



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

# תורת אמן WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

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## Parshas Matos: The Power of Speech

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

By Devorah Kaye

In Parshas Matos, Moshe speaks to the *Roshei Matos*-the tribal leaders, regarding the positive and negative commandments related to oaths and vows. Why did Moshe speak to the *Roshei Matos* first and not directly to the Jewish people? Rashi explains that if a person regrets the oath that he uttered in a fit of emotion, he can go to a great Torah scholar, such as one of the tribal leaders, and have the vow rescinded. Therefore, Moshe spoke to the *Roshei Matos* first.

The Avnei Nezer questions Rashi's explanation. If any Jew can make a vow, why does the Torah specifically single out the tribal leaders? He answers that it seems as if taking a vow could be a violation of "Lo Tosef"-the prohibition not to add any new mitzvot to the Torah. How can the Torah

give a license to make a vow, thus creating additional obligations? The Avnei Nezer answers that the mitzvot of the Torah are G-d given, and are therefore eternal. In contrast, oaths are initiated by man, and can be rescinded by the Sages of Israel. Therefore, because the concept of *hatarat nedarim* authorizes vows, Moshe addressed the tribal leaders, who can nullify oaths, first. The Shem MiShmuel asks, how can Man have the power to make vows and create personal prohibitions? He explains that a Jew is a holy vessel endowed with angelic sanctity. Speech comes from within a person, taking on the *kedusha* of the human soul. Because speech is holy, vows and promises are endowed with special sanctity and must be fulfilled. This is the secret of the power of a *neder*.

What if our speech has been defiled, however? How can we say that our vows have sanctity, if we have desecrated our speech? Even if an individual has sinned in the area of speech, our Torah sages and righteous people share their great holiness with every Jew, enabling the individual to tap into their holiness and imbue his words with spiritual power. Therefore, Moshe spoke first to the *Roshei Matos*-the righteous leaders of Israel, signifying that their sanctity in tandem with the eternal *kedusha* of Kneset Yisrael will lend holiness to all vows and oaths.

## The Grand Scheme- Parshios Matos-Massey

Based on a shiur by Shira Smiles on Sefirat Haomer

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

In Parshas Massey Hashem gives the command to set aside six 'cities of refuge', as well as the forty two cities of the Leviim, as places where one who kills unintentionally must remain until the death of the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest.

This seems an inordinately severe punishment for an unintentional sin. For almost all accidental trespasses we are able to atone by bringing an offering to the Temple, and we would have been absolved.

Although other accidental sins can be atoned for more easily, the accidental loss of life requires a severe punishment, to teach us that nothing is as important as human life.

We must be aware of the sanctity of life. This is the inherent difference between the secular view of life and the Jewish view of life. The secular view of life imposes qualifications on the value of life. That view quantifies life as a product of the quality of life, or the usefulness of life.

In the Jewish view, every hour of life is precious. Every moment is a gift that the Creator has blessed us. Hashem breathed

into us as a manifestation of His Spirit at the moment of our creation, and every moment that we live, He is re-enacting that moment of creation.

The value of our lives is therefore the potential to take our G-dly spark and elevate it through connecting to Hashem's Will. True joy lies in improving ourselves spiritually, in overcoming the urge to sin, and in striving for greater heights. Every time we succeed in one of these areas, we create beauty and serenity in the world, and meaning in our lives.

If someone has inadvertently caused the death of another, it is because for a moment he took the value of life too casually. The accidental murderer has severed the possibility of the victim's continued service of Hashem in this world, and has distanced himself from Hashem as well. Hashem sends him to the city of the Levites, to people whose entire being is dedicated to service to Hashem. In this setting, it is hoped, he will be influenced to learn to appreciate how vigilant he must be in all his actions, especially when it comes to life and death.

He must wait for the death of the High Priest. This teaches the power of prayer. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest is responsible to pray for no accidental deaths among the Jewish People. If accidental deaths do occur, the High Priest's prayer was not effective, and he is therefore partially responsible for this death. As a result of this, the negligent murderer undoubtedly prays for the death of the High Priest and the end of imprisonment.

No one understands the power of prayer more than a mother. The mother of the High Priest now fills her time with prayer for her son's well-being, hoping to counteract the prayers of the man in custody. She also accepts some of the responsibility. Perhaps she herself was negligent in her duty as a mother. Perhaps she did not impress upon her son, the current High Priest, the importance and power of prayer. Had she done so, his prayers would have been more sincere and effective, and this situation would not have been.

