

JULY 10, 2010 28 Tammuz 5770 Parshat Matot-Masei

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The End of the Journey

This week we finish reading the fourth of the books of the Torah. It encapsulates the story of 42 encampments during a 40-year journey. If we look at tendencies that play out during this time, we could say that Bnei Yisrael did a lot of complaining and bickering. However, if we take a closer look, we should realize that they underwent a difficult, long-lasting schooling experience.

Moshe himself said: "You shall remember all of the path that Hashem had you take during forty years in the desert in order to afflict you, to test you" (Devarim 8:2). This was not a normal national existence. They did not occupy an inhabited land; they did not have normal houses or normal bread to eat. Everything was unnatural: bread from the sky, water that arrived miraculously. The travels were totally unpredictable, sometimes after a day, a month, ... (Bamidbar 9:22). It is not such a surprise that the people were short-breathed at times. It is not easy to always live in uncertainty and undergoing tests. Let us take a look at some of the test results.

The Torah does not concentrate on the praise due to the nation, but highlights that which was wrong and needed repair. However, we can see some of the good things in the nation specifically from the appraisal of one who was not so enthusiastic about seeing their goodness, Bilam. He was particularly impressed with Bnei Yisrael's living quarters, among other things. Apparently they had slowly started fitting the mold for which they were destined, as the Nation of Hashem.

By the end of *Sefer Bamidbar*, there was a changing of the guard. The final census did not contain members of the generation that Moshe and Aharon originally counted (Bamidbar 26:64). The new generation was one that was poised to conquer the Land. They conquered nations on the east bank of the Jordan and were encamped just to the east of the Jordan, near Yericho. Perhaps the most daunting challenge was that their great leader, Moshe, was preparing to pass on from leadership and from life. He had to instruct them about the boundaries of the Land and the methods of dividing it. He had to warn them how to interact with the inhabitants of the Land of

C'n'a'an, and to set up even cities of refuge for unintentional murderers.

The *parasha* ends in a manner that expresses the essence of the nation and the Land they were to inherit. "Do not defile the Land that you are living in, in which I dwell, for I am Hashem Who dwells in the midst of Bnei Yisrael" (Bamidbar 35:34). *Chazal* (Sifrei, Bamidbar 1) derive from here that even when the nation is impure, still the Divine Presence is among them. This the nature of the Land and the nation, whose sanctity does not cease even in a state of defilement. Indeed it was worthwhile to undergo 40 years of trials and tribulations in order to hear such a Divine assurance. *Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik*. May we be repeatedly strengthened.

Harav Shaul Yisraeli,
from *Si'ach Shaul*, p. 463
Eretz Hemdah

RABBIS WEIL AND WEINREB OF THE ORTHODOX UNION TEAM UP FOR TISHA B'AV ALL-DAY WEBCAST

An OU tradition continues again this year with OU Executive Vice President Emeritus Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb's annual four-hour Tisha b'Av webcast on www.ou.org and www.ouradio.org, to be immediately followed by OU Executive Vice President Rabbi Steven Weil's Tisha b'Av presentation.

Rabbi Weinreb's live webcast will take place at 9am EDT from the Young Israel of Woodmere on Long Island, NY.

Rabbi Weil's will begin at 1pm EDT, 10am PDT, 3,000 miles away at Shaarey Zedek Congregation in Valley Village, CA.

**Tisha b'Av is observed on
Tuesday, July 20 this year.**

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westcoast@ou.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS @ OU WEST COAST

October 22-24

Come join us for an
OU Weekend in La Jolla, CA

Sheraton Hotel--La Jolla
Meals at Adat Yeshurun
\$350 per/couple

Info: EstherR@ou.org

Programs in the works:

Kinnus Teshuva Weekend
Attorney Continuing Education
Medical Ethics Conference
Kallah Class II
Parenting Workshop
Israel Advocacy Event
Trustees Event

OU West Coast Annual Torah Convention

Thursday, DEC 23 thru
Sunday, DEC 26, 2010

ISRAEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD

Quenching your thirst with the sea

An Israeli company is making seawater potable for millions of people worldwide, with 400 desalination plants in 40 countries, producing 2,000,000 cubic meters of water a day.

