

## MATOT (*tribes*)



Swearing an oath

**Numbers 30:1** And Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the sons of Israel saying, “this is what יהוה has commanded. 2 If a man makes a vow to יהוה or obligates himself by swearing an oath; he will not break his word; he will do all that he said he would do. C-MATS

**Question:** What does it mean “he will not break his word”? He shall not desecrate his word. A believer's word is sacred; for him to violate it is a desecration. Everyone must watch their own words, whether spoken, sung, or written. He must do what he says he is going to do. *Chumash*

**Question:** What is יהוה giving man the right to do in this verse? By means of an oath, one may either prohibit oneself or require oneself to perform an act. His oath is so strong that a person violating it can suffer the court-imposed penalty of lashes. *Chumash*

**Question:** What are the two types of a vow? (a) One can prohibit to himself something that the Torah permits, by saying, for example, "I will not eat bread for thirty days." (b) One may obligate oneself to bring an optional offering or to perform an optional commandment, such as to tithe to a particular charity. The oath under discussion in this passage is the first type, a voluntarily adopted prohibition (banning yourself from something). With the exception of a vow to perform a commandment [such as (b) above], one cannot use a oath to require oneself to perform an act; for example, if someone were to declare, "I make a oath to go to sleep on time," it is not binding under the terms of this passage, because you are not prohibiting yourself from doing something. *Chumash*



**Numbers 30:3** If a woman also makes a vow to יהוה and obligates herself by an oath, *while she is young* in her father's house; 4 And her father hears אָתּ her vow and her oath with which she has obligated herself and her father holds his peace: then all her vows will stand and every oath with which she has obligated herself will stand. 5 But if her father expresses his disapproval on the day that he hears *her vows*; not any of her vows or her oaths with which she has obligated herself will stand: and יהוה will forgive her, because her father has expressed his disapproval. C-MATS



**Numbers 30:6** And if she has a husband, when she vowed or uttered anything out of her lips with which she obligated herself, **7** And her husband heard *it* and held his peace on the day *that* he heard *it*: then her vow will stand and her oaths with which she obligated herself will stand. **8** But if her husband expressed his disapproval on the day *that* he heard *it*; then he will void אָרַח her vow, which she made and uttered with her lips with which she obligated herself and יהוה will forgive her.  
C-MATS

**Question:** Who has authority to break a woman's vow? The father has rights over his daughter as long as she is in his home. This means that she is under his jurisdiction, not that she is physically in his premises; if she was married or divorced, her father has no rights. The husband has authority over his wife to break her vows. The husband's authority is restricted to vows that might cause the woman personal discomfort or which might affect the relationship between husband and wife. *Chumash*

**Question:** How much time does a man have to break a vow that his wife or daughter has made? Here the Torah refines the term “**on the day that he heard it.**” He does not have a full twenty-four hour period, but only until the beginning of the next day, sundown of the day on which he heard of the vow. If the man stops the woman from keeping her vow after this time period, then the sin falls on the man. Anyone who causes another person to sin takes his place regarding the punishment for transgression. *Chumash*

**Question:** A woman's father (when the woman is single) or husband (when she is married) may annul the vows, oaths, and obligations she makes upon his first hearing of them. This applies not only to the words of the woman's mouth constituting a commitment, but the meditations or issues of her heart as well. Since issues of the heart are not necessarily spoken, how is a husband or father to know when a heart issue exists so that he may intervene on behalf of those in his house? Praying in the Spirit increases a man's magnetic field of influence and increases your heart's frequency. Praying in the Spirit is more than just the evidence of the Spirit, praying in tongues activates the Spirit in you. The human body has a magnetic field and frequency. Increase His magnification and frequency in you; tune in and turn up the volume of His voice. This increased sensitivity reveals heart issues when the husband (or father) is present with his wife and family. Be sure to set aside time to be around your family, not just time for activities, but time to cultivate the relationships in your family. Praying in the Spirit increases your intuitive sense of what is going on in the heart of your wife or daughter that needs to be tenderly addressed. Being in tune with their hearts; staying close, you will be able to annul the things which may be harmful for your loved ones.

**Question:** What about the man himself? Who can deliver him from the entanglements of careless vows, oaths, and obligations? The One who connects heaven to earth, the author of the test, the One Elohim, יהוה can renounce our vows, oaths and obligations. Though a man may not break his vows, he can go to יהוה in prayer. Praying in the Spirit reveals your own heart and releases or make known the words or heart issues that need to be annulled by his Head, Yahusha! *Chumash*

Numbers 30:9 But every vow of a widow and a woman who is divorced, with which she has obligated herself, will stand against her. 10 And if she vowed *in* her husband's house or obligated herself by an oath. 11 And her husband heard *it* and held his peace with her and did not express his disapproval: then all her vows will stand and every oath with which she obligated herself will stand. 12 But if her husband has made them void on the day he heard *them*; *then* whatever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning her oath will not stand: her husband has made them void; and יהוה will forgive her. 13 Every vow and every binding oath to obligate her, her husband may establish it or her husband may make it void. 14 But if her husband holds his peace from day to day; then he establishes אֶת־ all her vows or אֶת־ all her oaths, which *are* on her: he confirmed them, because he held his peace on the day *that* he heard *them*. 15 But if he wants to make them void after he has heard *them*; then he will bear אֶת־ her iniquity.” 16 These *are* the statutes which commanded יהוה אֶת־ Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, *while she is still young in her father's house*. C-MATS



**Question:** Should we ever tell someone we will do something and then not do it? Why do you think it hurts people more when we say 'yes' and don't do it than if we say 'no' in the first place? While no one likes having his requests refused, it is preferable to facing the bigger let down of counting on someone for something and then having it not happen.

