
THE WEISS EDITION

מטות-מסעי

Matos-Masei



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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

מטות

Matos

ל:ג | 30:3

אִישׁ כִּי יָדַר נֶדְוַר לְה' אִו הִשָּׁבַע שְׁבַעַה לְאַסֹּר אֶסֶר
עַל נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ כְּכֹל הַיֵּצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה

A man who vows to G-d or takes an oath placing a prohibition upon himself, he shall not violate his word; according to whatever came out of his mouth, he shall do.

Tapping into the Sanctity Line

A person who declares, “This shall be prohibited unto me like a sacrifice” about an otherwise permissible object is legally bound to abide by his vow. Just as a person can consecrate an animal as a sacrifice, thereby conferring sanctity upon it and prohibiting any personal benefit from it, a vow equating a permissible object with a sacrifice can prohibit the one taking the vow from using that object for personal benefit.

In contrast, if a person declared, “This object shall be prohibited unto me like the flesh of a swine,” his vow is mean-

ingless.¹ This is because the flesh of the swine is inherently non-kosher and prohibited by G-d—not due to its consecration by any individual. It therefore cannot serve as a model for the vow one takes upon himself to make something personally prohibited.

This distinction reflects the true purpose of vows according to the Torah.

Ideally, G-d wants us to utilize all permissible aspects of the material world in our service of Him.² But if a person finds that instead of elevating the material world, he is being drawn *into* it, he may take a vow of abstinence to protect himself from succumbing to lust and temptation.

This is also why many things which were biblically permissible were later prohibited by rabbinic decree as a “fence” for the Torah. Increased challenges in terms of living a sanctified life warrant taking additional precautions.³

The power of these vows and prohibitions, however, lies not only in minimizing our contact with temptation. Rather, through these measures we draw additional sanctity upon ourselves, giving ourselves the strength to overcome any obstacles to our Divine mission.

Accordingly, we can understand why only a vow based on a comparison to a sacrifice is effective, and not a vow based on a comparison to something inherently prohibited. For like a sacrifice, which the Torah prohibits for personal use due to its extraordinary sanctity, the purpose of a vow is to obtain additional sanctity and strength to help us battle the ever-present spiritual darkness.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 4, pp. 1076–1077, fn. 12*

1. See Talmud, Nedarim 14a.

2. See Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 9:1.

3. See Likkutei Torah, Rosh Hashanah 57a.

 32:41 | לב:מא

וַיֵּאִיר בֶּן מְנַשֶּׁה הַלֵּד וַיִּלְכֹּד אֶת חֻזְתֵיהֶם וַיִּקְרָא אֶתְהֶן חֻזַת יֵאִיר

Yair, the son of Menasheh, went and conquered the villages, and called them “the villages of Yair.”

The Villager

The tribes of Reuven and Gad, and half the tribe of Menasheh, took their portion of the land from the pasture-rich territories that Bnei Yisrael conquered east of the Jordan (outside of the land of Canaan). The Torah relates that Yair, from the tribe of Menasheh, conquered a large swath of land there and named the villages in his territory “Chavos Yair”—the Villages of Yair.

Elsewhere⁴ we read that Yair’s territory actually included a full 60 cities and their surrounding villages. Why did Yair place more emphasis on the surrounding villages (even naming them the Villages of Yair!) than the rest of the area he conquered?

One of the reasons the tribes requested to settle in the lands east of the Jordan, writes Rabbeinu Bechayei,⁵ was to prevent these desirable areas from being repopulated by idolaters, and to ensure that the cities and towns were not rededicated to their deities. We thus find that Bnei Yisrael renamed a number of cities in this area which previously bore pagan names,⁶ highlighting the tribes’ true objective in occupying these cities: to “reinvent” them, as it were, eliminating

4. Devarim 3:4–5, 14; Yehoshua 13:30.

5. Bamidbar 32:3.

6. See Bamidbar 32:38 and Rashi ad loc.

the idolatry that was once prevalent there, and to fill them instead with the service of G-d.

In light of the above, the Torah's emphasis on the *villages* that Yair conquered can be understood as a metaphor for the transformation Yair engendered there.

The Talmud⁷ contrasts the reactions of an urbanite and a village dweller upon seeing the king. For the city dweller, the king and his entourage are a common sight; for the village dweller, who is unaccustomed to seeing royalty, the sight of the king is novel and exciting.