Beating the boot-up blues

Israel's Soluto just won a prestigious TechCrunch Disrupt award with its lead product that may cut down PC boot-up time by up to half, a vital aid to the silent majority in need of solutions.

Health supplement triples fertility,

Israeli researchers find

An anti-aging drug, sold over the counter worldwide, has been found to dramatically improve pregnancy rates among women undergoing treatments for infertility, according to new Israeli research.

Your next guitar could be a Budaqov

A veteran Israeli guitarist is producing an instrument that is proudly joining the Fenders and Gibsons in music stores worldwide.

www.israel21c.org

OU SYNAGOGUES AROUND THE REGION

Beverly Hills: Cong. Beth Jacob (310) 278-1911

- **Women's Seudah Shlishet Series with the Rebbetzins:**
JULY 10, 6pm: Rebbetzin/Dr. Hindy Posy @1531 Glenville
- **Tisha B'Av JUL 19-20: Joint program BJ-BH / BDJ / YICC**
MON, 7:50pm Mincha @ YICC; TUES 8:30am Schachrit @ BJ-BH with Rabbis Kanefsky, Muskin, Topp + video @ noon;
- **Shabbat JUL 24:** Board Installation lunch w/Rabbi Kenneth Brander, RSVP

Beverly Hills: Young Israel-North BH: (310) 276-7650 info@YINBH.org

- **Shabbat JULY 10:** Guest – Rabbi David Mahler, Maimonides Academy
- **Shabbat JULY 16-17:** S-I-R Rabbi Natan Slifkin, 'The Zoo Rabbi'
- **Shabbat JULY 31:** Guest Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, Jews4Judaism
- **Shabbat AUG 14:** Guest Ofir Fisher, of The OR Movement
- **Shabbat AUG 21:** Guest Rabbi Baruch Sufrin, Harkham-Hillel Academy
- **Shabbat AUG 28:** Guest Rabbi Zvi Schindel, Maimonides Academy faculty

Calabasas Shul: (818) 591-7485

Canada-Calgary: House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel (403) 259-3230

Canada-Edmonton: Beth Israel (780) 488-2840

Canada-Vancouver: Schara Tzedek (604) 736-7607

Denver, CO : BMH-BJ Cong (303) 388-4203

Denver, CO: EDOS (303) 322-7943

Irvine, CA: Beth Jacob (949) 786-5230

LA: Adas Torah (310) 203-9659 www.adastorah.com

LA: Aish Hatorah (310) 278-8672 x 305 or tsullivan@aishla.com

LA: B'nai David-Judea (310)-276-9269 or amram@bnavid.com

- **Tisha B'Av JUL 19-20: Joint program BJ-BH / BDJ / YICC**
MON, 7:50pm Mincha @ YICC; TUES 8:30am Schachrit @ BJ-BH with Rabbis Kanefsky, Muskin, Topp + video @ noon;

LA: Etz Jacob (323) 938-2619

LA: Mogen David Cong. (310) 556-5609

LA: Young Israel of Century City: (310) 273-6954

- **Tisha B'Av JUL 19-20: Joint program BJ-BH / BDJ / YICC**
MON, 7:50pm Mincha @ YICC; TUES 8:30am Schachrit @ BJ-BH with Rabbis Kanefsky, Muskin, Topp + video @ noon;

LA: Young Israel of Hancock Park: (323) 931-4030

LA: Yeshiva of LA (YOLA) 310-203-3197 yeshivarebbi@juno.com

MINCHA/MAARIV: SUN-THURS, 15 minutes before Shkiah;

