



Parshat Matot-Masei: Journey of The Soul

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

There were 42 places that the Jews encamped in the desert which are mentioned by name in Parshat Matot-Masei. They parallel the 42 words in the first chapter of Shema. Why did the Torah find it necessary to enumerate all these places?

We have this idyllic picture of the Jews in the desert going from one point to the next with the Clouds of Glory hovering above them. But in fact the Zohar says that Hashem imbued

the desert with a feeling of distance and forsakenness. Every place they reached had its difficulties. This is meant to teach us that when we go through life and there are changes which tend to be hard, there's a lesson. Wherever Hashem leads you, you have to find the part of you that wants to bond with Him. Try to serve Hashem in every new place you find yourself better than you served him in the previous place and in the next place

still more. Hashem guides us to where we really want to be. We make choices and then we are given the capabilities and the opportunities to love Hashem with all our heart, soul, and possessions in the place that is destined for us. It is up to us to actualize the potential both within ourselves and the place we find ourselves and to recognize that wherever we are, it is meant to be good.

Chodesh Av: Focus on Faith

Based on a Naaleh.com class by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Judaism teaches that a name reflect the essence of a thing. What is the meaning behind the month of Menachem Av?

The Beis Halevi explains that the second temple was destroyed because of the veracity of the tzedokim who didn't believe in the veracity of the rabbis and explained the Torah according to their natural understanding. This was the root cause of the churban. We know it was baseless hatred that caused the destruction. What does this have to do with the tzedokim?

The Leket v'halibuv explains that it was the baseless hatred and irreverence that the tzedokim had towards the rabbis that caused them to refuse to accept what they interpreted. This brought about the churban.

The Midrash says the destruction came as a result of a lack of kibud av veim (honoring ones parents). This is why the descendants of Esav whose ancestor showed great respect for his father were able to vanquish the Jewish people. The Meshech Chochma explains that when a child denigrates his father he mocks him not only as an individual but as a link to the generations. The twelve month mourning period is unique only for a parent because we are mourning not only the loss of the parent but the chain to Sinai. The root of the churban was the fundamental breakdown in the father/son tradition.

In parshat Kedoshim, Rav Hirsh explains that it first says, "Kedoshim tiheyu," (You shall be holy) and then it says "Ish aviv v'imo tirayahu," (You shall fear your father and mother) followed by "Ve's Shabososai tishmoro" (And you shall keep the Shabbat). In order to understand limitations and restrictions the child must learn to fear his parents. Then he can transfer this awe to his relationship with Hashem. When a Jewish child sees his parents keeping Shabbat he learns from their example to reign in his will before Hashem.

Man seeks the great ultimate root of all being. He tries to understand the origin of life and he finds it in Hashem. In so doing he also discovers his parents. There are three partners in the creation of man. Our parents are our point of origin. They brought us into the world. Through our relationship with them we strengthen our relationship with Hashem. Standing in front of ones parents with awe and admiration is as if standing before Hashem. Working on our relationship with our parents is working on our connection with Hashem.

Hashem chose to rest his Shechina in Binyamin's portion because he didn't have a part in the sale of Yosef and never caused his father any pain. Likewise, during the time of the second temple, Binyamin's stone was missing and the sages went to Dama ben Nesina who refused to wake his father. Hashem was hinting to the people that it was

this aspect of Binyamin, the model of kibud av, that was missing.

The Torah tells us, "As a father chastises his son so does Hashem chastise us." The month of Av is a time to work on kibud av. In so doing we will reinforce our relationship with mesorah and with Hashem.

It says, "When Av comes we must lesson our joy." Similarly it is written, "When Adar comes we must increase our joy." The Chazon L'moed points out that we equate Av with Adar because there's a connection between them. The very reason we lesson our joy in Av is the reason we increase our joy in Adar. The miracle of Purim happened in a way that was hidden. So too in Av Hashem concealed his face. We mourn the exile but it was this aspect of hester panim (that He hid Himself) that ultimately brought about the joy of Purim. Our happiness is sensing Hashem's presence even within the pain of Av. It's recognizing that Hashem is very much with us although we may not discern it outright.

At the time of the churban, the keruvim (the cherubs atop the ark) embraced. It was as if Hashem was reaching out to us at the lowest depths and assuring us that His love for us would endure. Menachem Av, the month when we feel the most distant from Hashem, is when He comforts us, "I remain your caring father."



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The Causes of Churban Habayit: Part I

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Chazal tell us, "Any generation in which the Beit Hamikdash is not built, is as if it was destroyed then." We need to understand the causes of the destruction in order to know what steps we must take to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash. The Gemara in Yoma states that the first Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of the three cardinal sins, idol worship, adultery, and murder. Although Klal Yisrael were involved in Torah and mitzvot, the second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of baseless hatred. This comes to teach us that baseless hatred is so severe that it is equated with the three cardinal sins for which the Torah obligates us to forfeit our lives. The Gemara says that although during the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash, the Jews sinned, they had bitachon in Hashem. Rabbi Yochanon and Rabbi Eliezer said about the generation of the first Beit Hamikdash, that just as their sins were revealed, their punishment was fixed for a set period. And in fact, the first exile only lasted 70 years as the Navi promised.

The Gemara says, just as the sin of the later generations was not revealed, so too the end of their exile was not revealed. Rabbi Yochanon said, "The nails of the earlier generations are greater than the stomach of the later generations." Reish Lakish told Rabbi Yochanon, "On the contrary, the later generations are greater for although we have been in exile for so long, we still hold fast to the study of Torah." Rabbi Yochanon then said, "The Beit Hamikdash is proof. The earlier generations merited that the Beit Hamikdash was restored after 70 years while the later generations are still waiting for the Beit Hamikdash to be rebuilt.

Apparently, the earlier generations were greater and we need to understand why. What does the Gemara mean when it says that the earlier generations had bitachon in Hashem if they worshipped idols? In addition, what does it mean that the later generation's sin were not revealed if it clearly states that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of baseless hatred.

The Maharal says the holiness of the first Beit Hamikdash stemmed from the complete expression of the Divine Presence that was present in the first Beit Hamikdash, whereas the sanctity of the second Beit Hamikdash drew from Klal Yisrael. Since the three cardinal sins are an expression of impurity that drives away the Shechina, the Beit Hamikdash had to be destroyed. The Maharal adds that the first Beit Hamikdash stood in the merit of the avot who paralleled the opposite of the three sins. Avraham was the paragon of chesed (kindness), in complete contradiction to immorality, the chesed of impurity. Yitzchak was the pillar of avodah, serving Hashem, the opposite of idol worship. Yaakov was on such a high level of holiness, he was never a baal keri, the opposite of murder. Because these three pillars were destroyed, the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. The second Beit Hamikdash existed in the merit of the Jewish nation. When they transgressed with baseless hatred, the Beit Hamikdash had to be destroyed as the pillar of unity it stood upon was destroyed.