The Torah therefore highlights that Yair conquered “villages” and called them “the Villages of Yair,” for Yair’s line of work was marked by the excitement and novelty of the villagers discovering “the king”: he made the King of Kings known and revealed in places where He had previously been relatively unknown and unseen.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 38, pp. 117-121*

7. Talmud, Chagigah 13b; see Rashi ad loc.

מסעי *Masei*

לה:כה | 35:25

וַיֵּשֶׁב בָּהּ עַד מוֹת הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל

*He shall remain there until the
death of the Kohen Gadol.*

One Nation, One Soul

A person who inadvertently caused someone's death is exiled to a city of refuge, where he must remain until the passing of the Kohen Gadol (during whose term he was sentenced). If he leaves the city of refuge earlier, he risks being killed by “the avengers of the blood”—the relatives of the deceased.

What changes with the passing of the Kohen Gadol? One explanation is that until then the inadvertent killer's sin is not completely atoned for, so if he leaves the city of refuge, the relatives of the deceased may still avenge their relative's blood. The passing of the righteous, however, serves as atone-

ment for all the Jewish people.¹ Therefore, the passing of the Kohen Gadol fully atones for the sin of the inadvertent killer.

Why is the atonement for this sin specifically through the passing of the Kohen Gadol, and not any other righteous person living at that time? The answer to this question lies in the words of Rashi,² who says that “the Kohen Gadol should have prayed that such a misfortune should not befall Israel during his lifetime.” The Kohen Gadol bears some degree of responsibility for this accident, since his prayers could have prevented the tragedy from ever occurring. As such, it is specifically *his* passing that completes the inadvertent killer’s atonement.

This association between the inadvertent killer and the Kohen Gadol demonstrates the extraordinary inherent bond between one Jew and another. The Kohen Gadol is the one selected from among all Jews “to be distinctly holy of holies.”³ On the opposite end of the spectrum is the person who has caused someone’s death, whose crime is so awful that he is sentenced to (and deserving of) exile, a punishment comparable to death itself.⁴ Nevertheless, the bond between Jews is so strong that the passing of one, the righteous Kohen Gadol, brings atonement for the other. Moreover, Rashi teaches us that the Kohen Gadol’s attachment to his fellow Jews was so great that he would (typically) intercede on behalf of even the lowest elements of society, to save them from sin.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 33, pp. 206–212*

1. See Rashi, Bamidbar 20:1.

2. Bamidbar 35:25; cf. Talmud, Makkos 11a.

3. I Divrei Hayamim 23:13.

4. Sefer Hachinuch, mitzvah 410.

 לה:כט | 35:29

וְהָיוּ אֵלֶּה לָּכֶם לְחֻקַּת מִשְׁפָּט לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם

These shall be for you a statute of justice for all your generations, in all your dwelling places.

Local Judge, Distant Sentence

A person who accidentally caused someone's death would be exiled by the court to one of the six cities of refuge, where he would be safe from potential avengers of the deceased's blood. The Sifri notes that the cities of refuge that guarantee such protection are established only in the Land of Israel. Thus, if a person accidentally killed someone outside of Israel, his trial and sentencing would take place in a local court outside of the Land;⁵ his exile, however, would be to a city of refuge within the Land of Israel.⁶

This distinction between the place of the trial and the place of the exile can be explained as follows:

The struggle to abide by the Torah's commands is much greater outside the Land of Israel than it is within the Holy Land, where one can sense that "the eyes of Hashem your G-d are always upon it."⁷ Therefore, a person who committed a crime outside the Land of Israel must be tried before local judges, who understand the realities and challenges faced by the one they are judging, and sentence him accordingly.

If the court finds the defendant guilty, however, he must be exiled to a city of refuge in the Land of Israel. This sentence is

5. See Sifri Zuta, Masei 35:29.

6. See Sifri, Masei 35:13.

7. Devarim 11:12.

not a punishment, but a method of rehabilitation. Complete rehabilitation requires the person who committed the crime to not only regret his past deeds, but to also be steadfast in his resolve to conduct himself differently in the future. Now, the Midrash associates the name Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel, to the Hebrew words *ratz*, “running,” and *ratzon*, “will”: “Why is it called *Eretz*? Because it runs (*ratz*) to do the will (*ratzon*) of its Master.”⁸ So, for a complete rehabilitation, the person who accidentally committed such a grievous crime cannot remain outside of the Land. He must relocate to Eretz Yisrael, so that “running to do the will of his Master” will become second nature.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 380–382

8. Bereishis Rabbah 5:8.

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת **לוי יצחק** ב"ר **ברוך בענדיט** ע"ה
שמערלינג

נלב"ע ביום ח' מנחם אב ה'תשס"א

נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו

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ולעילוי נשמת

הילד **זאב ארי'ה** ע"ה

בן יבלחט"א הרה"ח **שניאור זלמן**

גליק

נלב"ע ב' מנחם אב תשע"ג

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לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת משה יוסף ב"ר טוביה ע"ה ווייס

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תנצב"ה

נדפס ע"י משפחות ווייס ופיקארסקי שיחיו



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