LATE MAARIV: SUN-THUR 10pm. M-TH am/pm: adults/students chavrusas

Laguna Woods, CA: Beth Torah (949) 587-1967 (a retirement community)

La Jolla: Adat Yeshurun (858) 535-1196

- **OCT 22-24: OU Shabbaton in La Jolla.** Info EstherR@ou.org

Las Vegas, NV: Shaarei Tefila (702) 384-3565 (Mikva 384-3317)

- **SUN NOV 7:** Annual Gala

Oakland, CA: Beth Jacob (510) 482-1147

Palm Springs, CA: The Desert Synagogue (760) 327-4848

Palo Alto, CA: Emek Beracha (650) 857-1800 (Mikva 493-5555)

Phoenix, AZ: Beth Joseph (602) 277-8858

Portland, OR: Kesser Israel (503) 222-1239

Sacramento, CA: Keneset Israel Torah Center (916) 481-1159

- **SUN JUL 11, 6pm:** Documentary about Michael Levin (z"l), a Philadelphia native who immigrated to Israel and sacrificed for his people

- **Shabbat JUL 17:** Mini-Shabbaton with Rabbi Yosi Aronson, from J'lem

San Diego, CA: Cong. Beth Jacob (619) 287-9890

San Diego, CA: Kehillat Ahavat Yisrael-KAY (858) 633-0181

San Francisco, CA: Adath Israel (415) 564-5665

Seattle: Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath (206) 721-0970

- **SUN AUG 15:** Annual BBQ & Fair. Contact info: Julie@bcmhseattle.org

Seattle: Ezra Bessaroth (206) 722-5500

Seattle: Sephardic Bikur Holim (206) 723-3028

Valley Village, CA: Shaarey Zedek Cong. (818) 763-0560

Venice, Pacific Jewish Center-The Shul on the Beach:(310)392-8749

Washington-Mercer Island: Shevet Achim (206) 275-1539

Woodland Hills: Beit HaMidrash (818) 999-2059 (5850 Fallbrook Ave.)

- **SUNS @ 8:30am:** following 8am minyan-Shiur-Baba Kama w/Rabbi Yaakov Rechnitz

West LA: Westwood Kehilla (310) 441-5288x2 director@kehilla.org

- **AUG 3-10:** Group trip to the Canadian Rockies. Info at 310- 927-1853 or asherbrander@gmail.com

NCSY-JSU-YACHAD ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS



Office contact: 310-229-9000 x 209 www.westcoastncsy.com

Want to help run a chesed project? call Solly at 310-557-6582

For more info on CITY NCSY or JSU call Solly 310-557-6582

CITY NCSY: Call Solly @ 310-557-6582 or Shess@westcoastncsy.com

Congrats to City Chapter on their CHAPTER EXCELLENCE AWARD!

Bonfire and Kumzitz this Sunday night at 7pm at Dockweiler Beach

Latte&Learning-is going strong!-TUES 7:30pm: @CB&T-233 S. Beverly Dr. with Rabbi Josh Horwitz

DNL is on break for the summer - have a great summer!

JR. NCSY: (6-8 grade) Call Josh 310-694-2976 or ncsyjosh@gmail.com

... **NCSY Bar/Bat Mitzvah** tutoring available. Talmud Torah classes.

***Jr. NCSY Dodger Baseball Event:** call Josh for details 310-694-2976

YACHAD: Call Perri @323-228-4191.

