reliance that endangers someone who has achieved full Divine consciousness.

Furthermore, thanks to his reliance on the father, the fiancé can annul vows made prior to the betrothal. Allegorically, this means that when a Jew relies on and elicits God (the Father)'s help, he can overcome his relationship with materialism, his connection to the world before his "betrothal." Since materialism is ingrained into the reality of our world and we are naturally entrenched in it, it is virtually impossible for an individual to free himself of its shackles on his own.

The ideal then, is to preserve the feeling of being only "betrothed" to God even after having become "married." This is made possible by remembering that since God is infinite, there are infinite levels of relationship to be attained with Him, and therefore, every consummation of consciousness becomes a state of "betrothal" relative to the higher state of consummation to come.<sup>21</sup>

21. Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, pp. 612 ff.

**4 If a woman makes a vow to God or imposes a prohibition** upon herself by means of an oath when she is under 11 years old, she is a minor and her vows are not legally binding. If she makes a vow or oath when she is over twelve-and-a-half years old<sup>17</sup> and also unmarried, she is a free agent and her vows are legally binding the same as any other adult's. However, if she is both **in her father's house**, i.e., she is still unmarried and therefore under his sole jurisdiction, and she is also **in her youth**, that is, between the ages of eleven<sup>5</sup> and twelve-and-a-half, then these special laws apply to her:

**5 If her father heard her vow or her prohibition that she imposed upon herself** by taking an oath, and **yet her father remains silent** and thus confirms her vow or oath, **all her vows** in such cases **shall be binding**, and also **any prohibition that she has imposed upon herself** in such cases **shall be binding**.

**6 But if her father hinders her on the day he hears this vow or oath by annulling it**, declaring it null and void, **all her vows and her prohibitions that she has imposed upon herself** and he has so annulled **shall not be binding**. **God will forgive her** if, before becoming aware that her father annulled her vow or oath, she transgressed it, **because her father already hindered her**, preventing the vow or oath from taking force.

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❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

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**He shall not violate his word:** The word for "violate" in Hebrew (*yachel*) comes from the word for "profane" or "unholy" (*chol*). The inner meaning of this verse is therefore that a person should not make his word "profane"; even our most mundane matters should also be imbued with holy intentions and be consistent with the greater purpose of Creation, making a home for God in this world.<sup>18</sup>

**4 If a woman makes a vow :** The following individuals can annul a woman's vows:

- A father can annul his daughter's vows as long as she is not married;
- a betrothed woman's fiancé and father can together annul her vows; and
- a husband can annul his wife's vows.

The man in question can annul his daughter's/fiancé's/wife's vows if they are in some way detrimental to her (or in the case of the fiancé/husband, detrimental to their relationship), and his annulment actually contravenes the force of her vow, thereby canceling it.

In addition, a sage or rabbinical court can invalidate any individual's vows if his vow is proving more of a hindrance than a help in his life and/or relationship with God. In this case, however, the sage or court do not have the legal authority to *annul* the vow;<sup>19</sup> they rather interrogate the individual and

determine whether he would have made the vow had he known it would lead to the present consequences. If the answer is "no," it is established that the vow was made under false pretenses and is therefore retroactively void.

The annulment of the father/fiancé/ husband is analogous to the case in which a person has made a formal vow but is ready to progress to the point where he no longer needs it, since he can restrain himself on his own. Such an individual still needs to abstain from worldly pleasures in some way, but he is ready—with the proper inspiration—to do so without the legal crutch of the vow.

The invalidation of the vow by the sage or court is analogous to the case in which a person is successfully restraining himself on his own but is now ready to ascend to the maturity of consciousness in which the material world poses no threat to his Divine orientation. He can partake of the world's pleasures in a Godly way. The sage or court, in this case, simply has to reveal the latent, inner Divinity of the individual's soul; this releases him from his need for abstinence. In fact, it becomes retroactively evident that, had he manifested this level of consciousness all along, there would have been no need for abstinence to begin with.<sup>20</sup>

**If a woman makes a vow:** A father can annul vows his daughter makes *before* her marriage. A husband

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17. Although a woman normally becomes a legal adult at the age of 12, in some cases (such as this) she is considered to be in an intermediate stage of maturity between the ages of twelve and twelve-and-a-half. This stage is called "youth" (*na'arut*). 18. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 108. 19. The Torah text itself does imply that the sage and the court possess such authority, but according to the legal tradition given with the text, they do not (*Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 189). 20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, pp. 191-192.

ONKELOS

7 ואם יהיו תהיה לאיש ונדרה עליה או מבטא שפתייה  
אשר אסרה על-נפשה: 8 ושמע אישה ביום שמעו  
והחריש לה וקמו נדריה ואסרה אשר-אסרה על-  
נפשה יקמו: 9 ואם ביום שמע אישה יניא אותה והפר  
את-נדרה אשר עליה ואת מבטא שפתייה אשר אסרה  
על-נפשה ויהוה יסלח-לה: 10 ונדר אלמנה וגרושה כל  
אשר-אסרה על-נפשה יקום עליה: 11 ואם-בית אישה  
נדרה או-אסרה אסר על-נפשה בשבעה: 12 ושמע  
אישה והחרש לה לא הניא אותה וקמו כל-נדריה וכל-  
אסר אשר-אסרה על-נפשה יקום: 13 ואם-הפר יפר  
אתם | אישה ביום שמעו כל-מוצא שפתייה לנדרה  
ולאסר נפשה לא יקום אישה הפרם ויהוה יסלח-לה:  
14 כל-נדר וכל-שבעת אסר לענת נפש אישה יקימנו  
ואישה יפרנו: 15 ואם-החרש יחריש לה אישה מיום  
אליום והקים את-כל-נדריה או את-כל-אסריה אשר  
עליה יקים אתם כי-החרש לה ביום שמעו:

RASHI

על נפשה יקום עליה. לפי שאינה לא ברשות אב ולא  
ברשות בעל. ובאלמנה מן הנשואין הכתוב מדבר,  
אבל אלמנה מן הארוסין — מת הבעל, הנרוקנה  
והזרה לרשות האב: 11 ואם בית אישה נדרה. בנשואה  
הכתוב מדבר: 14 כל נדר וכל שבעת אסר וגו'. לפי  
שאמר שהבעל מפר, וכול כל נדרים במשמע? תלמוד  
לומר: "לענת נפש" — אינו מפר אלא נדרי ענוי נפש  
בלבד. והם מפרשים במסכת נדרים: 15 מיום אל יום.  
שלא תאמר מעת לעת, לכה "מיום אל יום" — ללמדך  
שאין מפר אלא עד שתחשך:

7 ואם יהיו תהיה לאיש. זו ארוסה. או אינו אלא  
נשואה? כשהוא אומר: "ואם בית אישה נדרה", הרי  
נשואה אמור, וכאן בארוסה. ובא לחלק בה — שאביה  
ובעלה מפירין נדריה, הפר האב ולא הפר הבעל, או  
הפר הבעל ולא הפר האב, הרי זה אינו מופר, ואין  
צריך לומר, אם קים אחד מהם: ונדרה עליה. שנדרה  
בבית אביה, ולא שמע בהן אביה, ולא הופרו ולא  
הוקמו: 8 ושמע אישה וגו'. הרי לה שאם קים הבעל,  
שהוא קים: 9 והפר את נדרה אשר עליה. יכול אפלו  
לא הפר האב? תלמוד לומר: "בנעריה בית אביה" —  
כל שבנעריה ברשות אביה היא: 10 כל אשר אסרה

8. עט, נ.

their relationship.

15 Regarding the period in which the husband may annul such vows or oaths, if her husband remains silent from the time he heard about them on one day until the beginning of the next day, that is, until nightfall after he heard about them, he has by virtue of remaining silent upheld all the vows and prohibitions she has assumed; he has upheld them since he remained silent on the day he heard it.

**7** If, between the ages of eleven and twelve-and-a-half, **she** becomes betrothed to a man while **her vows are in force, or** the oaths she made **by an utterance of her lips** and **that she** thereby **imposed upon herself** are in force, her father having neither annulled them nor confirmed them,

**8** and her fiancé hears about them **but remains silent on the day he hears** about them, **her vows shall remain binding and her prohibition that she has imposed upon herself** by taking an oath **shall remain binding**. By remaining silent, her fiancé has confirmed them.

**9** But if her fiancé, together with her father, **hinders her on the day he hears it, he** thereby **annuls the vow she had taken upon herself and the utterance that she had imposed upon herself** by taking an oath, and **God will forgive her** if she transgresses it unaware that it has been annulled.

**10** If the engagement is broken off while the woman is still in this age range, she returns to the jurisdiction of her father and the laws governing a single girl of this age apply to her. But **as for the vow or oath of a woman who did marry her fiancé but became a widow or a divorcé while still in this age range, whatever she prohibited upon herself will remain binding upon her**. Once she has been fully married, her father no longer has any jurisdiction over her, even if she subsequently becomes widowed or divorced.

**11** If the woman married her fiancé and **she vowed in her husband's house**, that is, while under his jurisdiction, regardless of her age, **or imposed a prohibition upon herself with an oath,**

**12** and her husband heard and remained silent, and did not hinder her, **all her vows shall be binding and every prohibition she imposed upon herself shall be binding**. By remaining silent, he has implicitly confirmed her vow or oath.

**13** If, on the other hand, **her husband annuls them on the day he hears them, anything issuing from her lips regarding her vows or self-imposed prohibitions shall not be binding; her husband has annulled them and God shall forgive her** if, unaware that he has annulled them, she transgresses them.

**14** Her husband does not have control over *all* her vows and oaths; he **can either uphold or annul only any vow or any binding oath of self-affliction** that affects

#### ❧ A CLOSER LOOK ❧

**[7] If she becomes betrothed:** The terms “betrothed” [אירוסין, *eirusin*] and “fiancé(e)” [ארוסה, *arus(ah)*] as used here indicate a precise and binding legal status between the man and woman, contracted by specific legal procedures. In Jewish law, “betrothal” is an intermediate state between singlehood and marriage, in which the couple are legally husband and wife but are not yet allowed to live together or cohabit.<sup>22</sup> Betrothal cannot be dissolved simply by consent; if the betrothed couple wish to separate they must

undergo a halachic divorce.<sup>23</sup> In ancient times, it was customary for couples to become betrothed and then married several months (often twelve) later, in order to give the families time to prepare for the wedding.<sup>24</sup> Nowadays, this practice has been largely discontinued, and halachic betrothal takes place as the first part of the marriage ceremony. Thus, when couples today decide to get married, they should never be referred to as being “betrothed” [*arusim*], but only as being “engaged” [*mishtadchim*, etc.].<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 55:1. <sup>23</sup> Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 26:3. <sup>24</sup> See, for example, Genesis 24:55. <sup>25</sup> Igrot Kodesh, vol. 26, p. 140; Sichot Kodesh 5741, vol. 2, pp. 512-513.



## ONKELOS

16 ואם בשלל יבטל יתהון  
 בתר דשמע ויקבל ית חובה:  
 17 אלץ קמץא די פקיד יי ית  
 משה בין גבר לאתתה בין אבא  
 לברתה ברביותהא בית אבוהא:  
 31:1 ומליל יי עם משה למימר:  
 2 אתפרע פרענות בני ישראל  
 מן מדינאי בתר כן תתכנש לעמך:  
 3 ומליל משה עם עמא למימר  
 זריזו מנכון גברין לחילא ויהון על  
 מדון למיהב פרענות דין עמא דיי  
 במדון:

16 ואם-הפר יפר אתם אחרי שמעו ונשא את-עונה:  
 17 אלה החקים אשר צוה יהוה את-משה בין איש  
 לאשתו בין-אב לבתו בנעריה בית אביה: פ  
 שני 31:1 וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: 2 נקם נקמת בני  
 ישראל מאת המדינים אחר תאסף אל-עמך: 3 וידבר  
 משה אל-העם לאמר החלצו מאתכם אנשים לצבא  
 ויהיו על-מדון לתת נקמת-יהוה במדין:

## RASHI

לא להם. דבר אחר: מפני שתי פרידות טובות שיש לי  
 להוציא מהם: רות המואביה ונעמה העמונית: 3 וידבר  
 משה וגו'. אף על פי ששמע שמיתתו תלויה בדבר —  
 עשה בשמחה ולא אחר: החלצו. כתרגומו, לשון חלוצי  
 צבא מזינים: אנשים. צדיקים, וכן: "בחר לנו אנשים"<sup>9</sup>,  
 וכן: "אנשים חכמים וידיעים"<sup>10</sup>. נקמת ה'. שהעומד  
 כנגד ישראל, כאלו עומד כנגד הקדוש ברוך הוא:

16 אחרי שמעו. אחרי ששמע וקים, שאמר: אפשי בו,  
 וחזר והפר לה אפלו בו ביום: ונשא את עונה. הוא נכנס  
 תחתיה. למדנו מכאן, שהגורם תקלה לחברו, הוא  
 נכנס תחתיו לכל ענשין: 2 מאת המדינים. ולא מאת  
 המואבים, שהמואבים נכנסו לדבר מחמת יראה, שהיו  
 יראים מהם שהיו שוללים אותם, שלא נאמר אלא:  
 "ואל תתגר בם מלחמה"<sup>9</sup>, אבל מדינים נתעברו על ריב

9. דברים ב, ט. 10. שמות יז, ט. 11. דברים א, יג.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

**3 The revenge of God against Midian:** The word "Midian" in Hebrew is derived from the word for "strife" or "argument" (*madon*).<sup>29</sup>

This evil of baseless hatred had to be eliminated before we entered the Land of Israel, since baseless hatred is obviously at odds with the harmonious functioning of society that is the prerequisite for attaining *any* national goals, let alone that of promulgating Divinity in the world. Indeed, the Jews succumbed to this evil during the era of the second

Temple and this is what brought about the Temple's destruction and the present exile.<sup>30</sup>

The root of baseless hatred is ego. An egocentric person feels threatened by anyone who opposes (or seems to oppose) his inflated sense of self. Any positive quality evinced by the other person diminishes his own importance, so the egocentric person will desperately seek to delegitimize the other person. Although he may not seek to actively harm him, he will be secretly pleased when the other person

## INNER DIMENSIONS

**[3] The revenge of God against Midian:** The Name of God used in this verse is the Name *Havayah*, indicating that the evil embodied by Midian opposes specifically this Name of God.