**Question:** What, if anything, is ethically wrong with not keeping one's word? Besides the harm it can cause others who make decisions based upon what one has told them, it undermines the stability of the world as people cease to trust each other and can no longer interact in good faith.

**Question:** Are there any situations when it is right to tell people what they want to hear, even if it isn't what you truly mean? Certain times, such as when we give someone a compliment to lift their spirits, there is room to exaggerate for the sake of kindness. However, in general, people ultimately feel better when we are straight with them, even if they seem disappointed at first.

# keep your word & have integrity

**Question:** Why should we keep our word? More than just being a nice thing to do, how seriously we take our promises shows how seriously we take ourselves. When a person gives his word, he is basically putting his reputation on the line, and by keeping it, he shows that he respects himself, and that will cause others to respect him too.

**Question:** Does a person still need to keep his word if he really meant it when he promised, but then later changed his mind? A person's word is a very serious thing, and we should be sure when we promise something, that we're ready to follow through. When we make a commitment, we need to honor it, no matter what, even if we later change our mind.

**Question:** Must we literally do everything we say we will? It depends. Sometimes we just mention something casually, like 'I'm going shopping today.' This is a plan, not a promise. Although there are some spiritually attuned people who are careful not even to say these types of things lightly, nevertheless, not fulfilling it isn't really a breach of trust. But if we go out of our way to commit ourselves, or promise to do something, it is very important to keep to it, if at all possible.

**Question:** Why should we be very careful about what words come out of our mouth? The Divine Bridegroom wants to train His Betrothed Bride to be very, very careful with the utterances of her mouth. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. What comes out of our mouths is therefore very, very important. Indeed, our mouths and other organs of speech have been recreated by יהוה, in order that, through them as well as the other members of our bodies, we may bring honor and glory to יהוה. The words which come out of our mouths reveal what is inside of us.

**Matthew 12:34 For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."** C-MATS

**James 3:5** Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is *set on fire by a small spark*. **6** *The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.* **7** All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, **8** but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With the tongue we praise יהוה our Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in יהוה's likeness. **10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. **11** Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? **12** My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. C-MATS

**Ecclesiastes 5:4-7** When you vow a vow to יהוה, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should יהוה be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but יהוה is the one you must fear. C-MATS

**1 John 2:5** But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of יהוה is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him. C-MATS

**Psalm 89:34** I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

**Matthew 5:37** Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

**Matthew 5:33** "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to יהוה what you have sworn.' C-MATS

**Numbers 23:19** יהוה is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? C-MATS

**Joshua 23:14** "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that יהוה your Elohim promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. C-MATS

**Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. C-MATS

**Proverbs 8:6** Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. **7** My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. **8** All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. C-MATS

**Proverbs 13:3** He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

**Proverbs 16:13** Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth. C-MATS

**Proverbs 29:20** Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of יהוה. C-MATS

# Stop Swearing.

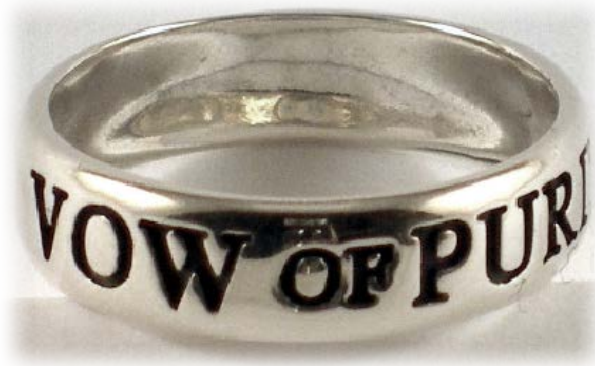
**Question:** Does the Torah ever instruct us to make vows or swear oaths?" Yahusha said, **"You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not swear falsely yourself, but shall perform unto יהוה your oaths. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatsoever is more than these comes from evil."** No, it doesn't do anything of the sort. It only tells us that, if we choose, as an act of free will, to make a vow or declare an oath [such as, for instance, a Nazirite vow of abstinence from grape products, haircuts, and contact with the dead – see Numbers 6:2.], then whatever we say we are going to do we must do. Yahusha did not change anything – He merely clarified the intention of יהוה – **And you will not swear by My name falsely, neither will you profane the אֱתֵנָה name of your Elohim: I am יהוה. Leviticus 19:12.** All Messiah did was reiterate how important it is that we should never make promises we cannot keep. Believers are to be people so known for their truthfulness that they have no need to vow that they will keep their word. Let us not make promises that we cannot keep and be faithful to do what we say in big and small things.