Check out pics from Spring Regional at www.westcoastncsy.com

ACT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE- SIGN UP FOR LINKEDIN ON JULY 8 & COMPUTER CLASSES STARTING JULY 12 EVENTS: OU Job Board Announcements and Upcoming Events

July 8th, 2010 the OU Job Board will be broadcasting Part 2 of LinkedIn- The Way to Get Ahead in Today's Job Marketplace. The Webcast will be available starting at 5:30pm (ET) - 6:30pm (PT). Please go to the OU Job Board to sign up to join this event at www.oujobs.org. If you want to attend this event please register as above and then e-mail sarahd@ou.org to attend this event live. This event is FREE and we invite all to "attend"

Starting July 12, 2010 the OU Job Board will once again be offering classes in conjunction with BMCC. The classes held in full equipped computer labs. The following schedule of classes will be ready for registration starting Wednesday, June 23. Please note these classes fill up quickly and there is a first come first serve policy in effect. To register please go to www.oujobs.org after June 23:

July 12, 26, Aug 2, 9, 16, 23-MS EXCEL-Beginners: 10-11:30am:

July 12, 26, Aug 2, 9, 16, 23-MS ACCESS: 11:45am-1:15pm:

July 12, 26, Aug 2, 9, 16, 23-QUICKBOOKS- Beginners: 1:30-3:00pm:

July 12, 26, Aug 2, 9, 16, 23-QUICKBOOKS-Advanced: 3:30-5:00pm:

July 13, 27, Aug 3, 10, 17, 24-Introduction to COMPUTERS: 10-11:30am:

July 13, 27, Aug 3, 10, 17, 24-MS WORD & OUTLOOK: 11:45am-1:15pm:

July 13, 27, Aug 3, 10, 17, 24-Adobe PHOTOSHOP-Beginners: 1:30-3pm:

July 13, 27, Aug 3, 10, 17, 24-Adobe PHOTOSHOP-Advanced: 3:30-5pm:

July 14, 21, 28, Aug 4, 11, 18--BEGINNER WEB DESIGN (DREAMWEAVER)--Time: 1:30-3pm:

July 14, 21, 28, Aug 4, 11, 18-ADVANCED WEB DESIGN (DREAMWEAVER)--Time: 3:30-5pm:

July 15, 22, 29, Aug 5, 12, 19-Microsoft POWERPOINT: 1:30-3pm:

July 15, 22, 29, Aug 5, 12, 19-MS EXCEL-Advanced: 3:30-5pm:

All classes require registration.

There is a \$72 registration fee. Scholarships may be available

Can't come to the BMCC classes? We invite you to take these classes on-line. A full schedule of these on-line classes will be available shortly. Classes will be held on-line via WebEx with full interaction with the teacher. Classes will be held in the morning and in the evening and is available world wide

Did you know there are now over 1500 jobs available and looking to be filled on the OU Job Board. Please search for these jobs, post your resumes, and explore our archives all for FREE. Don't wait for a job to come to you, be proactive and find the job of your dreams! www.oujobs.org

B'NEI AKIVA OF LA ANNOUNCEMENTS

➔ **Office:** 310-248-2450 bneiakivaLA@gmail.com

➔ **Upcoming Events:**

Have a great Summer!

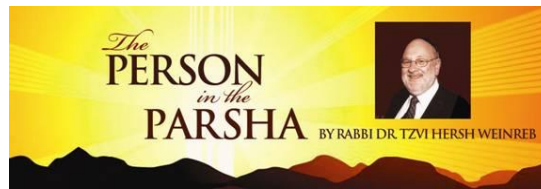


COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

▶ **ONGOING: OU'S WOMEN'S TORAH NETWORK (WTN)**

Classes with Geri Wiener--Summer sessions start June 21 & 23

➔ **MONs-Valley (private home):** ➔ **WEDs-City (OU Hdqtrs):**



Parshat Matot/Masei

July 10, 2010 – 28 Tammuz 5770

To read more articles and essays by Rabbi Weinreb, visit his blog at www.ou.org/rabbi_weinreb

"Breaking Promises"

It was a typical park bench conversation. I hadn't seen my friend for quite some time, and we both were delighted when we ran into each other by chance that afternoon.

We shook hands, and withdrew to a bench in the shade to spend a few minutes together catching up with each other. As is often the case in such conversations, we found ourselves discussing mutual acquaintances with whom one or the other of us had lost touch. Pretty soon we were discussing Sam.