The Name *Havayah* (which means "the One who brings into being") alludes to the various forces of God's energy He used and uses to create the world. These creative forces are different and even opposing, but they function harmoniously because they exhibit no self-assertion; they exist only to actualize God's creative will. Thus, the Midianite egocentrism that spawns contention and strife undermines the harmonious function-

ing of the forces God uses to continuously create the world.

This is an additional reason why this war had to be led by Moses. The only way for there to be cooperation and peace between people in this world is when they submit to the higher authority of the Torah. Firstly, without this submission, who is to say whose authority is more legitimate? Secondly, the Torah itself fosters peace, as it is said, "its ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." Since Moses was both the channel through whom God gave the Torah and the personification of selflessness, he had to lead the war against Midian.<sup>31</sup>

29. See Zohar 2:68a; Likutei Torah (Arizal). 30. Yoma 9a. 31. Likutei Torah 3:85d ff, Sefer HaMa'amarim 5659, p. 53 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5747, p. 183 ff.

16 But if he then changes his mind and annuls them, after having heard them and confirmed them by remaining silent until the end of the day or by saying 'I approve,' this shall not be a valid annulment; therefore, he shall bear her iniquity if she transgresses her vow or oath, thinking he has annulled it.

17 These are the rules which God commanded Moses concerning a man and his wife and a father and his daughter, in her youth, while in her father's house. The sage (or tribunal) can release the vow, while the father, husband, or fiancé can annul the vow, but not vice versa."

## The Attack on Midian

◆ **Second Reading 31:1** The Torah now returns to the historical narrative, continuing with the aftermath of the incident at Shitim and the preparations for Moses' death. As was seen above,<sup>26</sup> God told Moses to distress the Midianites and that soon he would have to attack them directly. God now spoke to Moses, saying,

2 "Take revenge for the Israelites against the Midianites. Afterwards, you will die and be gathered to your people."

3 Even though Moses understood that he would die soon after this battle, he nevertheless did not delay to do God's bidding. Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm from among you righteous men for the army, that they can do battle against Midian, and carry out the revenge of God against Midian." God had just described this battle as "the revenge of the *Israelites*," but since whoever is an enemy of the Jewish people is an enemy of God, the two concepts are equivalent.

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### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

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2 **Take revenge for the Israelites:** In the battles against Sichon and Og, Moses played an active role. Here, however, he merely prepared the people for war while Pinchas actually led them in battle.

This is because God commanded the Jewish people to take vengeance against Midian because they enticed them into the idolatry of *Pe'or*.<sup>27</sup> No Midianite territory was captured or annexed to the Land of Israel. As we mentioned previously, the idolatry of *Pe'or* is essentially hedonism: the indulgence in sensual pleasure as an end in itself rather than for the higher purpose of experiencing Divinity or infusing Divinity into reality. This attitude toward life is the antithesis of the lifework of Moses. Hedonism implies that physical pleasures are either too "low" and vulgar to serve Divine purposes or are somehow off-limits for the holy life. Moses, the channel through whom God gave the Torah, championed the truth that Godliness can and must pervade all of reality; it must even dictate our approach to physical pleasures. In fact, if anything, Moses' lifework proclaimed that it is *specifically* in the lowest end of creation that the potential for Divinity is the greatest. He used this argument to wrest the Torah from the angels and expose the error of the spies. Unfor-

tunately, the misconstruction of this appreciation for the lowest rungs of spirituality led to the error of *Pe'or*. In order to wipe out the source of this error, Moses' inspiration and example was necessary.

This theoretical groundwork, which destroys the philosophy of *Pe'or*'s mental stranglehold, is sufficient to prevent a person from falling into the trap in the future. But to "avenge" the evil, i.e., to repair the damage already done and root out any trace of its effect that might surface sometime in the future, more is required than the detached arguments of a philosophical theoretician. The battle itself was therefore led by Pinchas, because Pinchas embodied the ethic and zeal of self-sacrifice. The inspired zeal that makes a person incensed enough to go beyond the letter of the law—and even risk his life—reveals a higher, purer level of motive and consciousness than normal.

Similarly, in our personal confrontation with the deception of *Pe'or*, we need to emulate both Moses and Pinchas. From Moses we learn to cultivate the proper, Jewish attitude toward materialism and its sensuality; from Pinchas we learn to attack its effects on us with righteous indignation.<sup>28</sup>

26. Above, on 25:16-18. 27. Numbers 25:17-18. 28. *Reshimot* 51.

## ONKELOS

4 אֶלְפָּא לִשְׁבֻטָּא אֶלְפָּא לִשְׁבֻטָּא  
לְכָל שְׁבֻטֵּי דְיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּשְׁלַח  
לְחִילָא: 5 וְאַתְבָּחְרוּ מֵאֶלְפֵּי  
דְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלְפָּא לִשְׁבֻטָּא תְּרֵי עֶשֶׂר  
אֲלָפִין מִזֻּרֵי חִילָא: 6 וְשִׁלַּח יִתְהוֹן  
מֹשֶׁה אֶלְפָּא לִשְׁבֻטָּא לְחִילָא  
יִתְהוֹן וְיֵת פִּינְחָס בֶּר אֱלֶעָזָר כְּהֵנָּה  
לְחִילָא וּמִנִּי דְקֹדֶשׁא וְחֻצוֹצֶרֶת  
יִבְתָּא בִידֵה: 7 וְאַתְחִילוּ עַל מִדְיָן  
בְּמָא דִּי פִקִּיד יְיָ יֵת מֹשֶׁה וְקָטְלוּ כָּל  
דְּבוֹרָא:

## RASHI

פינחס משל יוסף? שנאמר: "מבנות פוטאל"<sup>40</sup> — מורע  
יתרו שפטם עגלים לעבודה זרה, ומורע יוסף שפטם  
ביצרו. דבר אחר: שהיה משוח מלחמה: וכלי הקדש.  
זה הארון והציץ. שהיה בלעם עמהם, ומפריח מלכי  
מדן בכשפים והוא עצמו פורח עמהם, הראה להם  
את הציץ שהשם חקוק בו והם נופלים, לכך נאמר: "על  
חלליהם" במלכי מדן, שנופלים על החללים מן האויר,  
וכן בבלעם כתיב: "אל חלליהם" בספר יהושע<sup>41</sup>: בידו.  
ברשותו, וכן: "ויקח את כל ארצו מידו"<sup>42</sup>:

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

more comprehensive perceptions of truth. His lack of concern for his own image will also enable him to bare his shortcomings to another person and seek his guidance, thereby allowing him to solve his problems and progress in his self-refinement.<sup>40</sup>

**Whoever is an enemy of the Jewish people is an enemy of God:** This idea is expressed specifically in the context of the war with Midian because the Midianites in fact attacked both God and the Jewish people. They sought to physically destroy the Jews, and the means they used to try to do this was to entice them into sin, thus attacking God.<sup>41</sup>

**Whoever is an enemy of the Jewish people is an enemy of God:** The vengeance God sought against Midian was in response to the death of thousands of Jews that resulted from the encounter with Midian. These Jews died because the Midianite women enticed them into idol worship and moral transgressions. We see here how much God loves His people: He considers someone who opposes and attacks even transgressors such as these as if he had attacked God Himself.<sup>42</sup>

**4 From all the tribes of Israel:** Unlike other wars, the Levites were conscripted to fight in this one and

4 אֶלְפָּא לִמְטָה אֶלְפָּא לִמְטָה לְכָל מִטּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּשְׁלַח  
לְצָבָא: 5 וַיִּמְסְרוּ מֵאֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלְפָּא לִמְטָה שְׁנַיִם-  
עֶשֶׂר אֶלְפָּא חֲלוּצֵי צָבָא: 6 וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה אֶלְפָּא  
לִמְטָה לְצָבָא אֹתָם וְאֶת-פִּינְחָס בֶּן-אֱלֶעָזָר כְּהֵנָּה לְצָבָא  
וְכָלִי הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְחֻצוֹצֶרֶת הַתְּרוּעָה בְּיָדוֹ: 7 וַיִּצְבְּאוּ עַל-מִדְיָן  
בְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ כָּל-זָכָר:

4 לְכָל מִטּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל. לרבות שבט לוי: וַיִּמְסְרוּ.  
להודיע שכן של רועי ישראל, כמה הם חביבים על  
ישראל: עד שלא שמעו במיתתו, מה הוא אומר: "עוד  
מעט וסלקני"<sup>43</sup>, ומששמעו שמיתת משה תלויה בנקמת  
מדן, לא רצו ללכת עד שנמסרו על כרחן: 6 אֹתָם  
וְאֶת פִּינְחָס. מגיד שהיה פינחס שקול כנגד כלם. ומפני  
מה הלך פינחס ולא הלך אלעזר? אמר הקדוש ברוך  
הוא: "מי שהתחיל במצוה — שהרג קובי בת צור —  
יגמר". דבר אחר: שהלך לנקם נקמת יוסף אבי אמו,  
שנאמר: "והמדנים מכרו אותו"<sup>44</sup>. ומנין שהיתה אמו של

12. שמות יז, ד. 13. בראשית לו, לו. 14. שמות ו, כה. 15. יג, כב. 16. במדבר כא, כו.

took a portion of the booty. This is because the purpose of this war, as we said, was to uproot the idolatry of *Pe'or*, the misuse and abuse of gross materiality. The Levites, consecrated from birth to the service of God, are always in danger of thinking that the proper response to the dangers of materiality is to renounce it altogether. Therefore, it was necessary to engage them in this war in order that they learn to fully appreciate the value of the elements of creation on the lower rungs of spirituality.

The lesson for us here is that the extent to which we dedicate ourselves to spiritual pursuits should not cause us to disparage those "beneath" us. As the sages have instructed us, "Be humble before *all* men."<sup>43</sup> Everything and everyone has some positive aspect for us to value and learn from, no matter how holy we may be or have become.<sup>44</sup>

The Torah goes into great detail about the booty of Midian and its purification in preparation for Jewish use and is quite terse about the details of the battle itself. This, again, is because the purpose of the war with Midian was not to conquer them or their land but to illustrate the proper attitude toward materiality.<sup>45</sup>

40. Likutei Torah 3:85d ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5659, p. 53 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5747, p. 183 ff. 41. Likutei Sichot, vol. 18, pp. 361-362.

42. Sichot Kodesh 5734, vol. 2, p. 323. 43. Avot 4:10. 44. Reshimot 51. 45. Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, pp. 197-198.



4 Moses continued, **“You shall send a thousand of these men from each tribe from all the tribes of Israel—including the tribe of Levi, which normally is exempt from military service—into the army.”**

5 **From the thousands of Israelites, a thousand men were given over for each tribe** against their will, because they understood that fighting this battle would hasten Moses’ death. Even though the Jews harassed Moses continually since the Exodus, they really valued him and tried to forestall losing him. Nonetheless, they reluctantly submitted to God’s will, and there were thus **12,000 armed for battle.**

6 **Moses sent them—the thousand from each tribe—to the army.** Because the excessive plunder from the battles with Sichon and Og had left the Israelites morally lax and susceptible to Balaam’s plot, Moses told them not to take any booty by themselves from this battle.<sup>32</sup> In order to increase their spiritual merits, he sent **them to the army along with Pinchas the son of Eleazar the priest**, for his merit equaled that of the rest of the army. Although Eleazar was the high priest, it was Pinchas who accompanied the army because (a) he had begun the attack on the Midianites when he slew their princess, Kozbi,<sup>33</sup> so it was fitting that he oversee its completion; (b) this was an opportunity for him to take revenge on the Midianites for buying his ancestor,<sup>34</sup> Joseph,<sup>35</sup> as a slave; and (c) he was the priest appointed to exhort the people before battle.<sup>36</sup> Pinchas went out **with the sacred utensils—the ark that always accompanied the Israelites into battle<sup>37</sup> and the high priest’s garments, which the priest appointed to exhort the people before battle wore<sup>38</sup>—and the trumpets for sounding during battle<sup>39</sup> in his possession.**

7 **They mounted an attack against Midian, as God had commanded Moses, and they killed every male** (See Figure 1).

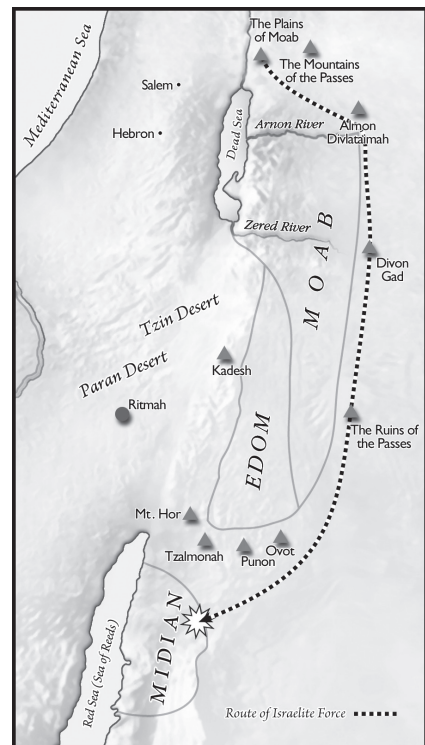


Figure 1: The Battle with Midian

### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

suffers, or at least not be troubled. Furthermore, egocentricity blinds a person to other people’s good qualities; since he is not sincere in his relationship with God and the world, he cannot believe that others are, either.