Prayer is the physical manifestation of the soul, a vehicle for cleaving to our Maker. Through prayer, Hashem has supplied us with

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## אִמֵּר WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

### The Grand Scheme- Parshiot Matos-Massey-Continued

Based on a shiur by Shira Smiles on Sefirat Haomer

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our own individual "city of refuge" on a daily basis. The *Shema* consists of forty-eight words in total. The first six words, "*Shema... Echad*," correspond to the six

official cities of refuge, while the forty-two words from "*Veahavtah... Uvisharechah*" are equal to the other forty two Levite cities. If we can immerse ourselves in this prayer,

we will be in the environment that nurtures our *neshamah*.

### Rebbetzin's Perspective Part 13:

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

#### Question:

In one of your lectures in the Tree of Life series, you discussed our struggle with the Yetzer Hara, and you spoke of a woman trying to daven a long Shemoneh Esrei as a negative thing. Since I'm new to prayer and trying to figure out what is appropriate, I wondered if you could elaborate on this idea. How long is 'long'? How long is good? What should I expect of myself, and what is considered too much?

#### Answer:

It depends on each individual person's life situation. Your list of priorities should be as follows-what is required and what is not

required by Jewish law. Prayer is certainly a requirement, but a woman has other priorities. She is required to be her husband's wife and her children's mother. If she works, then she has ethical responsibilities to her employer that may preclude taking long breaks for prayer. No one can daven for you, but just as certainly no one can be your husband's wife or your children's mother. So you have to make sure that davening doesn't take over the whole picture. On a practical level, it very much depends on what your life is like. I know one very responsible woman who takes very good care of her family who spends two hours each morning on prayer because she has these two free hours. I know other

women who have many responsibilities who can only devote 20 minutes to a half an hour to tefillah. But at least in Shemonei Esrei make sure to have some amount of time to think about who you are, who is it you are addressing, where you are in life, who is it that can give you what you need, and what you'll do with what you'll be given. You need to have proper kavanah. It is much better to say less in a way that's really devoted and focused. A woman definitely should set aside time to pray every day. How much time, though, depends entirely on her individual circumstances and responsibilities.

### Mourning Over The Real Jerusalem

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on the the Three Weeks by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

by Dena Weiss

The Gemara in Tannis writes, "*Kol hamis-abul al Yerushalayim zoche v'roya b'simchata*"-All who mourn over Jerusalem merit to see its joy" Our Sages question why the present tense is used in the Gemara. Should it not say "*yizke v'yirah*" in future tense? In addition, we find that Tisha B'av, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, is called "*moed*"-a holiday. How can we understand this?

When Yaakov was informed of Yosef's supposed death, he sat in mourning, yet was not comforted, for in truth Yosef was still alive and Hashem only grants the blessing of *shikcha*-forgetfulness, to those who truly suffer a loss. Based on this principle, the Achronim write that there is a kernel of joy in our mourning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The fact that we still mourn and refuse to be comforted, proves that on a certain level, Yerushalayim is still alive, it is there but dormant, and we hope that very soon we will regain what we have lost. Therefore Tisha B'av is called *moed*. Our very act of mourning is a sign of hope

for future redemption. We believe that there is a Yerushalayim in heaven waiting for the right moment to descend. That is why the language of the Gemara is present tense. Our mourning shows confidence and belief that the glory that was once will eventually return.

Similarly, Rav Yaakov Emden explains the paragraph in bentching, "*Rachem na..al Yerushalayim irecha*"-Have mercy on your city Yerushalayim. One does not normally ask for mercy for something that does not exist. This proves that the holiness of Yerushalayim and the Beit Hamikdash is still there. Physically it is gone, but its spiritual potential is still alive, yet dormant, waiting to be revitalized anew.

From its earliest beginnings, Yerushalayim was associated with Torah study and righteous people. The Midrash explains that the name Yerushalayim is a combination of two names given by two great righteous men. Avraham called it "*Yirah*" and Shem called it "*Shalem*". Har Hamoriah, the holiest spot in Yerushalayim, comes from the root word, "*horaah*"-to teach, signifying

that this city was the center of Torah and spiritual growth.

The Tosfos in Bava Basra explains the idea of *maaser sheni*-where a Jew needed to eat his *maaser* in Yerushalayim. In a sense, he was being forced to make the trip to the holy city and stay there a bit. Why? The Torah explains that he should learn to fear Hashem. Tosfos writes that Yerushalayim was the nerve center of *ruchniyut*. When a Jew reached the holy city he could not help but be affected by the fountain of spirituality that poured forth from the Beit Hamikdash, the Sanhedrin, and the great yeshivas and *batei medrash*. Therefore, when we mourn for Yerushalayim, we mourn this loss of spirituality and the destruction of the heart and epicenter of Torah.

We need to think about the great potential of holiness and spirituality that was once the essence of Yerushalayim, and grieve over the great loss we suffered. In the merit of our recognition of the magnitude of our loss, may Hashem will have mercy on us and rebuild the ruins of Yerushalayim.