**Question:** Why is it important that we not say publicly we are going to do something, and then not do it? Because we are emissaries of יהוה – and if we as His emissaries do not do what we say we will do, His Name will be profaned. Yahusha said, **But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is Elohim's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black. Matthew 5:34-36.** Yahusha was merely pointing out that יהוה – not us -- is in control of all aspects of our world; hence we are in no position to make vows or oaths. Yahusha was teaching us to seek His will, and perform His Words -- not go around foolishly proclaiming our own ideas about what ought to happen. The "voice" by which the Redeemed of יהוה are to live is His Voice -- not our own.

**Question:** What are some vows and oaths that are made today?



Marriage vows to love and remain faithful



Vow of Purity to abstain from sex until marriage



Oath of the military to protect our country



Public servant's oath to protect the public





Public Leader's oath to defend the Constitution of the United States



Doctor's oath to protect life



Oath in court to tell the truth

**Numbers 31:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, 2 “Take vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites: then you will be gathered to your people.” 3 And Moses spoke to the people saying, “arm men from among yourselves for war and let them go against the Midianites *to carry out* יהוה’s vengeance on Midian. C-MATS**

**Question:** Why did יהוה tell Moses to go to war with Midian? The two nations of Moab and Midian teamed up to make big problems for the Israelite people as they were on their way to the Land of Israel. Even though both nations were in on it together, יהוה told us to respond more strictly against Midian, because the quarrel had nothing to do with them, and they were making trouble for no reason. We should not quarrel at all! We should definitely not butt into other people's quarrels, that aren't any of our business. When we see a quarrel, unless we can genuinely help to make peace, we should keep our noses out of it!



**Question:** Why should we stay out of quarrels? It is tempting when we see people arguing to want to 'put our two cents in'. It may seem harmless, but it isn't. Besides simply not being our business, also more people being involved tends to heat things up and makes the quarrel grow bigger. Quarrels are like fire that burns people for life and is the cause of much of the world's troubles. Who in his right mind would want to jump into a fire?

**Question:** Why do you think the Torah considers the one who enters into other people's quarrels as being more destructive than the quarrelers themselves? Quarreling is in itself a very destructive activity. It is a root cause for much of the world's strife throughout history and today. Yet sometimes a person feels threatened in some way, and his heated emotions and desire to defend himself drag him into a quarrel. Someone who joins into a quarrel even though he is not compelled by the emotional intensity of being personally affected by it has done something much more destructive.

**Question:** Is it ever appropriate to enter a quarrel, such as to protest an injustice, etc.? There are rare times when, yes we must step in to prevent an injustice. However, this should only be done with much caution and after much consideration of the situation and our motives.

**Proverbs 15:18** A hot-tempered man stirs up conflict, but he who is slow to anger quiets disagreements. C-MATS

**Proverbs 17:14** The start of an argument is like the first break in a dam; stop it before it goes any further. C-MATS

Proverbs 17:19 He who loves a quarrel loves sin; If you brag all the time, you are asking for trouble.

Proverbs 20:3 Any fool can start arguments; the honorable thing is to stay out of them. C-MATS

Proverbs 26:17 Getting involved in an argument that is none of your business is like going down the street and grabbing a dog by the ears. C-MATS

Proverbs 26:20 Without wood, a fire goes out; without gossip, quarreling stops. C-MATS

2 Timothy 2:24 יהוה's servant must not quarrel. He must be kind toward all, a good and patient teacher, 25 who is gentle as he corrects his opponents, for it may be that יהוה will give them the opportunity to repent and come to know the truth. 26 And then they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the Devil, who had caught them and made them obey his will. C-MATS

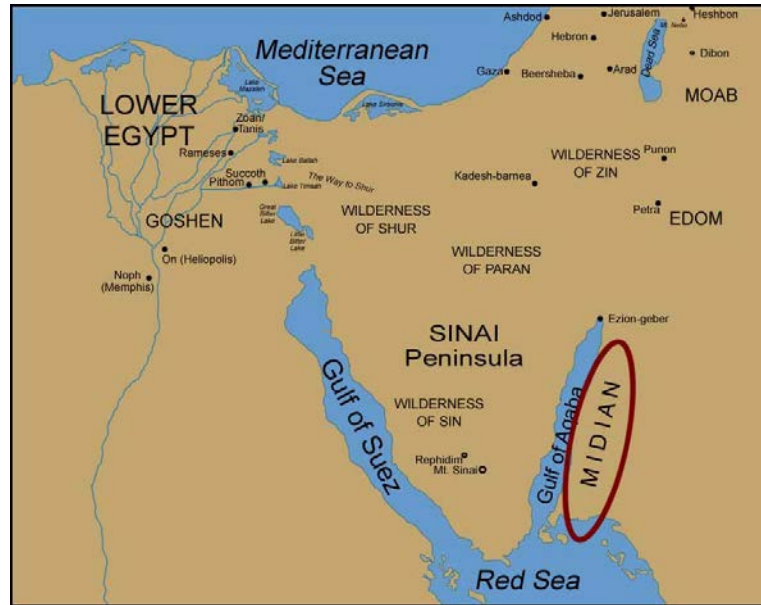
1 Corinthians 3:3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? C-MATS