In contrast, someone who is not plagued with egocentricity will focus only on other people’s good qualities. Their suffering will genuinely trouble

him, since he will judge them favorably and find no justification for their suffering. If he does find some fault with someone else, he will admonish him in accordance with the Torah’s guidelines for doing so, but he will not hate him.

Similarly, rather than viewing differences of opinion as an affront to his selfhood, the selfless person will view them as opportunities to arrive at higher,

32. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 357 ff. 33. Above, 25:6 ff. 34. As was stated above, on 25:10. 35. Genesis 37:36. 36. Deuteronomy 20:1-4. 37. See Exodus 40:21. 38. *Yoma* 73a. 39. Above, 10:9.

ONKELOS

8 וְיֵת מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן הָרְגוּ עַל־חֲלָלֵיהֶם אֶת־אָוִי וְאֶת־רָקֶם  
וְאֶת־צֹר וְאֶת־חוּר וְאֶת־רַבֵּעַ חֲמִשָּׁת מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן וְאֶת  
בַּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעֹזֵר הָרְגוּ בַּחֲרָב: 9 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־  
נָשֵׁי מִדְיָן וְאֶת־טַפָּם וְאֶת כָּל־בְּהֵמָתָם וְאֶת־כָּל־מִקְנֵהֶם  
וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵילָם בָּזְזוּ: 10 וְאֶת כָּל־עֲרֵיָהֶם בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָם וְאֶת  
כָּל־טִירָתָם שָׂרְפוּ בָּאֵשׁ: 11 וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַשָּׁלָל וְאֶת  
כָּל־הַמִּלְקוֹחַ בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה: 12 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־  
אַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשְּׁבִי וְאֶת־  
הַמִּלְקוֹחַ וְאֶת־הַשָּׁלָל אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה אֶל־עֶרְבַת מוֹאָב  
אֲשֶׁר עַל־יַרְדֵּן יַרְחוֹ: 13 וַיִּצְאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן  
וְכָל־נִשְׂיָאֵי הָעֵדָה לִקְרָאתָם אֶל־מַחֲוִין לַמַּחֲנֶה:  
14 וַיִּקְצֹף מֹשֶׁה עַל פְּקוּדֵי הַחֵיל שְׂרֵי הָאֱלָפִים וְשְׂרֵי  
הַמֵּאוֹת הַבָּאִים מִצִּבְא הַמִּלְחָמָה: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם  
מֹשֶׁה הַחַיִּיתֶם כָּל־נַקְבָּה: 16 הֵן הִנֵּה הָיוּ לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּדָבָר בַּלְעָם לְמַסְר־מַעַל בִּיהוָה עַל־דְּבַר פֶּעֹזֵר וְתַהֲיִי  
הַמִּגֵּפָה בְּעֶרְתַּת יְהוָה:

RASHI

ולא נחשדו על הגלגל לשלח יד בבזה שלא ברשות,  
שנאמר: "את כל השלל וגו'". ועליהם מפרש בקבלה:  
"שניף בעדר הרחלים וגו'". — אף אנשי המלחמה שבה  
כלם צדיקים: שלל. הן מטלטלין של מלבוש ותכשיטין:  
בזו. הוא בזת מטלטלין שאינם תכשיטין: מלקוח. אדם  
ובהמה. ובמקום שכתוב "שבי" אצל "מלקוח", "שבי"  
באדם, ו"מלקוח" בבמה: 13 ויצאו משה ואלעזר  
הכהן. לפי שראו את נערי ישראל יוצאים לחטף מן  
הבזה: 14 ויקצף משה על פקודי החיל. ממנים על  
החיל. ללמדך שכל סרחון הדור תלוי בגדולים, שיש  
בח' בידם למחות: 16 הן הנה. מגיד, שהיו מכירין אותו,  
"וזה הוא שנקשל פלוני בזה". בדבר בלעם. אמר להם:  
"אפלו אתם מכניסים כל המונות שבעולם, אין אתם  
יכולים להם, שמא מרבים אתם מן המצרים שהיו שש  
מאות רכב בחור? בואו ואשיאכם עצה: אלהיהם של  
אלו שונא זמה הוא וכו'", כדאיתא ב"חלק" 20 ובספרי:

8 חֲמִשָּׁת מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן. וְכִי אֵינִי רוֹאֶה שֶׁחֲמִשָּׁה מִנֵּה  
הַכְּתוּב, לָמָּה הִזְקַק לומר "חֲמִשָּׁת"? אֵלָּא לְלַמֶּדֶךָ שֶׁשְּׁשׁוֹ  
כֻּלָּם בְּעֵצָה, וְהָשׁוּ כֻּלָּם בְּפָרְעֻנוֹת. בַּלְעָם הֵלֵךְ שֵׁם לְטַל  
שָׂכָר עֲשָׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה אֶלֶף שֶׁהִפִּיל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵצָתוֹ.  
וַיֵּצֵא מִמִּדְיָן לְקִרְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמִשִּׁיֵּאֵן עֵצָה רָעָה. אָמַר  
לָהֶם: "אִם כְּשֶׁהֵייתֶם שְׂשִׁים רְבּוּא לֹא יִכְלֹתֶם לָהֶם, וְעַכְשָׁו  
בְּשָׁנִים עֶשְׂרֵי אֶלֶף אֲתֶם בָּאִים לְהִלָּחֵם?" נִתְּנוּ לוֹ  
שָׂכָרוֹ מִשְׁלֵם וְלֹא קִפְחוּהוּ: בַּחֲרָב. הוּא כָּאֵל עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְהַחֲלִיף אֲמָנוֹתוֹ בְּאֲמָנוֹתָם, שֶׁאֵין נוֹשְׁעִים אֵלָּא בְּפִיָּהֶם  
עַל יְדֵי תַּפְלָה וּבִקְשָׁה, וְכֹא הוּא וְתַפֵּשׁ אֲמָנוֹתָם לְקַלֵּלָם  
בְּפִיו, אִף הֵם בָּאוּ עֲלֵיו וְהַחֲלִיפוּ אֲמָנוֹתָם בְּאֲמָנוֹת  
הָאֲמוֹת, שֶׁבָּאִין בַּחֲרָב, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְעַל חֲרָבָהּ תַּחֲיֶה":  
10 טִירָתָם. מְקוֹם פְּלִטְרִין שֶׁלָּהֶם, שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן מוֹשֵׁב  
בְּמָרִים יוֹדְעֵי חֲקִיָּהֶם. דָּבָר אַחֵר: לְשׁוֹן מוֹשֵׁב שְׂרִיָּהֶם,  
כְּמוֹ שֶׁמֶתְרַגֵּם "סִרְגִּי פִלְשִׁתִּים" 18 — "טוֹרְגִי פִלְשִׁתָּאִי":  
11 וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת כָּל הַשָּׁלָל וגו'. מְגִיד שֶׁהָיוּ כְּשָׂרִים וְצָדִיקִים,

17. בראשית כז, מ. 18. יהושע יג, ג. 19. שיר השירים ו, ו. 20. סנהדרין ק, א.

8 As it happened, Balaam was in Midian at the time, for he had come to collect his fee for having caused the death of thousands of Israelites by advising Moab and Midian to entice them into the sins of idolatry and lechery.<sup>46</sup> When the Israelites attacked, he used his magical powers to make himself and the five kings of the Midianite confederation fly in the air, but Pinchas held up the high priest's headband to them, and the Divine Name engraved on it nullified the power of Balaam's magic. In this way, **they killed the Midianite kings**, making them fall from the air **upon their own slain**. **Evi, Rekem, Tzur, Chur, and Reva were the five kings of Midian**. They were equally guilty of scheming against the Israelites, and therefore all died the same way. Balaam, in the meantime, left the Midianite camp and approached the Israelite army, attempting to argue that it was useless to try to subdue Midian. "If," he argued, "when you were 600,000 strong, you could not resist the temptation to sin with the Midianite girls, what makes you think you can now resist the same temptation when you are only 12,000 strong?" The Israelites thereupon **slew Balaam the son of Beor with the sword**. This was poetic justice: Balaam had tried to usurp the Jews' weapon, their power of prayer, by battling them with his curses; the Jews in turn killed him by usurping the non-Jewish weapon, the sword.<sup>47</sup>

9 **The Israelites took the Midianite women and their small children captive, and they plundered all their beasts, livestock, and all their possessions.**

10 **They set fire to all their residential cities and also to their castles**, in which their political and religious leaders lived.

11 **They took all the movable booty and all the living plunder of man and beast**

12 **and brought it all—the captives, the plundered animals, and the movable booty—to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the entire community of Israel in the camp, in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho.** They did not appropriate any of it for themselves, just as Moses had told them.

◆ *Third Reading (Second when combined)* 13 Although the soldiers' behavior was impeccable, some of the young people started looting the booty when the army returned. To stop them, **Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all princes of the community went out to meet them, outside the camp.**

14 When he saw the Midianite women, **Moses became angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds—who had returned from the campaign of war.**

15 **Moses said to them, "Did you let all the females live?"**

16 We can recognize them individually: **they are the same ones who were involved with the Israelites on Balaam's advice to betray God in the incident of Peor, resulting in a plague among the congregation of God.**

46. Above, on 24:14. 47. Compare above, on 21:18.

ONKELOS

17 ובעת הָרָגוֹ כָּל־זָכָר בַּטָּהָר וְכָל־אִשָּׁה יָדַעַת אִישׁ לְמִשְׁכָּב זָכָר הָרָגוֹ: 18 וְכָל הַטָּהָר בְּנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ מִשְׁכָּב זָכָר הִחְיוּ לָכֶם: 19 וְאַתֶּם חָנוּ מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָרֹג נָפֶשׁ וְכָל נֹגַע בַּחֲלָל תִּתְחַטְּאוּ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי אַתֶּם וּשְׂבִיכֵכֶם: 20 וְכָל־בֶּגֶד וְכָל־כְּלִיעוֹר וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה עֵזִים וְכָל־כְּלִיעֵץ תִּתְחַטְּאוּ: 21 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־אַנְשֵׁי הַצִּבְיָא הַבָּאִים לְמַלְחָמָה זֹאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:

RASHI

שְׁנָאֵמַר: "וְאַתֶּן צֹאֵן מִרְעִיתִי, אָדָם אַתֶּם" — אַתֶּם קְרוּיִים "אָדָם" וְאֵין אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם קְרוּיִין "אָדָם", מוֹדָה הוּא שֶׁהַגּוֹיִם מְטַמְּאִים בְּמַגֵּעַ וּבְמִשְׁאֵל, שֶׁלֹּא נֶאֱמַר "אָדָם" אֶלָּא אֶצֶל טַמְאָת אֱהֻלוֹת, שְׁנָאֵמַר: "אָדָם כִּי יָמוּת בְּאַהֲלֵךְ" — אַתֶּם וּשְׂבִיכֵכֶם. לֹא שֶׁהַגּוֹיִם מְקַבְּלִין טַמְאָה וְצָרִיכִין הוֹאָה, אֶלָּא מָה אַתֶּם בְּנֵי בְרִית, אֵף שְׂבִיכֵכֶם, כְּשִׁיבּוּאוֹ לְבְרִית וְיִטְמְאוּ, צָרִיכִין הוֹאָה: 20 וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה עֵזִים. לְהַבִּיא כָּלִי הַקְּרָנִים וְהַטְּלָפִים וְהַעֲצָמוֹת: 21 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְגו', לְפִי שֶׁבֶּא מֹשֶׁה לְכָלֵל כַּעֵס, בָּא לְכָלֵל טְעוֹת, שֶׁנִּתְעַלְמוּ מִמֶּנּוּ הַלְבוֹת גְּעוּלֵי נָרִים. וְכֵן אַתָּה מוֹצֵא בְּשִׁמְיִנִי לְמִלּוּאִים, שְׁנָאֵמַר: "וְיִקְצֹף עַל אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל אֵיתָמָר" — בָּא לְכָלֵל כַּעֵס, בָּא לְכָלֵל טְעוֹת, וְכֵן בְּ"שִׁמְעוּ נָא הַמְּרִים" — "וְיִזַּךְ אֶת הַסֵּלַע", עַל יְדֵי הַכַּעֵס טְעוֹה: אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' וְגו'. תִּלְךָ הַהוֹרָאָה בְּרַבּוֹ:

21. רשביי ביבמות ס, ב. 22. יחזקאל לד, לא. 23. במדבר יט, יד. 24. ויקרא י, טו. 25. במדבר כ, ייא.

## INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] or heated until white-hot in order to make it physically release the forbidden food it has absorbed, while a vessel that has been defiled needs only to be immersed in a *mikveh*—whose waters merely surround the vessel from without and do not physically affect the walls of the vessel in any way.