Sam was a person who had many fine qualities, indeed some outstanding ones. But the one that made the biggest impression upon my park bench partner and me was Sam's impeccable honesty.

"Once Sam says something," my pal remarked, "he never backs out or changes his mind. You can count on him to keep his word."

Something deep inside of me, perhaps the ornery part of me, then spoke up. "Is it always a virtue to keep your word and never change your mind? Isn't that a sign of a certain rigidity, which is not always beneficial, and may even sometimes be morally wrong?"

My friend objected. "Surely," he said, "you don't mean to condone lying."

At this point, I realized that our idle conversation was taking a deeper turn. We were beginning to wax philosophical and would soon have to resort to a higher level of discourse than we had bargained for when we initially sat down together.

But before changing the topic of conversation, I was reminded of this week's Torah portion, *Matot-Ma'asei*, and of its opening passages which discuss the binding nature of vows and promises, and the circumstances under which those verbal commitments can be annulled.

"When a man vows a vow... or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." (*Numbers* 30:3)

The binding quality of one's promises is emphasized by many non-biblical authors. The Roman sage Horace writes in his *Epistles*, "Once a word has been allowed to escape, it cannot be recalled." The Spanish novelist, Miguel de Cervantes, puts these words in the mouth of his hero Don Quixote: "An honest man's word is as good as his bond."

It is apparent that being true to one's words is a universal ethical standard. The Torah, however, while fully supporting the binding quality of one's promises, also recognizes that there are situations which call for the revocation of those promises. Times change, circumstances are altered, and a reassessment of past commitments is not only permitted but is to be commended. Blind obedience to one's past vows can lead to disastrous consequences.

Whereas the Torah explicitly grants the authority to a father to annul the vows of his daughter, and under certain circumstances allows a husband to abrogate his wife's vows, our sages recognize that every individual must have access to a wise man, a *chacham*, who can

help him assess his verbal commitments, and, when justified, release him from those commitments.

The classic case of misguided adherence to one's words is the story, narrated in the book of *Judges* chapter 11, of Jephthah (Yiftach). He was a great military leader who, when he embarked upon a battle against the Ammonites, vowed that if God would grant him victory, he would offer "whatever comes out of the door of my house... as a burnt offering." Tragically, it was his daughter, his only child, who came out to meet him. He felt bound by his words and "did to her as he vowed."

Our sages see his blind obedience to his own words as being a result of his ignorance, and they do not commend his fidelity to his vow. Quite the contrary; our rabbis recognize the complexities of life and understand full well that situations which call for morality can be most ambiguous.

In certain circumstances, a sense of being bound by one's promises is an example of integrity and honesty of the highest order. But even one's promises need to be assessed in the light of changing circumstances. When those circumstances demand a loosening of the bond of verbal commitment, our tradition knows of procedures whereby one can be released even from his most fervent oaths and vows.

The opening passages of this week's Torah portion recognize this complexity. These passages teach that one must be careful never to profane or violate his words. But they also teach that one's words need to be revisited, re-examined, and reassessed. And they teach that, under the guidance of a wise and pious *chacham*, the bonds of words can be undone, and the chains of past commitments can be loosened.

There is an additional lesson here, and that is the lesson of forgiveness. Sometimes human relationships necessitate certain reactions. My vow to have nothing to do with you may have been based upon the factual consideration that your behavior was undesirable and might have a negative effect upon me or my family. But I must be ready to say, "That was then and this is now." I must be ready to realize that you have changed and that now our relationship must change.

And when I realize that, I must re-examine my past promises and commitments and be ready to undo them. That is the underlying concept behind the procedure known as *hatarat nedarim*, the undoing of the bonds of words. That is among the messages of this week's Torah portion.

I am sharing these thoughts with you, dear reader, but didn't share them with my park bench partner. Certain matters are much too important for a park bench. But I am sharing my thoughts with you, and hope you find them meaningful.