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask יהוה. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward יהוה? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of יהוה. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "יהוה opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves, then, to יהוה. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to יהוה and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before יהוה, and he will lift you up. 11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you-who are you to judge your neighbor? C-MATS

Numbers 31:4 Send a thousand to war from every tribe throughout all the tribes of Israel." 5 So there were from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from *every* tribe, 12,000 armed for war. C-MATS

**Question:** Who went to fight against the Midianites? All the tribes, including Levi were equally represented in the fighting force, and they were accompanied by Phinehas who had, in a sense begun the task by slaying Zimri and Cozbi, and thereby ending the plague that the Midianites had brought upon the Hebrew people. The two halves of Joseph -- Manasseh and Ephraim -- were counted as one tribe for the purpose of this war. *Chumash*



**Numbers 31:6** And Moses sent them to war, a thousand from every tribe, including Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, with the consecrated instruments and the trumpets to blow in his hand.  
**C-MATS**

**Question:** What were the consecrated instruments taken into war? The Ark containing the broken Tablets of the Law and the Kohen Gadol's gold Headplate, on which was inscribed the sacred Four-letter Name of יהוה. Phinehas took with him the Kohen Gadol's Breastplate so that the Urim v'Tumim would answer any questions that arose while they were at the battlefield.  
*Chumash*



Moses Ordering the Slaughter of the Midianites

Numbers 31:7 And they warred against the Midianites as commanded יהוה אלהי משה; and they killed all the males. 8 And they killed the kings of Midian, *along with the others who were slain*; אלהי עבי, רקם, זור, חור, ורבי- the five kings of Midian: Balaam, the son of Beor, was also killed with the sword. 9 And the sons of Israel took captive *all* אלהי the women of Midian and their little ones and took as spoil all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods. C-MATS



Five Kings of Midian Slain by Israel

**Question:** Why was Balaam killed in the battle at Midian? The successful plan to seduce Israelite men had originated with Balaam, and he had come to Midian to claim his reward. Thus, his intended victims were able to apprehend him and punish him as he deserved. It is significant that he was killed by the sword. Esau was blessed with the sword of murder and violence and Jacob was blessed with the voice of prayer and prophecy. Since the evil Balaam had tried to take Jacob's blessing and use it to curse Israel, now Israel used Esau's blessing, the sword, against him.



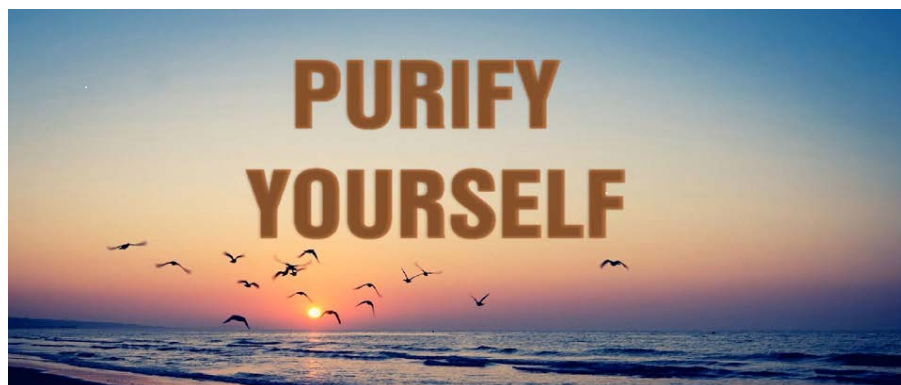
The Women of Midian Led Captive by the Hebrews

**Numbers 31:10** And they burnt with fire all their cities in which they lived and all their *camps*. 11 And they took אָתְּ all the spoil and all the booty, *all the people and animals they had captured*. 12 And they brought אָתְּ the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel camped at the plains of Moab, which *are* by Jordan near Jericho. 13 And Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the princes of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. 14 And Moses was angry *with* the officers of the army, the captains over thousands and hundreds, which came from the battle. 15 And Moses said to them, “why have you saved all the women? 16 These *women* caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit sins against יהוה in the matter of Peor and there was a plague among the congregation of יהוה. 17 Now kill every male child and kill every woman who is not a virgin. 18 But all the female children, who are virgins, you may keep alive for yourselves. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did Moses rebuke the officers of the army? Moses was angry with the officers of the army because they had allowed their troops to spare women who were known to have participated in the orgies-- and they, not the Midianite men, were primarily responsible for inciting the sins that had caused the plague. To Moses it was clear that there was no excuse for permitting known harlots to survive. As a result, Moses ordered them to execute punishment against the guilty people. It is the responsibility of leadership to learn from the past to improve the future. Having seen how the sins at Peor took place and how there had been no resistance to them until Phinehas acted, the commanders should have gleaned the lesson that they had to maintain proper control. *Chumash*

**Question:** 'Being kind to the cruel will lead to being cruel to the kind.' How do you understand this idea? A person has to look at the big picture. For instance, on the surface it might seem kind and merciful to pardon a violent criminal or terrorist and free him from jail. However a deeper look will show us that such a person is likely to hurt innocent people if we let him go—therefore freeing him would in fact be an act of cruelty. Additionally, on a spiritual level, once a person skews true values and a clear outlook by being inappropriately kind, his lack of ethical clarity will likely cause him to eventually act inappropriately cruel.