Inasmuch as our sense of logic is tied largely to our physical senses, the process used to make a vessel give up the forbidden food it has absorbed seems more logical than the process used to purify a vessel from ritual defilement. It goes somewhat against the grain of logic to say that immersing a vessel in a specified volume of wa-

17 וְכָל אִשָּׁה יָדַעַת אִישׁ. רְאוּיָה לְהַבְעֵל אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁלֹּא נִבְעַלְהָ. וּלְפָנֵי הַצִּיּוֹן הַעֲבִירוּם, וְהָרְאוּיָה לְהַבְעֵל פְּנִיָּה מוֹרִיקוֹת: הָרָגוֹ. לְמָה חוֹר וְאִמְרָה לְהַפְסִיק הָעֵינָן, דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעְיֵאל, שֶׁאִם אֲנִי קוֹרָא: "הָרָגוּ כָּל זָכָר בַּטָּהָר וְכָל אִשָּׁה יָדַעַת אִישׁ וְכָל הַטָּהָר בְּנָשִׁים וְגו'", אֵינִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לְהָרֹג עִם הַזָּכָרִים, אוֹ לְהַחְיוֹת עִם הַטָּהָר, לְכָךְ נֶאֱמַר "הָרָגוּ": 19 מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה. שֶׁלֹּא יִכְנסוּ לְעוֹרָה: כָּל הָרֹג נָפֶשׁ. רַבִּי מֵאִיר אוֹמֵר: בְּהוֹרֵג בְּדָבָר הַמְקַבֵּל טַמְאָה הַכְּתוּב מְדַבֵּר. וְלִמְדָה הַכְּתוּב שֶׁהַכָּלִי מְטַמֵּא אָדָם בְּחַבּוּרֵי הַמֵּת, כְּאִלּוּ נֹגַע בְּמֵת עֶצְמוֹ. אוֹ יָכוֹל אֶפְלוּ וְרַק בּוֹ חֵץ וְהָרָגוּ תַלְמוּד לֹאֹמֵר: "וְכָל נֹגַע בַּחֲלָל" — הַקִּישׁ הוֹרֵג לְנוֹגַע, מִה נֹגַע עַל יְדֵי חַבּוּרָה, אֵף הוֹרֵג עַל יְדֵי חַבּוּרָה: תִּתְחַטְּאוּ. בְּמִי נִדָּה, כְּדִין שֶׁאֵר טַמְאֵי מֵתִים, שֶׁאֵף לְדָבָר הָאוֹמֵר<sup>21</sup> קְבָרֵי גוֹיִם אֵינָן מְטַמְּאִין בְּאַהֲלָה.

ter originating from a specified source can somehow affect it.

Ritual defilement by contact with a corpse is even more abstract than regular ritual defilement, so the means used to purify it—sprinkling a few drops of a specially prepared solution on the outside of the affected person or vessel—are even more "spiritual" and counter logic even more.

This explains how Moses erred regarding the power of the solution of the ashes of the red cow: Moses was the "escort of the King" (God), and looked at reality from the higher, Divine perspective. Accordingly, he felt that the potency of

**17 So now kill every male child, and you shall also kill every woman who** is old enough to **have carnal intercourse with a man**, even if she is still a virgin.

**18 But you may keep alive all the young girls who are not old enough to have carnal intercourse with a man, for yourselves.** We will determine which ones are in which category by having all the women pass in front of the high priest's headband; the faces of those mature enough for carnal relations will turn green.

**19 And** those of **you** who have been defiled through contact with a corpse during the war or will kill the captives now must **encamp outside the camp**, that is, not enter the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting **for** at least **seven days**; specifically, **whoever** either came in contact with a corpse indirectly through having **killed a person** with a sword or some other instrument that transmits defilement **or who touched a corpse** directly **shall purify himself on the third and seventh day** after he begins counting, with the solution made of the ashes of the red cow.<sup>48</sup> This applies to **both you and** to any of **your captives** who have converted.

**20 Similarly, all garments, leather articles, any goat product**, including those made of its hair, horns, claws, and bones, **and every wooden** and metal **article** that came in contact with a corpse **shall undergo** the same **purification rites**."

**21** In his anger at the army over their having left the Midianite women alive, Moses mistakenly assumed that purifying the plundered eating utensils from the defilement of having come in contact with a corpse would also purify these same utensils from the forbidden food they had absorbed and from the impurity they possessed by virtue of belonging to a non-Jew.<sup>49</sup> So Moses' nephew, **Eleazar the priest, said to the soldiers returning from battle, "This—the laws of purification from defilement through contact with a corpse that Moses just reviewed for you—is the statute that God commanded Moses, and you must do as he said.**

#### — CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**17 You shall kill every woman who can have carnal intercourse with a man:** The Midianite women who had seduced the Israelite men clearly deserved the death penalty, for they were guilty of causing them to sin and had thus proven themselves to be either outright malicious or incapable of standing up to mass evil. Those who did not participate in Balaam's scheme (if there were such) but were simply non-virgins had to be killed because their attitudes toward carnality and femininity had already been spoiled by the relations they had engaged in as part of the corrupt Midianite society. Their attitudes and jadedness rendered them not only unfit to join the ranks of the Jewish people but a danger-

ous influence that could not be allowed to seep into the society of holiness and corrupt it. But why was it necessary to kill the Midianite women who were merely old enough for carnal relations, even if they were still virgins?

Presumably, they had to be killed because the very fact that they had reached puberty and were therefore ready at any time to join the ranks of the carnally active women meant that they already considered themselves part of the depraved Midianite culture and had absorbed its values. This put them in the same category as their experienced compatriots.<sup>50</sup>

#### — INNER DIMENSIONS —

**[21]** The fundamental difference between ritual defilement (*tumah*) and absorption of forbidden food is that the latter penetrates *into* the vessel,

while the former resides spiritually *around* the vessel. Thus, a vessel that has absorbed forbidden food needs to be immersed in boiling water

48. Above, 19:1-22. 49. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 182-184. 50. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 368.



— ONKELOS —

22 בָּרָם יֵת דְּהָבָא וְיֵת כֶּסֶף אֵת נַחֲשָׁתָא יֵת פְּרֻלָּא יֵת אֲבָצָא וְיֵת אֲבָרָא: 23 כָּל מַדְעָם דְּמַתְעַל בְּנוּרָא תַעֲבֵרְנָה בְּנוּרָא וְיִדְכִי בָרָם בְּמִי אֲדִיּוּתָא יִתְנִי וְכָל דִּי לֹא מַתְעַל בְּנוּרָא תַעֲבֵרְנָה בְּמִי: 24 וְתַחֲוֹרוֹן לְבוּשִׁיכוֹן בְּיוֹמָא שְׂבִיעָאָה וְתִדְכוּן וְכִתְרָא כֵּן תַעֲלוֹן לְמִשְׁרִיתָא: 25 וְאָמַר יְיָ לְמֹשֶׁה לְמִימַר: 26 קְבַל יֵת חֶשֶׁבֶן דְּכִרְתָּ שְׂבִיָּא בְּאַנְשָׁא וּבְבִעִיקָא אֶת וְאַלְעֹר כְּהֵנָּה וְרִישִׁי אֲבָהָת בְּנִשְׁתָּא: 27 וְתַפְלִיג יֵת דְּבִרְתָּא בֵּין גִּבְרִי מְגִיחִי קִרְבָּא דְנִפְקוּ לְחִילָא וּבֵין כָּל בְּנִשְׁתָּא: 28 וְתַפְרֵשׁ נְסִיבָא קָדָם יְיָ מִן גִּבְרִי מְגִיחִי קִרְבָּא דְנִפְקוּ לְחִילָא חֹד נַפְשָׁא מִחֻמֶּשׁ מָאָה מִן אֲנָשָׁא וּמִן תּוֹרִי וּמִן חֲמִרִי וּמִן עֲנָא:

22 אֵת אֶת־הַזָּהָב וְאֶת־הַכֶּסֶף אֶת־הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֶת־הַפְּרֻלָּה אֶת־הַבְּדִיל וְאֶת־הַעֲפָרָת: 23 כָּל־דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יָבֹא בָאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בָאֵשׁ וְטָהַר אֵת בְּמִי נִדָּה יִתְחַטֵּא וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֹא בָאֵשׁ תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמִיָּם: 24 וְכִבְסֶתֶם בְּגָדֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְטָהַרְתֶּם וְאַחֵר תָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמִּחֻנָּה: 25 וְרַבִּיעִי 26 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 26 שֶׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ מַלְקוֹת הַשִּׁבְטִי בְּאֶדָם וּבִבְהֵמָה אֶתְּהָ וְאַלְעֹר הַכֹּהֵן וְרֹאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הָעֵדָה: 27 וְחֲצִיתָ אֶת־הַמַּלְקוֹת בֵּין הַנְּפִשִּׁי הַמַּלְחָמָה הַיִּצְאִים לְצֹבָא וּבֵין כָּל־הָעֵדָה: 28 וְהִרְמֹתָ מִכֶּם לַיהוָה מֵאֵת אֲנָשֵׁי הַמַּלְחָמָה הַיִּצְאִים לְצֹבָא אֶחָד נֶפֶשׁ מִחֻמֶּשׁ הַמָּאוֹת מִן־הָאָדָם וּמִן־הַבְּקָר וּמִן־הַחֲמֹרִים וּמִן־הַצֹּאן:

— RASHI —

וְהָ לְטַהֲרוֹ מִשְׁמָאֵת מַת. אָמַר לָהֶם: צְרִיכִין הַפְּלִים גְּעוּל לְטַהֲרָם מִן הָאִסּוּר, וְחֲטוֹי לְטַהֲרֵן מִן הַטְּמֵאָה. וְרַבּוּתֵינוּ דְּרָשׁוּ מִכָּאן<sup>54</sup>, שֶׁאֵף לְהַכְשִׁירוֹן מִן הָאִסּוּר, הִטְעִין טְבִילָה לְכָלִי מִתְּכֹת. וְ"מִי נִדָּה" הַכְּתוּבִין כָּאן, דְּרָשׁוּ: מִיָּם הָרְאוּיִם לְטַבֵּל בָּהֶם נִדָּה, וְכֵמָּה הֵם? אֲרַבְעִים סָאָה: וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָבֹא בָאֵשׁ. כָּל דָּבָר שֶׁאֵין תִּשְׁמִישׁוֹ עַל יְדֵי הָאוּר, כְּגוֹן: כּוֹסוֹת וְצִלּוּחִיּוֹת, שֶׁתִּשְׁמִישׁוֹן בְּצוּנָה וְלֹא בְּלֵעוֹ אִסּוּר: תַּעֲבִירוּ בְּמִיָּם. מְטַבִּילֵן וְדִיּוֹ. וְדוֹקָא כָּלִי מִתְּכֹת: 24 אֵל הַמִּחֻנָּה. לְמַחֲנֶה שְׂכִינָה, שֶׁאֵין טְמֵא מַת טְעוֹן שְׁלוֹחַ מִמֻּחֲנֶה לְוִיָּה וּמִמֻּחֲנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל: 26 שֶׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ. קָח אֶת הַחֶשֶׁבֶן: 27 וְחֲצִיתָ אֶת הַמַּלְקוֹת בֵּין הַנְּפִשִּׁי הַמַּלְחָמָה וּגו'. חֲצִיּוֹ לְאֵלּוֹ וְחֲצִיּוֹ לְאֵלּוֹ:

22 אֵת אֶת הַזָּהָב וְגו'. אֵף עַל פִּי שְׁלֹא הִזְהִיר לָכֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶלָּא עַל הַלְכוֹת טְמֵאָה, עוֹד יֵשׁ לְהַזְהִיר לָכֶם עַל הַלְכוֹת גְּעוּל. וְ"אֵת" לְשׁוֹן מַעוּט, כְּלוּמַר מִמַּעֲטִין אֲתֶם מַלְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּפָלִים, אִפְּלוּ לְאַחֵר טַהֲרָתוֹן מִטְּמֵאֵת הַמַּת, עַד שִׁיטְהֵרוּ מִכְּלִיעַת אִסּוּר נִבְלוֹת. וְרַבּוּתֵינוּ אָמְרוּ:<sup>55</sup> "אֵת אֶת הַזָּהָב", לוֹמַר, שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְהַעֲבִיר חֲלָדָה שְׁלוֹ קָדָם שִׁיגְעִילָנוּ, וְהוּא לְשׁוֹן "אֵת" — שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה שֵׁם חֲלָדָה, אֵת הַמִּתְכַּת וְהִנֵּה כְּמוֹת שְׁהוּא: 23 כָּל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא בָאֵשׁ. לְבַשֵּׁל בּוֹ כָּלוּם: תַּעֲבִירוּ בָאֵשׁ. בְּדֶרֶךְ תִּשְׁמִישׁוֹ — הִגְעַלְתוּ: מַה שֶׁתִּשְׁמִישׁוֹ עַל יְדֵי חֲמִין יִגְעִילָנוּ בְּחִמִּין, וְמַה שֶׁתִּשְׁמִישׁוֹ עַל יְדֵי צֵלִי, כְּגוֹן הַשְּׁפוּד וְהָאֶסְכָּלָה, יִלְבָּנְנוּ בְּאוּר: אֵת בְּמִי נִדָּה יִתְחַטֵּא. לְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ "חֲטוֹי"

26. ילקוט שמעוני תשפ"ה. 27. עבודה זרה עה, ב.

### INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] the solution of the ashes of the red cow should be sufficient to penetrate the innermost aspects of the person or vessel: an overall change in a person's attitude should by right affect all aspects of his or her life, down to the minutest details.