**Question:** What if being kind to someone would mean being unkind toward ourselves—what takes priority? It takes balance. If doing something for someone else causes us a minor inconvenience, most likely we should nevertheless help. If however what someone asks of us involves serious harm or compromise of our values, we should know that it is no act of kindness to do it and we come first.



Numbers 31:19 And stay outside the camp *for seven days*: whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any *dead person* must purify *both* yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. 20 And purify all *your* garments made of skins and goats' *hair* and all things made of wood.” 21 And Eleazar the priest said to the men of war which went to the battle, “this *is* the ordinance of the Torah which commanded יהוה אֱתֵי־מֹשֶׁה; 22 Only אֱתֵי־הַזָּהָב and the silver, אֱתֵי־הַנְּחֹשֶׁת the brass, אֱתֵי־הַבַּיִשֵּׁת the iron, the tin and the lead, 23 Everything that may endure the fire, you will make it go through the fire and it will be clean: However it will be purified (*cleansed*) with the water of separation: and all that cannot endure the fire you will make go through the water. 24 And you will wash your clothes on the seventh day and you will be clean and then you will come into the camp.” 25 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, 26 “You, Eleazar the priest, and the leaders of the congregation take אֶת־כָּל־הַבְּיָוֵה all of the booty that was taken from *the people and animals*: 27 And divide into two parts אֶת־הַבְּיָוֵה the booty between those experienced men who went out to battle and between all the congregation. C-MATS

**Question:** How were the spoils from the battle divided? יהוה commanded how the spoils should be divided. The greatest share went to those who actually fought and put their lives in danger, the rest of the nation shared to a lesser extent, and a specified portion was to be tithed to the Tabernacle treasury and to the Levites. The Torah gives the totals of the spoils in detail to show that Israel had conquered a large and prosperous nation.

**Question:** What does this teach us? We get as much out of something as we put into it. יהוה didn't tell us to divide the spoils equally among everyone. Rather, those who exerted themselves more in battle got more. We can learn from here that the more we invest in an activity and take it seriously, the more we'll get back in the end.



Spoils of war

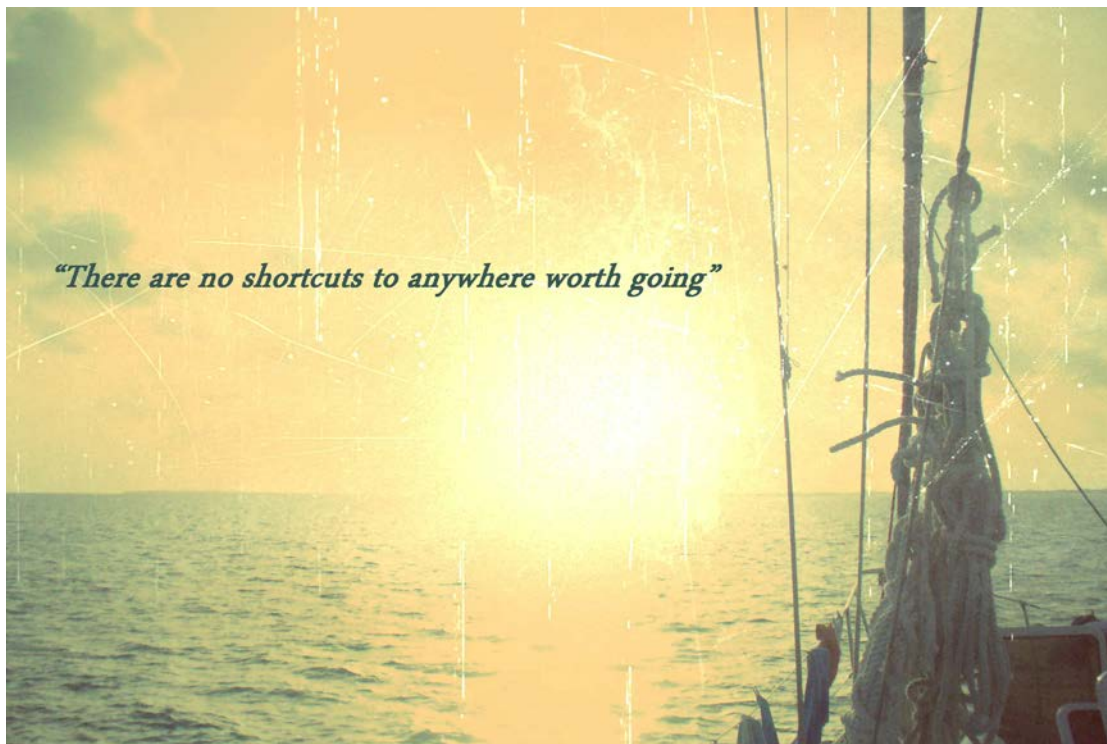
work hard now. it'll pay off later.



chibird

**Question:** What life-lesson could someone learn from working hard for what we get? When someone takes the easy way out and doesn't take his tasks seriously, he can think it doesn't matter. But in truth, there are always consequences and by choosing not to try hard - we are choosing not to accomplish.