Eleazar, however, was the priest, the "escort of the Queen" (the people). He looked at reality from the earthly perspective, and therefore knew that sweeping, overall changes are not enough; the individual must work on his or her inner self directly, as well.<sup>54</sup>

54. Likutei Sichot, vol. 8, pp. 184-185.

**22 But** even after you have purified the captured utensils from defilement caused by contact with a corpse, you must also purify these utensils from the forbidden food they absorbed and from the impurity of belonging to a non-Jew, through a different process. Metal vessels—**the gold, the silver, the copper, the iron, the tin, and the lead**

**23** —in fact, **whatever is used in fire, you shall pass through fire** the same way it is used, **and then it will be purified**. If it is a cooking vessel used with boiling water, you must immerse it in boiling water. If it is used directly over the fire, you must heat it until it turns white-hot. This is how a metal utensil releases the forbidden food it has absorbed. You must, however, remove any rust from it first, so nothing interposes between the metal and the cleansing medium. (In contrast to metal vessels, earthenware vessels used in fire never release the forbidden food they have absorbed, so such vessels cannot be purified.)” Although the people knew the principles involved in removing forbidden food from vessels<sup>51</sup> (and therefore Moses did not need to mention these laws after the battles with Sichon and Og), Eleazar had to repeat them here because (a) Moses had implied that they were not applicable; (b) Moses had not overseen this battle, so extra care was necessary to ensure that the soldiers followed all the applicable laws properly, and (c) the Midianites had rusty vessels, so the law applicable to such a case had to be articulated now.<sup>52</sup> **“But before you purify a metal vessel from the forbidden food it has absorbed, it must be purified with sprinkling water**, that is, the solution made with the ashes of the red cow, to purify it from the defilement caused by contact with a corpse, and even if the vessel is brand new, **it must be immersed** in the purifying water of a *mikveh*, the ocean, or a flowing river or stream **to purify it** from the defilement caused by non-Jewish ownership. **Whatever vessel is not used in fire** does not absorb any forbidden food; therefore, **you need only immerse it in purifying water** after purifying it from contact with a corpse.

**24** In order to complete the process of purification from defilement by a corpse, mentioned by Moses, **you shall immerse yourselves and your garments** in purifying water **on the seventh day** after you began counting, **and thus become ritually pure**,<sup>53</sup> **only afterwards, you and your garments may enter the camp**, that is, the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting.”

◆ *Fourth Reading* **25 God spoke to Moses, saying,**

**26 “Take a count of the plunder of the captive people and animals, you, together with Eleazar the priest and the heads of the paternal houses of the community.**

**27 And you shall divide this plunder equally between the warriors who went out to battle and the rest of the entire congregation.** The soldiers may keep whatever moveable property they captured, however, all for themselves.

**28 And you shall levy a tax for God from the half you gave to the soldiers who went out to battle: one out of every 500 of the people, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep.**

51. Leviticus 6:21. 52. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 369, note 43. 53. Above, on 19:12.



— ONKELOS —

29 מפלגותהון תסבון ותיחב לאלעזר כהנא אפרשותא קדם יי: 30 ומפלגות בני ישראל תסב חד דאתחד מן חמשין מן אנשא מן תורי מן חמרי ומן ענא מכל בעירא ותיחב יתהון ללנאי נטרי מטרת משכנא דיי: 31 ועבד משה ואלעזר כהנא כמא די פקיד יי ית משה: 32 והוה דברתא שאר כנא די כוז עמא דנפקו לחילא ענא שית מאה ושבעין וחמשא אלפין: 33 ותורי שבעין ותריין אלפין: 34 וחמרי שתין וחד אלפין: 35 ונפשא דאנשא מן נשא די לא ידעא משכבי דכורא כל נפשחא תלתין ותריין אלפין: 36 והות פלגותא חלק גבריא דנפקו לחילא מנין ענא תלת מאה ותלתין ושבע אלפין וחמש מאה: 37 והוה נסיבא קדם יי מן ענא שית מאה ושבעין וחמש: 38 ותורי תלתין ושתי אלפין ונסיבהון קדם יי שבעין ותריין: 39 וחמרי תלתין אלפין וחמש מאה ונסיבהון קדם יי שתין וחד: 40 ונפשא דאנשא שתא עשר אלפין ונסיבהון קדם יי תלתין ותריין נפשי: 41 ויחב משה ית נסיב אפרשותא קדם יי לאלעזר כהנא כמא די פקיד יי ית משה: 42 ומפלגות בני ישראל די פלג משה מן גבריא דנפקו לחילא: 43 והות פלגות כנשתא מן ענא תלת מאה ותלתין ושבעא אלפין וחמש מאה: 44 ותורי תלתין ושתי אלפין: 45 וחמרי תלתין אלפין וחמש מאה: 46 ונפשא דאנשא שתא עשר אלפין:

29 מִמַּחְצִיתָם תִּקְחוּ וְנִתְּתָה לְאַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן הַתְּרוּמָה יְהוָה: 30 וּמִמַּחְצֵת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּקַּח אֶחָד אֶחָז מִן־הַחֲמִשִּׁים מִן־הָאָדָם מִן־הַבִּקֹּר מִן־הַחֲמֹרִים וּמִן־הַצֹּאן מִכֹּל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְנִתְּתָה אֹתָם לְלוֹיִם שְׂמֹרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה: 31 וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה וְאַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: 32 וַיְהִי הַמִּלְקוֹחַ יֵתֵר הַכֹּזֵז אֲשֶׁר בָּזְזוּ עִם הַצֹּבָא צֹאן שֵׁש־מֵאוֹת אֵלֶף וְשִׁבְעִים אֵלֶף וְחֲמִשָּׁת אֲלָפִים: 33 וּבִקֹּר שְ�נַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים אֵלֶף: 34 וְחֲמֹרִים אֶחָד וְשִׁשִּׁים אֵלֶף: 35 וְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם מִן־הַנָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ מִשְׁכָּב זָכָר כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם וְשָׁלֹשִׁים אֵלֶף: 36 וַתְּהִי הַמַּחְצָה חֶלֶק הַיֹּצֵאִים בַּצֹּבָא מִסֵּפֶר הַצֹּאן שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת אֵלֶף וְשָׁלֹשִׁים אֵלֶף וְשִׁבְעַת אֲלָפִים וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: 37 וַיְהִי הַמֶּכֶס לַיהוָה מִן־הַצֹּאן שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת חֲמִשׁ וְשִׁבְעִים: 38 וְהַבִּקֹּר שֵׁשָׁה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים אֵלֶף וּמֶכֶס לַיהוָה שְׁנַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים: 39 וְחֲמֹרִים שְׁלֹשִׁים אֵלֶף וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וּמֶכֶס לַיהוָה אֶחָד וְשִׁשִּׁים: 40 וְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם שֵׁשָׁה עָשָׂר אֵלֶף וּמֶכֶס לַיהוָה שְׁנַיִם וְשָׁלֹשִׁים נֶפֶשׁ: 41 וַיִּתֵּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מֶכֶס תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְאַלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:

◆ חמישי 42 וממחצית בני ישראל אשר חצה משה מן האנשים הצבאים: 43 ותהי מחצת העדה מן הצאן שלש מאות אלף ושלשים אלף שבעת אלפים וחמש מאות: 44 ובקר ששה ושלשים אלף: 45 וחמורים שלשים אלף וחמש מאות: 46 ונפש אדם ששה עשר אלף:

— RASHI —

ולא בא לכלל חלקה, "מספר הצאן וגו'": 42 וממחצית בני ישראל אשר חצה משה. לעדה, והוציא להם "מן האנשים הצבאים": 43 ותהי מחצת העדה. כך וכך, "ויקח משה וגו'":

32 וַיְהִי הַמִּלְקוֹחַ יֵתֵר הַכֹּזֵז. לפי שלא נצטוו להרים מכס מן המטלטלין אלא מן המלקוח, כתב את הלשון הזה: "וַיְהִי הַמִּלְקוֹחַ", שְ�בָא לְכָל־חֶלֶק וְלְכָל־מֶכֶס, שְׁהִיָּה עוֹדֵף עַל כּוֹ הַמִּטְלָטִלִּין "אֲשֶׁר בָּזְזוּ עִם הַצֹּבָא" אִישׁ לוֹ

29 Take this tax from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest as a gift to God.

30 From the half belonging to the rest of the Israelites, you shall take one fiftieth of the people, the cattle, the donkeys, the sheep, and all animals as a tax, and you shall give them to the Levites, the keepers of the charge of the community, as their representatives, in the Tabernacle of God.”

31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did as God had commanded Moses.

32 The plunder, which was in addition to the moveable spoils that the army had pillaged, consisted of 675,000 sheep,

33 72,000 cattle,

34 and 61,000 donkeys.

35 As for the people, that is, the women who were not old enough to have carnal intercourse with a man, they were 32,000. Miraculously, the tallies were all such that their halves were divisible by 50 and by 500, so God’s instructions could be carried out precisely and so the tax could be actually levied from the entire tally. This would not have been possible if the total had not been divisible by these numbers.<sup>55</sup>

36 Regarding the half that was the portion of those who went out to battle: the number of sheep was 337,500

37 and the tax to God from the sheep—one five hundredth—was 675;

38 there were 36,000 cattle, of which the tax to God was 72;

39 there were 30,500 donkeys, of which the tax to God was 61;

40 and there were 16,000 people, of which the tax to God was 32 people.

41 Moses gave the tax, which was a gift to God, to Eleazar the priest, as God had commanded Moses.

- ◆ *Fifth Reading* 42 As he was commanded, Moses then took a tax from the half allotted to the Israelites, which Moses had divided for them from the total spoils brought back by the men who had gone into the army.

43 Although it had taken time to divide all the plunder in half and levy the tax from the soldiers’ half, none of the captives or animals died, nor were any new ones born, in the interim.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the community’s half also totaled the same as the soldiers’: 337,500 sheep,

44 36,000 cattle,

45 30,500 donkeys,

46 and 16,000 people. Thus, the two halves of the spoils were exactly equal, and the proportions levied from them were precise.

55. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 110-113. 56. *Ibid.*

— ONKELOS —

47 וְנָסִיב מִשָּׁה מִפְּלִגּוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 יֵת דַּאֲתַחַד חַד מִן חֲמִשִּׁין מִן אֲנָשָׁא  
 וּמִן בְּעִיָּא וְיִהֵב יִתְהוֹן לְלִנְאִי  
 נָטְרִי מִטָּרַת מִשְׁכָּנָא דִּי כְּמָא דִּי  
 פָּקִיד יֵי יֵת מִשָּׁה: 48 וְקָרִיבוּ לָוֶה  
 מִשָּׁה דִּמְמָן עַל אֲלָפֵי חִילָא רַבְּנִי  
 אֲלָפִין וְרַבְּנִי מֵאֲנָתָא: 49 וְאָמְרוּ  
 לְמִשָּׁה עֲבָדִיךָ קִבִּילוּ יֵת חֲשָׁבֹן  
 גִּבְרִי מְגִיחֵי קָרְבָּא דִּי עֲמָנָא וְלֹא  
 שָׂגָא מִנָּנָא אָנֹשׁ: 50 וְקָרִיבָנָא  
 יֵת קָרְבָּנָא דִּי גִבְרִי דַּאֲשַׁבַּח מִן  
 דְּדִהֵב שִׁירִין וְשִׁבְכִין עֲזָן קִדְשִׁין  
 וּמִחוּץ לְכִפְרָא עַל נִפְשָׁתָנָא קָדָם  
 יֵי: 51 וְנָסִיב מִשָּׁה וְאֲלַעֲזָר כְּהֵנָּא  
 יֵת דִּהֵבָא מִנְהוֹן כָּל מִן דְּעוֹבְדָא:  
 52 וְהָיָה כָּל דְּהֵב אֲפִרְשׁוּתָא דִּי  
 אֲפִרְשׁוּ קָדָם יֵי שְׁתָּא עֶשֶׂר אֲלָפִין  
 שְׁבַע מֵאָה וְחֲמִשִּׁין סֻלְעִין מִן רַבְּנִי  
 אֲלָפִין וּמִן רַבְּנִי מֵאֲנָתָא: 53 גִּבְרִי  
 דְּחִילָא בּוֹז גִּבְרִי לְנִפְשָׁה: 54 וְנָסִיב  
 מִשָּׁה וְאֲלַעֲזָר כְּהֵנָּא יֵת דִּהֵבָא מִן  
 רַבְּנִי אֲלָפִין וּמֵאֲנָתָא וְאִיתִיּוּ יִתְהוּ  
 לְמִשְׁכָּן וּמִנָּא דּוֹכְרָנָא לְבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 קָדָם יֵי: 32:1 וּבָעִיר סָגִי הָיָה לְבִנֵי  
 רְאוּבֵן וּלְבִנֵי גָד מִקִּיף לְחָדָא וְחוּזוּ  
 יֵת אֶרֶץ יַעֲזֹר וְיֵת אֶרֶץ גִּלְעָד וְהָא  
 אֲתֵרָא אֲתֵר בֶּשֶׂר לְבֵית בָּעִיר:

47 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה מִמִּחֲצֵת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָאָחֻז אַחַד  
 מִן־הַחֲמִשִּׁים מִן־הָאָדָם וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם לְלוֹוִים  
 שְׂמֹרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִשְׁכָּן יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:  
 48 וַיִּקְרְבוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַפְּקָדִים אֲשֶׁר לְאֲלָפֵי הַצֹּבָא שְׂרֵי  
 הָאֲלָפִים וְשְׂרֵי הַמֵּאוֹת: 49 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עֲבָדֶיךָ  
 נִשְׁאָו אֶת־רֹאשׁ אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה אֲשֶׁר בִּידָנוּ וְלֹא־  
 נִפְקַד מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ: 50 וַנִּקְרָב אֶת־קָרְבֵּן יְהוָה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
 מֵצָא כְּלִי־זָהָב אֲצַעֲדָה וְצִמִּיד טַבַּעַת עָגִיל וְכוּמָז לְכַפֵּר  
 עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵינוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: 51 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה וְאֲלַעֲזָר הַכֹּהֵן  
 אֶת־הַזָּהָב מֵאֹתָם כָּל כְּלִי מַעֲשֶׂה: 52 וַיְהִי | כָּל־זָהָב  
 הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְיִמוּ לַיהוָה שֵׁשֶׁה עֶשֶׂר אֲלָף שְׁבַע־  
 מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים שֶׁקֶל מֵאֵת שְׂרֵי הָאֲלָפִים וּמֵאֵת שְׂרֵי  
 הַמֵּאוֹת: 53 אֲנָשִׁי הַצֹּבָא בָּזוּזוּ אִישׁ לוֹ: 54 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה  
 וְאֲלַעֲזָר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַזָּהָב מֵאֵת שְׂרֵי הָאֲלָפִים וְהַמֵּאוֹת  
 וַיָּבִיאוּ אוֹתוֹ אֶל־אַהֲלֵ מוֹעֵד וּפָרוּן לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי  
 יְהוָה: פ

◆ שִׁישִׁי (שְׁלִישִׁי בַּמַּחֲבָרִין 32:1) וּמִקְנֶה | רֵב הָיָה לְבִנֵי רְאוּבֵן  
 וּלְבְנֵי־גָד עֲצוּם מְאֹד וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ יַעֲזֹר וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ  
 גִּלְעָד וְהִנֵּה הַמָּקוֹם מְקוֹם מִקְנֶה:

— RASHI —

הַרְגִּיל לִישָׁב שָׁם. וְכֵן: "וַיִּפְקַד מְקוֹם דָּוִד"<sup>30</sup> — נִחָסֵר  
 מְקוֹמוֹ, וְאִין אִישׁ יוֹשֵׁב שָׁם: 50 אֲצַעֲדָה. אֵלּוּ צְמִידִים  
 שֶׁל רִגְלִי וְצִמִּיד. שֶׁל יָד: עָגִיל. נִזְמִי אֵין: וְכוּמָז. דְּפוּס  
 שֶׁל בֵּית הָרָחֹם, לְכַפֵּר עַל הַרְהוּר הַלֵּב שֶׁל בְּנוֹת מִדְיָן:

48 הַפְּקָדִים. הַמְּמָנִים: 49 וְלֹא נִפְקַד. וְלֹא נִחָסֵר.  
 וְתַרְגוּמוֹ: "וְלֹא שָׂגָא", אָף הוּא בִלְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי "חֲסָרוֹן",  
 כְּמוֹ: "אֲנִכִּי אֲחַטְנָה"<sup>28</sup>, תַּרְגוּמוֹ: "דִּהְיוֹת שְׂגִיָּא מִמְּנִינָא".  
 וְכֵן: "כִּי יִפְקַד מוֹשֶׁבֶךְ"<sup>29</sup> — יִחָסֵר מְקוֹם מוֹשָׁבֶךְ, אִישׁ

28. בְּרַאשִׁית ל"א, ל"ט. 29. שְׁמוּאֵל א' כ', י"ח. 30. שָׁם, כ"ג.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

reality betrayed a certain escapism. The fact that the Levites had been conscripted into the war against Midian had showed them that even those dedicated to the most sublime forms of Divine service can and must work to elevate reality. They therefore preferred to be shepherds, since this occupation is conducive to a meditative lifestyle and distances a person from the bustle of city life. They felt that it was possible to accomplish God's ends while removed from the realities of civilization.

Moses was initially opposed to their proposal, since he felt that if the people would enter the Land of Israel and capitalize on its inherent superior spirituality, the spiritual energy generated would be so great that it would draw into it the spiritual potentials of the rest of the world. This would make it unnecessary to actively seek out the spiritual potentials outside the holy land. Indeed, something of this nature actually occurred much later, in the era of King Solomon. His Divine wisdom was so great

47 Moses took one-fiftieth of the half of the Israelites, the people and the animals, and gave them as a tax to the Levites, the keepers of the charge of the community, as their representatives, in the Tabernacle of God, as God had commanded Moses.

48 After this, the officers appointed over the army's thousands, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses.

49 They said to Moses, "Your servants counted the soldiers who were in our charge, and not one man is missing from us.

50 We therefore wish to bring an offering for God—any man who found a gold article of women's jewelry, be it an anklet, a bracelet, a ring, an earring, or a chastity belt—to atone for our souls before God for any lustful thoughts we may have had toward the Midianite women."

51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took all the gold articles from them.

52 The total of the gift of gold which they dedicated to God amounted to 16,750 shekels; this was from the commanders of the thousands and the commanders of the hundreds,

53 while, as mentioned previously, the soldiers had seized moveable spoils for themselves and kept them.

54 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the commanders of the thousands and hundreds and brought it to the Tent of Meeting, as a remembrance for the Israelites before God.

## The Request of Reuben and Gad

- ◆ *Sixth Reading (Third when combined)* 32:1 The Israelites had camped in Sichon's territory, southern Gilead, ever since conquering it in Elul, 2487.<sup>57</sup> They had also conquered the Ya'zer district, in Sichon's territory,<sup>58</sup> and Og's territory, even further north.<sup>59</sup> Of all the tribes, **the descendants of Reuben and Gad** had most appreciated the unique spiritual benefits of the manna, and were careful to eat it as much as possible. Since, for this reason, they had slaughtered very little of their cattle for food,<sup>60</sup> **they had an abundance of livestock, very numerous, and they saw the land of Ya'zer and the land of southern Gilead,**<sup>61</sup> **and behold, the place was a place uniquely suitable for livestock.**

### — CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

1 **The descendants of Reuben and Gad had an abundance of livestock:** As was explained above,<sup>62</sup> the war with Midian demonstrated that the proper attitude toward the lower elements of creation is not to shun them but to elevate them: to reveal their Divine dimension and thereby harness them for promoting holiness in the world. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, seeing that this is the case, reasoned that the territory outside of the holy Land of Israel was of a lower spirituality and therefore settling it and utilizing it for holy purposes would accomplish more than settling the Land of Israel.

For this same reason, they mentioned their cattle before their children; animals are a "lower" form of life than people, and therefore the tribes of Reuben and Gad appreciated the challenge they represented more.

Thus, their mistake was the opposite of the mistake of the spies and their generation. The spies disdained becoming involved with materiality, while the tribes of Reuben and Gad overemphasized its importance.

At the same time, their approach to the elevation of

57. Above, 21:21. 58. Above, 21:32. 59. Above, on 21:33 ff. 60. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, p. 548, note 80, quoting *Tiferet Yehonatan* on this verse. 61. Manasseh's grandson was named Gilead (above, 26:29). Perhaps the Torah refers to this area by the name it would be given later, when the Israelites conquered it, or perhaps Manasseh's son Machir named his son Gilead after the area he sensed prophetically that he would one day possess. 62. On 31:2, 4.

## ONKELOS

2 וַתָּאוּ בְנֵי גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וַאֲמָרוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ וְלַאֲלֶעָזָר כְּהֵנָּה וְלִדְבָרֵי כְנִשְׁתָּא לְמִימְרֵי: 3 מִכְּלָלָתָא וּמִלְבָּשְׁתָּא וּמִכּוּמְרִין וּבֵיתִינְמִרִין וּבֵית חֲשֻׁבָּנָא וּבְעָלֵי דְבָבָא וְסִימָא וּבֵית קִבְרֵתָא דְּמִשָּׁה וּבְעוֹן: 4 אֲרַעָא דִּי מִחָא יִי יְתִיבְהָא קָדָם כְּנִשְׁתָּא דִּישְׂרָאֵל אֲרַע פְּשָׂרָא לְבֵית בְּעִיר הִיא וְלַעֲבָדֵיךָ אֵית בְּעִיר: 5 וַאֲמָרוּ אִם אֲשַׁכְּחָנָא רְחֻמִּין בְּעִינֵיךָ תִּתְּיָהִיב יְתִיבְהָא אֲרַעָא הָדָא לַעֲבָדֵיךָ לְאַחֲסָנָא לֹא תַעֲבֻרְנָא יְתִיבְהָא: 6 וַאֲמָר מִשָּׁה לְבָנֵי גָד וְלְבָנֵי רְאוּבֵן הָאֲחִיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמַלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה: 7 וְלָמָּה תִּנּוּאוּן {תִּנְיָאוּן} אֶת־לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִעֵבֶר אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה: 8 כֹּה עָשׂוּ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם בְּשַׁלְחִי אֹתָם מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרָנֶע לְרֹאוֹת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: 9 וַיַּעֲלִי עַד־נַחַל אֲשַׁכּוּל וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּנְיָאוּ אֶת־לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבִלְתִּי־בֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה: 10 וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּשְׁבַּע לֵאמֹר: 11 אִם־יִרְאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָעֹלִים מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְמוֹעֵלָה אֶת הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לֵיצָחֵק וְלִיעֲקֹב כִּי לֹא־מָלְאוּ אֶת־יָדָיו:

2 וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־עֲזָרָה הַכֹּהֵן וְאַל־נְשֵׁי־אֵי הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר: 3 עֲמֻרֹת וְדִבֵּן וַיַּעֲזֹר וַנִּמְרָה וַחֲשַׁבּוּן וְאַל־עֲלָה וּשְׁבָם וּנְבוּ וּבְעֵן: 4 הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה יְהוָה לִפְנֵי עַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶרֶץ מִקְנָה הִוא וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ מִקְנָה: 5

5 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִם־מִצְאָנוּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ יִתֵּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לַעֲבָדֶיךָ לְאַחֲזָה אֶל־תַּעֲבֻרְנוּ אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן: 6 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי־גָד וְלְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן הָאֲחִיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמַלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה: 7 וְלָמָּה תִּנּוּאוּן {תִּנְיָאוּן} אֶת־לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִעֵבֶר אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה: 8 כֹּה עָשׂוּ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם בְּשַׁלְחִי אֹתָם מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרָנֶע לְרֹאוֹת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: 9 וַיַּעֲלִי עַד־נַחַל אֲשַׁכּוּל וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּנְיָאוּ אֶת־לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבִלְתִּי־בֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם יְהוָה: 10 וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּשְׁבַּע לֵאמֹר: 11 אִם־יִרְאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָעֹלִים מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְמוֹעֵלָה אֶת הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לֵיצָחֵק וְלִיעֲקֹב כִּי לֹא־מָלְאוּ אֶת־יָדָיו:

## RASHI

הַמְלָחָמָה וְחֹזֵק הָעָרִים וְהָעָם: 8 מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרָנֶע. כֹּךְ שְׁמֵהּ, וּשְׁנֵי קָדָשׁ הָיוּ:

3 עֲמֻרֹת וְדִבֵּן וְגו'. מִאֲרָץ סִיחֹן וְעוֹג הָיוּ: 6 הָאֲחִיכֶם. לְשׁוֹן תְּמִיּהָה הִוא: 7 וְלָמָּה תִּנְיָאוּן. תִּסְרִירו וְתִמְנִיעוּ לָבָם מִעֵבֶר, שִׁיחִיו סְבוּרִים שְׂאֵתָם יִרְאִים לַעֲבֹר מִפְּנֵי

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

and manifested so much Divinity that it awoke the slumbering spiritual potentials of the outlying lands and drew them toward their center of gravity. This will be the case in the messianic future, as well.

But when the tribes of Reuben and Gad pointed out to Moses that Divine providence indicated that this land was meant for them—"[it is] a land [fit] for livestock, and your servants possess livestock"—he agreed that God was, in effect, offering them the challenge of elevating this region and it was proper for them to accept it. Nonetheless, he stipulated that they first enter the holy land together with their brethren, in order to experience firsthand the purity of life in it. This way they would be properly

equipped to retain the force of idealism required when descending to elevate the lower levels of reality.

Moreover, Moses stipulated that the tribes of Reuben and Gad be the *leaders* of the conquest of Israel.<sup>68</sup> By leading the conquest and thereby cultivating self-sacrifice, they would become sufficiently strong in their commitment to God's purposes to be able to successfully pass the test of living outside the holy land. At the same time, they would gain the experience of having lived for years in a non-pastoral context and learned to appreciate it. This would ensure that when they returned to their shepherding it would not be an escape from reality.<sup>69</sup>

68. Rashi on Numbers 32:17, quoting Deuteronomy 3:18. 69. Reshimot 51; Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, p. 198.