**Question:** Do you think there is anything spiritual about working hard at a task? יהוה gave each of us special talents and the energy to use them. When we exert ourselves at a task, we are acknowledging יהוה's gifts to us and declaring that we see life as meaningful. Of course, we should be sure that we're using our talents and energy in a positive way.



**Question:** Do you think there are any shortcuts to life - that is ways to achieve something worthwhile without trying? While it may sound nice in theory - life doesn't work that way. All genuine life achievements only come one way - through dedication and effort.

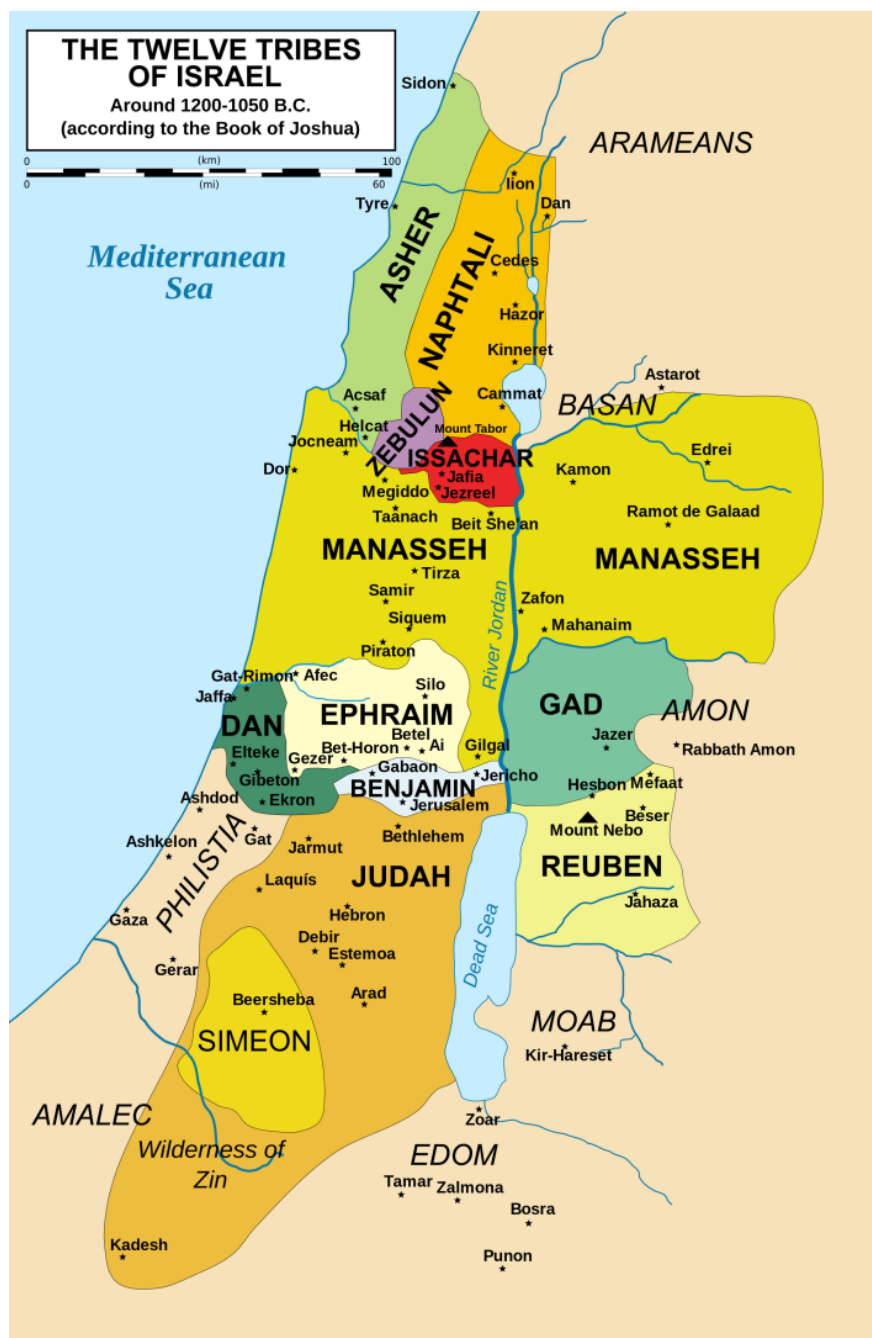




The Dividing of the Spoils of the Midianites

Numbers 31:28 And levy a tax to יהוה from the men who went out to battle: 1/500 of the people, cattle, donkeys, and sheep: 29 Take *it* from their share and give *it* to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering for יהוה. 30 And the half from the sons of Israel, you will take 1/50 from the people, cattle, donkeys, flocks, *and any type of animal*, and give them to the Levites, *who take care* of the tabernacle of יהוה.” 31 And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as commanded יהוה אֱת־ Moses. 32 And the booty, over and above *the portion* which the men who went to war had taken, *was* 675,000 sheep, 33 And 72,000 cattle, 34 And 61,000 donkeys, 35 And 32,000 persons in all, consisting of women who were virgins. 47 Moses took *from* the sons of Israel's אֱת־ portion, 1/50 of the persons and animals and gave them to the Levites, *who took care* of the tabernacle of יהוה; as commanded יהוה אֱת־ Moses. 48 And the officers, who *were in charge of* the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and hundreds, came near to Moses: 49 And they said to Moses, “your servants have taken אֱת־ the count of the men who went to war and there was not one man missing. C-MATS

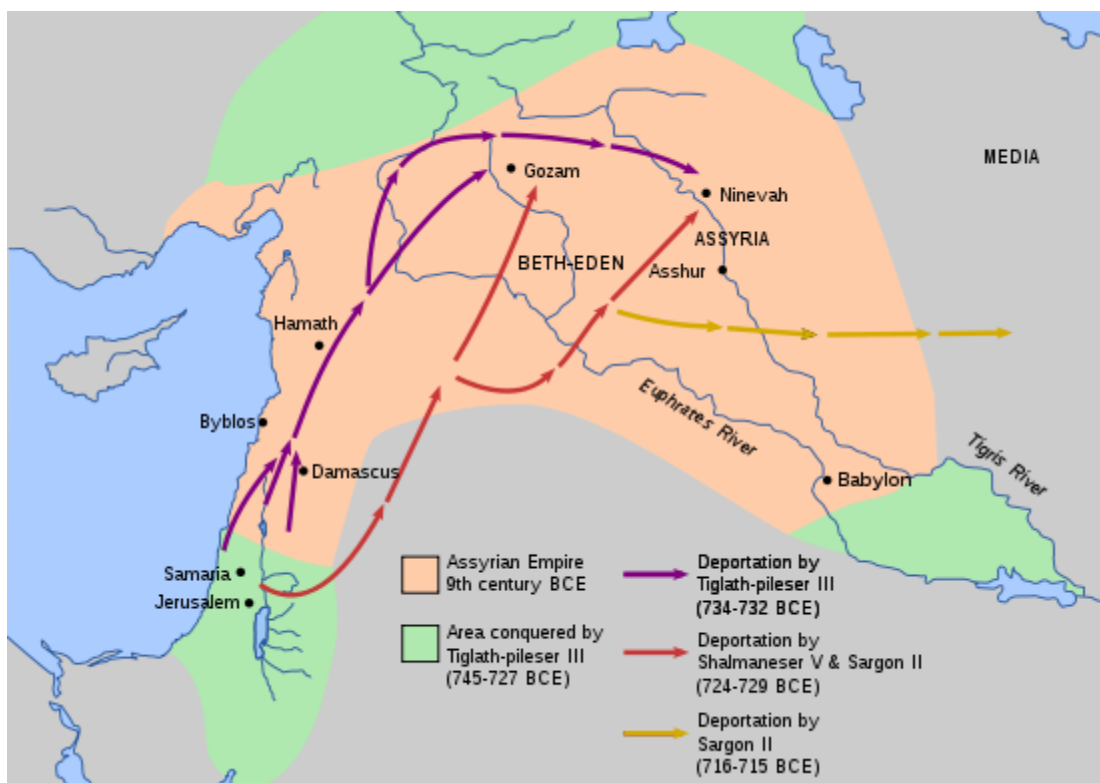
Numbers 31:50 We have therefore brought אֶת־ an offering for יהוה from what every man has taken from the gold jewelry, chains, bracelets, rings, earrings, and belts, to make an atonement for our souls before יהוה.” 51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest אֶת־ accepted the gold from them- all their jewelry. 52 And all the gold from the offering that they offered up to יהוה, from the captains of thousands and hundreds, was 16,750 shekels (420 pounds of gold). 53 (Because the men of war in the ranks had taken booty, every man for himself.) 54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took אֶת־ the gold from the captains of thousands and hundreds and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation for a memorial (reminder) for the sons of Israel before יהוה. C-MATS



Reuben and Gad ask for land on the other side of the Jordan

Numbers 32:1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great amount of cattle: and when they saw אֶת the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead and that the place *was* good for cattle; 2 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and to the princes of the congregation saying, 3 “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon, 4 *This* country which יהוה defeated before the congregation of Israel *is* a land *good* for cattle and your servants have cattle:” 5 Therefore they said, “If we have found favor in your sight, give אֶת land to your servants for a possession, and do not bring us over אֶת Jordan”. C-MATS

**Question:** Why did the tribes of Gad and Reuben have so many cattle? Gad and Reuben were distinguished for their military ability and plundered larger numbers of animals than did the other tribes. The Reubenites and Gadites were rich, possessing large amounts of cattle, but they loved their possessions so much that they separated themselves from their fellow Israelites and settled outside the Land of Israel. As a result, they became the first tribes to be taken away into exile. 1 Chronicles reports, “Tillegath-pilneser king of Assyria . . . carried . . . away . . . the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh”.