2 Like the spies that conquered Ya'zer<sup>63</sup> and the rest of the people, they were determined not to repeat the previous generation's mistake of spurning the Land of Israel, and wanted to rectify this mistake, as well. They knew that God had promised Abraham that his descendants, the Jewish people, would eventually inherit not only Canaan but afterwards also the original territories of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, to the east of the Jordan River.<sup>64</sup> They also knew that although God had forbidden the Israelites to wage war with these peoples, parts of Moab and Ammon had become permitted when Sichon wrested them from their original inhabitants. Thus, they felt that settling these lands *now* would hasten the time when the Israelites would inherit them in their entirety. Also, they felt that if Moses would have at least some involvement in possessing the land, it would solidify the Israelites' physical and spiritual control over it considerably. By choosing not to enter Canaan for these positive reasons, they hoped to rectify the sin of the spies' generation, who chose not to enter Canaan for negative reasons. They took the fact that they had abundant cattle and that these territories were particularly suitable for cattle as a Divine sign that they should try to realize their vision.<sup>65</sup> **The descendants of Gad, who took the lead in this matter, and the descendants of Reuben, who followed them, came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the princes of the community when they were all studying together, saying,**

3 "The cities of Atarot, Divon, Ya'zer, and Nimrah, Cheshbon, Elaleh, Sevam, Nebo, and Beon, and their surrounding areas,

4 **in the land that God struck down before the congregation of Israel, is a land uniquely suitable for livestock, and your servants possess much livestock."**

5 **They said to Moses, "If it pleases you, let this land be given to your servants as a heritage; do not take us across the Jordan.** Even though the whole nation conquered this land, and it is therefore the property of all the tribes, we ask that it be given to us in exchange for the land we would have taken on the west side of the Jordan."<sup>66</sup>

6 Because of their lofty intentions, Moses agreed to their idea in principle, but he had one major misgiving: **Moses said to the descendants of Gad and the descendants of Reuben, "Shall your brethren go to war while you stay here?**

7 **Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over to the land which God has given them?** They will think you are afraid of fighting the inhabitants of the land, and will become afraid, also.

8 **This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Ritmah, near Kadesh Barnea, to explore the land.**<sup>67</sup>

9 **They went up to the Valley of Eshkol and saw the land, and they discouraged the Israelites from coming into the land which God has given them.**

10 **God became angry that day, and He swore, saying,**

11 **'None of the men 20 years old and over who came out of Egypt will see the land that I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, for they did not follow Me wholeheartedly,**

63. Above, 21:32. 64. Genesis 15:18-21. 65. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, pp. 545 ff. 66. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, p. 182, notes 7-8. 67. Above, chapter 13.



ONKELOS

12 אֱלֹהִין כָּלֵב בַּר יִפְנֶה קִנְיָה  
וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בַּר נֹחַ אָרִי אֲשֶׁלִּימו  
בְּתַר דְּחִלְתָּא דִּי: 13 וְתַקַּף רִגְזָא  
דִּי בִישְׂרָאֵל וּטְרַדוֹן בְּמַדְבָּרָא  
אַרְבַּעִין שָׁנִין עַד דָּסַף כָּל דָּרָא  
דְּעֵבֶר דְּבִישׁ קָדָם יִי: 14 וְהָא  
קִמְתוֹן חֲלָף אֲבַהֲתִכוֹן תַּלְמִידֵי  
גִבְרָא חֲבִיָּא לְאוֹסְפָא עוֹד עַל  
תַּקּוּף רִגְזָא דִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: 15 אָרִי  
תְּתוּבוֹן מִבְּתַר דְּחִלְתָּהּ וְיוֹסֵף עוֹד  
לְאַחֲרוֹתָהוֹן בְּמַדְבָּרָא וְתַחֲבִלוֹן  
לְכָל עֲמָא דְּהִין: 16 וְקָרִיבֹו לְתוֹהָ  
וְאָמְרוּ חֲטָרִין דָּעִין נִבְנִי לְבַעֲיָרָנָא  
הָכָא וְקָרוּן לְטַפְלָנָא: 17 וְאַנְחָנָא  
נִזְדָּרוּ מִבְּעִין קָדָם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד דִּי  
נָעִילָנוּן לְאַתְרֵיהוֹן וְיִתְבוֹן טַפְלָנָא  
בְּקָרוּן כְּרִיכֹון מִן קָדָם יְתָבִי אַרְעָא:  
18 לֹא נָתוּב לְבַתְנָא עַד דִּיחֲסִטוֹן  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל גִּבְרַא אַחֲסָנְתָהּ: 19 אָרִי  
לֹא נַחֲסִין עֲמָהוֹן מַעֲבָרָא לִירְדָנָא  
וְלֹהֲלֹא אָרִי קְבִילָנָא אַחֲסָנְתָנָא  
לָנָא מַעֲבָרָא לִירְדָנָא מְדִנְחָא:  
20 וְאָמַר לְהוֹן מִשָּׁה אִם תַּעֲבִדוֹן  
יֵת פִּתְגָמָא דְּהִין אִם תִּזְדָּרוּן קָדָם  
עֲמָא דִּי לְקָרְבָא: 21 וְיַעֲבֵר לְכוֹן  
כָּל דְּמִזְזֹרוּ יֵת יִרְדָנָא קָדָם עֲמָא דִּי  
עַד דִּיתַרְךָ יֵת בְּעָלֵי דְּבִבּוּדֵי מִן  
קְדָמוּדֵי: 22 וְתַתְּכִבֵּשׁ אַרְעָא קָדָם  
עֲמָא דִּי וְכַתֵּר כֵּן תִּתְּבוֹן וְתַהוֹן  
זָכָאִין מִן קָדָם יִי וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְתַהִי  
אַרְעָא הָדָא לְכוֹן לְאַחֲסָנָא קָדָם יִי:  
23 וְאִם לֹא תַעֲבִדוֹן כֵּן הָא חֲבַתוֹן  
קָדָם יִי וְדַעוּ חוֹבְתִכוֹן דִּי תִשְׁכַּח  
יְתְּכוֹן:

12 בְּלִתִּי כָלֵב בֶּן־יִפְנֶה וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹחַ כִּי מִלְּאוֹ  
אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה: 13 וַיַּחֲרֹאף יְהוָה בִּישְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנְעַם בְּמַדְבָּר  
אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה עַד־תָּם כָּל־הַדֹּר הָעֹשֶׂה הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:  
14 וְהִנֵּה קִמְתָם תַּחַת אֲבֹתֵיכֶם תִּרְבּוֹת אֲנָשִׁים חֲמָאִים  
לְסָפוֹת עוֹד עַל חֲרוֹן אַף־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 15 כִּי תִשׁוּבוּן  
מֵאַחֲרָיו וַיִּסַּף עוֹד לְחַנִּיתוֹ בְּמַדְבָּר וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲתֶם לְכָל־הָעָם  
הַזֶּה: 8

16 וַיִּנָּשׂוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ גְדֵרְתָ צֹאן נִבְנֶה לְמִקְנֵנוּ פֶּה  
וְעָרִים לְטַפָּנוּ: 17 וַאֲנַחְנוּ נַחֲלִין חֲשִׁים לְפָנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם־הִבִּיאֲנָם אֶל־מְקוֹמָם וַיֵּשֶׁב טַפָּנוּ בְּעָרֵי  
הַמִּבְצָר מִפְּנֵי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ: 18 לֹא נָשׁוּב אֶל־בְּתִינוּ עַד  
הַתַּנְחַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ נַחֲלָתוֹ: 19 כִּי לֹא נִנְחַל אַתָּם  
מֵעֵבֶר לִירְדֵן וְהִלָּאָה כִּי בָּאָה נַחֲלָתָנוּ אֵלֵינוּ מֵעֵבֶר  
הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזְרָחָה: 9

◆ שְׁבִיעִי (רְבִיעִי בַּמַּחֲבָרִין) 20 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִשָּׁה  
אִם־תַּעֲשׂוּן אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אִם־תַּחֲלִצוּ לְפָנֵי יְהוָה  
לְמַלְחָמָה: 21 וְעֵבֶר לָכֶם כָּל־חֲלוּצֵי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְפָנֵי  
יְהוָה עַד הוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת־אֵיבֵיו מִפְּנֵיו: 22 וְנִכְבְּשָׁה הָאָרֶץ  
לְפָנֵי יְהוָה וְאַחֵר תֵּשְׁבוּ וְהִיִּיתֶם נָקִים מִיְּהוָה וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל  
וְהִיִּיתָ הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לָכֶם לְאַחֲזָה לְפָנֵי יְהוָה: 23 וְאִם־  
לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן הִנֵּה חֲטָאתֶם לַיהוָה וְדַעוּ חֲטָאתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר  
תַּמְצֵא אֶתְכֶם:

RASHI

לפני בני ישראל. בראשי גיטות, מתוך שגבורים היו,  
שכן נאמר בגד: "וטרף ורוע אף קדקד" 36. ואף משה  
חזר ופרש להם ב"אלה הדברים": "ואצו אתכם בעת  
ההוא וגו' חלוצים תעברו לפני אחיכם בני ישראל כל  
בני חיל" 37. וביריחו כתיב: "והחלוץ הלה לפניהם" 38,  
זה ראובן וגד שקימו תנאם: וישב טפנו. בעודנו אצל  
אחינו: בערי המבצר. שנבנה עכשו: 19 מעבר לירדן  
וגו'. בעבר המעבר: כי באה נחלתנו. כבר קבלנוה  
בעבר המזרחי:

12 הקנזי. חורגו של קנז היה, וילדה לו אמו של כלב את  
עתניאל: 13 וינעם. ויטלטלם, מן "נע ונד" 31 ויקח משה  
וגו' 14 לספות. כמו: "ספו שנה על שנה" 32, "עלותיכם  
ספו וגו' 33, לשון תוספת: 16 נבנה למקננו פה. חסידים היו  
על ממונם יותר מבניהם ובנותיהם, שהקדימו מקניהם  
לטפם. אמר להם משה: "לא כן, עשו העקר — עקר,  
והטפל — טפל: בנו לכם תחלה ערים לטפכם ואחר  
כה גדרות לצאנכם": 17 ואנחנו נחלץ חשים. נודרו  
מהירים, כמו: "למהר שלל חש בו" 34, "מהר יחישו" 35:

31. בראשית ד, יב. 32. ישעיה כט, א. 33. ירמיה ז, כא. 34. ישעיה ח, א. 35. ישעיה ה, יט. 36. דברים לג, כ. 37. דברים יג, יח. 38. יהושע ו, יג.

**12** except for Caleb the son of Yefuneh, the Kenizite—Caleb’s father, Yefunah, had died, and his mother married Kenaz, so Caleb was Kenaz’s stepson<sup>70</sup>—**and Joshua the son of Nun, for they followed God wholeheartedly.’**

**13** God became angry with Israel, and He made them wander in the desert for 40 years, until the entire generation who had done evil in the eyes of God had died out.

**14** And behold, you have now risen in place of your fathers as a society of sinful people, to add to the wrathful anger of God against Israel.

**15** If you turn away from following Him, He will leave Israel in the desert again, and you will destroy this entire people.”

**16** They approached him and said, “We will build sheepfolds and similar enclosures for our livestock here and cities for our wives and children.” They mentioned sheepfolds before cities because they were more concerned for their livestock than they were for their families.

**17** “We will then arm ourselves quickly and go before the Israelites, leading the troops, for we are valiant, and we also rely on Jacob’s promise that the descendants of Gad will be successful warriors.<sup>71</sup> We will not leave them **until we have brought them safely to their place.** In the meantime, **our wives and children will reside in the fortified cities** we will now build, **on account of the inhabitants of the land.**

**18** Not only will we help our brethren conquer the land, **we shall not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has taken possession of his inheritance.**” In fact, it took them seven years to conquer it and another seven to divide it up, and the warriors of Reuben and Gad did not return to the eastern side of the Jordan until the end of these 14 years.<sup>72</sup>

**19** “For we will not inherit with them on the other, west side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us here, **on the east bank of the Jordan.”**

- ◆ *Seventh Reading (Fourth when combined)* **20** Moses said to them, “If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves for battle and go before your brothers, God’s people, **21 and all your armed men cross the Jordan to do battle before your brothers, God’s people,<sup>73</sup> until He has driven out His enemies before Him,** **22 and the land will be conquered before God,** then, as far as I am concerned, this is enough, and afterwards you may return, and you shall be freed of your obligation from God and from Israel, and this land will become your heritage before God. You then do not have to stay any longer.

**23** But, if you do not do so, behold, you will have sinned against God, and be aware that there is a punishment for your sin, which will find you.

70. See Joshua 15:17. 71. Genesis 49:19. 72. See Joshua, chapter 22. 73. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, p. 7, note 36.

— ONKELOS —

24 בְּנוֹ לָכֶם עָרִים לְשִׁפְכֶם וּגְדֵרֹת לְצִנְאֲכֶם וְהִיצֵא מִפִּיכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵי־גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר עֲבַדְיָה יַעֲשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנִי מִצִּוָּה: 26 טַפְּנוּ נָשִׁינוּ מִקְּנֵנוּ וְכָל־בְּהֶמְתֵּנוּ יְהוּי־שָׁם בְּעָרֵי הַגִּלְעָד: 27 וְעַבְדִּיךָ יַעֲבֹרוּ כָל־חִלּוּץ צָבָא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְמַלְחָמָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנִי דִּבֶּר: 28 וַיֵּצֵאוּ לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן וְאֶת־רָאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הַמַּטּוֹת לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֱלֹהִים אִם־יַעֲבֹרוּ בְּנֵי־גָד וּבְנֵי־רְאוּבֵן אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן כָּל־חִלּוּץ לְמַלְחָמָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְנִכְבְּשָׁה הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵיכֶם וּנְתַתֶּם לָהֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד לְאֶחָזָה: 30 וְאִם־לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ חִלּוּצִים אֶתְכֶם וּנְאֻחֲזוּ בְּתֻכְכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: 31 וַיַּעֲנִי בְנֵי־גָד וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן לֵאמֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־עַבְדְּךָ כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה: 32 נָחֲנוּ נַעֲבֹר חִלּוּצִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאֶתְנוּ אַחֲזָת נַחֲלָתֵנוּ מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן: 33 וְיִתֵּן לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה לִבְנֵי־גָד וּלְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וְלַחֲצֵי אֶשְׁכֵּנִי מְנַשֶּׁה בֶּן־יוֹסֵף אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי וְאֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עֹג מֶלֶךְ הַכְּנָעַן הָאֶרֶץ לַעֲרִיָּה בְּגִבְלֹת עָרֵי הָאֶרֶץ סָבִיב:

— RASHI —

והם קבלו עליהם "עד התנחל"י<sup>41</sup>, הרי הוסיפו להתעבב שבע שחלקו, וכן עשו: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵי גָד. כָּלֶם כְּאִישׁ אָחֵד: 28 וַיֵּצֵאוּ לָהֶם. כְּמוֹ "עֲלִיהֶם", וְעַל תְּנָאֵם מִנָּה אֶלְעָזָר וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ, כְּמוֹ: "ה' יִלְחֶם לָכֶם"<sup>42</sup>: 32 וְאֶתְנוּ אַחֲזָת נַחֲלָתֵנוּ. כְּלוּמָר, בְּיָדֵינוּ וּבְרִשְׁוֹתֵנוּ תְּהִי אַחֲזָת נַחֲלָתֵנוּ מֵעֵבֶר הַזֶּה:

24 לְצִנְאֲכֶם. תְּבָה זוֹ מְגֻזֶּרֶת "צִנָּה וְאֶלְפִים כָּלֶם"<sup>39</sup>, שְׁאִין בּוֹ אֶל־מִפְסִיק בֵּין נֹ"ן לְצָדִי. וְאֶל־פִּי שְׂבָא כָאן אַחֲרֵי הַנּוּ"ן בְּמָקוֹם הַ"א שֶׁל "צִנָּה" הוּא. מִיִּסּוּדוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי מֹשֶׁה הִדְרִשָּׁן לְמִדְתִּי כֵן: וְהִיצֵא מִפִּיכֶם תַּעֲשׂוּ. לְגִבּוֹה, שֶׁקִּבְּלָתֶם עֲלֵיכֶם לַעֲבֹר לְמַלְחָמָה עַד כְּבוֹשׁ וְחִלּוּק. שִׁמּוּשָׁה לֹא בְּקֶשׁ מִהֶם אֶל־אֶל "וְנִכְבְּשָׁה וְאַחֲרֵי תִשְׁבּוּ"<sup>40</sup>,

39. תהלים ח, ח. 40. לעיל כב. 41. לעיל יח. 42. שמות יד, יד.

and aspiration to inherit the land in full. By dividing the tribe in two and giving half an inheritance on the west side of the Jordan and half an inheritance on the east side, Moses demonstrated that this tribe did not receive its portion on the east bank of the Jordan because it did not want to live in the land proper. Indeed, the majority of the tribe crossed the Jordan and settled on its west bank.<sup>79</sup> Moses gave these two-and-a-half tribes all the land mentioned together with the cities within its borders, the cities of the surrounding territory.

79. Likutei Sichot, vol. 28, pp. 210-215.

**24 So build yourselves cities for your wives and children and sheepfolds for your sheep** and appropriate pens for your other animals—but not in the order *you* mentioned them, sheepfolds and then cities, for your families are more important than your livestock. **And**, since you have vowed to remain on the western side of the Jordan until your brethren inherit their land, you must **do as you have promised.**”

**25 The descendants of Gad and the descendants of Reuben spoke to Moses** as one man, unanimously, **saying, “Your servants will do as you, our master, commands.**

**26 Our children and our wives, our livestock and our cattle will remain there, in the cities of Gilead.**

**27 But your servants will cross over, all who are armed for combat before God, for the battle, as our master has spoken.”**

28 Since he knew he would not live to supervise the arrangement with these tribes himself, **Moses commanded Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and all the paternal heads of the tribes of the Israelites concerning them.**

**29 Moses said to Eleazar and Joshua, “If the descendants of Gad and Reuben cross the Jordan with you, all who are armed for combat before God, and the land is conquered before you, you may give them Gilead as a heritage.**

**30 But if they do not cross over with you armed for battle, they shall receive a possession among you in Canaan.”**

**31 The descendants of Gad and the descendants of Reuben answered, saying, “We shall do as God has spoken to your servants.**

**32 We shall cross over in an armed force before God to Canaan, and then we shall have the estate of our inheritance on this side of the Jordan.”**

**33 So Moses gave the land on the east side of the Jordan to the descendants of Gad and the descendants of Reuben and half**, that is, part of the tribe of **Manasseh the son of Joseph**. Specifically, Moses gave the former **kingdom of Sichon, king of the Amorites**, to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, **and the former kingdom of Og, king of Bashan**, to two of the eight clans of the tribe of Manasseh.<sup>74</sup> The tribe of Manasseh had not requested any land on the east side of the Jordan, but Moses realized that the tribes of Reuben and Gad were correct in assuming that if he were involved in possessing the land it would strengthen the people’s control over it. He took their reasoning one step further and reasoned that his involvement (and its positive effect) would be even more pronounced if he planted some other part of the Jewish people in their land on his own initiative. He had given the former kingdom of Sichon to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, but the former kingdom of Og lay unclaimed. This area was the land of the Rephaim,<sup>75</sup> part of the land that God had promised to give to Abraham’s descendants when they first conquered the land,<sup>76</sup> not in the messianic future. (True, Moses had originally assumed that the land on the west side of the Jordan should be conquered first, but that plan had already been aborted.<sup>77</sup>) The tribe of Manasseh was famous for its devotion to the Land of Israel,<sup>78</sup> so Moses specifically chose them to express the people’s hope

74. Deuteronomy 3:12-13; see Joshua 17:1-2, where six of the eight clans of Manasseh (as given above, 26:29-32) are stated to have inherited on the west side of the Jordan. The clan of Machir is recorded explicitly as inheriting to the east of the Jordan (below, v. 39; Deuteronomy 3:13). The clan of Gilead is not mentioned explicitly, but it is not included in the list (in Joshua 17:2) of the six that inherited on the west side, and it is logical to assume that it inherited in the area that was eventually named after it. 75. Deuteronomy, 3:13. 76. Genesis 15:18-21. 77. Above, on 21:23. 78. See above, on 27:1.

— ONKELOS —

34 ובנו בני גד ית דיבון וית  
עטרות וית ערעור: 35 וית עטרות  
שופן וית יעור ורממא: 36 וית בית  
נמרה וית בית הון קרנין בריכן  
וחטריז דען: 37 ובני ראובן בנו ית  
חשבון וית אלעלא וית קריתים:  
38 וית נבו וית בעל מעון מקפן  
שמחה וית שבמה וקרו בשמה וית  
שמחה קרניא די בנו: 39 ואילו בני  
מכיר בר מנשה גלעד ונבשה  
ותרן ית אמוקא די בה: 40 ויהב  
משה ית גלעד למכיר בר מנשה  
ויתב בה: 41 ויאיר בר מנשה  
אזל וכבש ית כפרניחון וקרא  
יתחן כפרני יאיר: 42 ונבח אזל  
וכבש ית קנת וית כפרניחא וקרא  
לה נבח בשמה:

34 ויבנו בני גד את דיבון ואת עטרות ואת ערעור:  
35 ואת עטרות שופן ואת יעור ורממא: 36 ואת בית  
נמרה ואת בית הון ערי מבצר וגדרת צאן: 37 ובני  
ראובן בנו את חשבון ואת אלעלא ואת קריתים:  
38 ואת נבו ואת בעל מעון מוסבת שם ואת שבמה  
ויקראו בשמות את שמות הערים אשר בנו:

◆ מפטיר 39 וילכו בני מכיר בן מנשה גלעד וילבדה  
ויורש את האמרי אשר בה: 40 ויתן משה את הגלעד  
למכיר בן מנשה וישב בה: 41 ויאיר בן מנשה הלך  
וילבד את חותיהם ויקרא אתהן חות יאיר: 42 ונבח  
הלך וילבד את קנת ואת כפרניחא ויקרא לה נבח  
בשמו:

ק"ב פסוקים. בק"י סימן. יק"ב סימן. עיב"ל סימן.

— RASHI —

משמשת שתי חלקות — לשון ירשה, ולשון הורשה  
שהוא טרוד ותרוד: 41 חותיהם. כפרניהון: ויקרא אתהן  
חות יאיר. לפי שלא היו לו בנים, קראם בשמו לזכרון:  
42 ויקרא לה נבח. "לה" אינו מפיך ה"א. וראיתי ביסודו  
של רבי משה הדרשן, לפי שלא נתקיים לה שם זה,  
לפיכך הוא רפה, שמשמע מדרשו כמו "לא". ותמהני  
מה ידרש בשתי תבנות הדומות לה: "ויאמר לה בעז"<sup>44</sup>,  
"לבנות לה בית"<sup>45</sup>.

חסלת פרשת מטות

36 ערי מבצר וגדרת צאן. זה סוף הפסוק מוסב על  
תחלת הענין: "ויבנו בני גד את הערים הללו להיות  
ערי מבצר וגדרות צאן": 38 ואת נבו ואת בעל מעון  
מוסבת שם. נבו ובעל מעון — שמות עבודה זרה הם,  
והיו האמוריים קורים עריהם על שם עבודה זרה  
שלהם, ובני ראובן הסבו את שמם לשמות אחרים,  
וזהו: "מוסבת שם" — נבו ובעל מעון מוסבות לשם  
אחר: ואת שבמה. בנו שבמה, והיא "שבם" האמורה  
למעלה: 39 ויאיר. כתר גומו: "ותרן", שתבת "ריש"

43. פסוק ג. 44. רות ב, יד. 45. זכריה ה, יא.

### INNER DIMENSIONS

[41] "The villages of Yair": When he renamed the villages, Yair called them *chavot* (instead of one of the more usual terms, *banot* or *kefarim*).

The basic reason for this is because the word *chavot* is related to the word for "life" (*chai*), indicating that he intended them to be a memorial to his life.

On a deeper level, however, this term expressed the spiritual transformation Yair intended for these villages to undergo. Idolatry, the antithesis of Divine consciousness, is equivalent to spiritual death: the idolater severs himself from God, the source of life. By including these villages in the Jewish national homeland, Yair was transforming them from domains of death to gardens of life.

Furthermore, the word *Yair* means "will shine," so *Chavot Yair* means "Locales of life where Divine light will shine."

The deeper reason why Yair renamed only the villages this way is because the culture of the village is less sophisticated than that of the city and thus represents a more raw, unrefined level of Divine consciousness. (We are contrasting the village with a well-run and enlightened city, not the degenerate hotbed of vice the term "city" has unfortunately come to connote in modern times.) Transforming the *village* into a Godly setting thus captures the essence of our Divine mission in this world—to transform even the aspects of reality that are furthest removed from Divinity into God's home on earth.<sup>91</sup>



34 The descendants of Gad built up Divon, Atarot, Aroer,  
 35 Atrot Shofan, Ya'zer, Yogbehah,  
 36 Beit Nimrah, and Beit Haran, making them into fortified cities and sheepfolds.  
 37 The descendants of Reuben built Cheshbon, Elaleh, Kiryataim,  
 38 Nebo, Ba'al Meon—the names of the latter two having been changed by the tribe of Reuben since they were originally named after idols—and Sivismah, which is the same as Sevam, mentioned above,<sup>80</sup> for they changed the names of the cities they built in order to emphasize the fact that they had now come into Jewish possession.<sup>81</sup>

### Additional Conquests

- ◆ *Maftir* Inspired by the idea of expanding the borders of the Land of Israel in anticipation of the future, the descendants of Machir the son of Manasseh<sup>82</sup> went to the northern part of Gilead, that was beyond Og's territory, and conquered it, driving out the Amorites who were there.

40 Moses gave this part of Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.<sup>83</sup>

41 Yair, the great grandson of Manasseh,<sup>84</sup> also went and conquered some of the Amorites' territory in northern Gilead, which included cities and villages.<sup>85</sup> He called the villages surrounding the cities "the villages of Yair" after himself to perpetuate his name, since he was childless.<sup>86</sup> But he only named the *villages* after himself and not the cities because villages are like the "off-spring" of the cities.<sup>87</sup>

42 Similarly, another descendant of Manasseh,<sup>88</sup> Novach, went and conquered the city of Kenat, and its surrounding villages, but he called the city itself—not just the villages—Novach, after his name. But this name did not persist (See Figure 2).<sup>89</sup>



Figure 2: The Land Granted to the Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh

The *Haftarah* for the First Sabbath of the Three Weeks may be found on p. 253.



### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

37 **The descendants of Reuben built:** The original names of these cities were associated with the idolatries their original inhabitants practiced in them. Changing their names was an act of conquest, of taking something formerly associated with idolatry and appropriating it for holy purposes. In this

sense, the tribe of Reuben was continuing the task begun with the war against Midian and Moses' stipulation that they cross the Jordan with their brothers: that of elevating the lowest ends of the spiritual continuum to holiness.<sup>90</sup>

80. v. 3. 81. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, p. 546, note 68. 82. Above, 26:29. 83. Deuteronomy 3:15. 84. 1 Chronicles 2:22. 85. Deuteronomy 3:4-14. 86. Deuteronomy 3:14. 87. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 117 ff. 88. Chizkuni. 89. As can be seen from 1 Chronicles 2:23. 90. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 33, p. 198. 91. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 38, pp. 120-121.



*Dedicated in honor of our children*

**Nathan, Yitzchok,  
Moshe Lev,  
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways  
of our holy Torah*

**Yuri and Deana Pikover**