Assyrian Deportations of the Israelites

Numbers 32:6 And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, “will your brothers go to war and you not go? 7 Why discourage אֶת the heart of the sons of Israel from going over into the land which יהוה has given them? C-MATS

**Question:** If they were settling in a different land, what was the problem with not participating in the war for the land of Israel? Though יהוה's people are dispersed to many parts of the world, they are strongly united and psychologically interdependent. Thus, when one of יהוה's people in any part of the world experiences misfortune, his brothers throughout the world feel compassion and express concern. Moses was not questioning the legitimacy of their action, but rather saying to them, "Considering the emotions of the Israelite people, it would be impossible for you to sit *calmly and enjoy your land in Jordan when at the same time your brethren are engaged in war*".  
*Chumash*

**Numbers 32:8** *This is what your fathers did, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea (sacred place in desert) to see the land. 9 For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw אֶת־ the land, they discouraged אֶת־ the heart of the sons of Israel, so they would not go into the land which יהוה had given them.10 And יהוה's anger was aroused that day and he swore saying, 11 ‘None of the men that came up out of Egypt from twenty years old and upward will see אֶת־ the land, which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; because they have not completely followed me: 12 Except Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Y’hoshua, the son of Nun: because they have completely followed יהוה.’ 13 And יהוה's anger was aroused against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of יהוה was consumed. 14 And now you, a group of sinful men, have risen up in your fathers' place to *increase the* fierce anger of יהוה towards Israel. 15 For *if* you turn away from him, he will once again leave them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all these people.” 16 And they came near to Moses and said, “we will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our little ones: 17 But we will be ready and armed *for battle to march* before the sons of Israel until we have brought them to their place: and our little ones will live in the fortified cities, because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 We will not return to our houses until every man from the sons of Israel has received *his possession of land for an inheritance*. 19 But we will not have an inheritance with them on the other side *of the* Jordan, westward; because our inheritance is on this side *of the* Jordan, eastward.” C-MATS*



The hills of Gilead (current day Jal'ad, Jordan), where Gad and Reuben settled

Numbers 32:20 And Moses said to them, “if you will do אָתּ this, *and* if you will go armed before יהוה to war, 21 And all your soldiers will go armed *and cross* over אָתּ Jordan before יהוה until he has driven out אָתּ his enemies before Him, 22 And the land is conquered before יהוה: then you will return and be guiltless before יהוה and before Israel; and this land will be your possession before יהוה. 23 But if you will not do this, then you have sinned against יהוה: and your sin will find you out. 24 Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep; and do that *which you have spoken.*” 25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses saying, “Your servants will do as my master commands. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle will be there in the cities of Gilead: 27 But your servants will pass over, every man armed for war before יהוה ready for battle, as my master said.” C-MATS

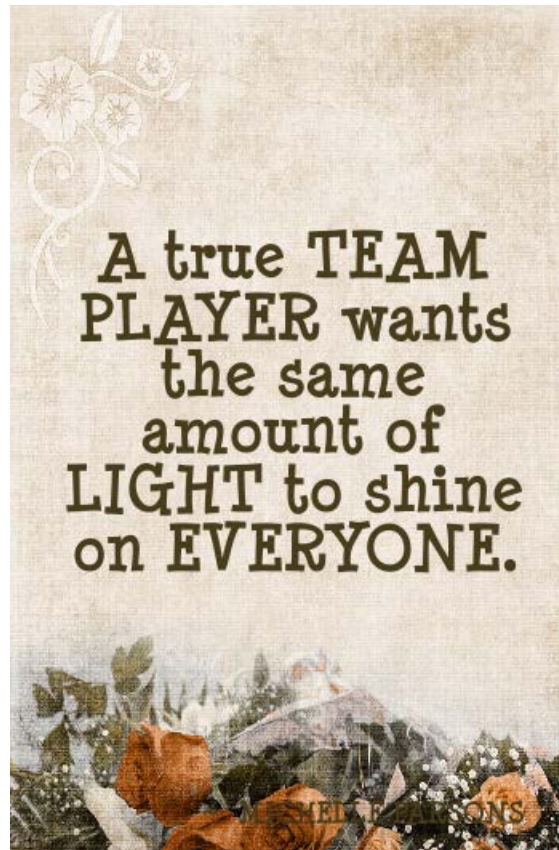
**Question:** What did the tribes of Gad and Reuben say that they would do? They were fully prepared to send their troops into the Land and take a leading role in the wars until they were successfully concluded. However, their response revealed a shortcoming in their priorities. The Reubenites and the Gadites cherished their property more than human life, putting their cattle before their children when they told Moses in Numbers 32:16, “we will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our little ones”. Moses told them that their priorities were wrong and that they should rather do the more important things first, when Moses told them in Numbers 32:24, “Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep”. The different priorities apply to the words of Ecclesiastes 10:2, “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand”— applying to Moses — and “but a fool’s heart at his left” — applying to the Reubenites and the Gadites. יהוה told the Reubenites and the Gadites that as they showed greater love for their cattle than for human souls, there would be no blessing in it for them. Their fate applies to the words of Proverbs 20:21 “An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end shall not be blessed”, and the words of Proverbs 23:4, “Weary not yourself to be rich; Cease from your own wisdom.” *Chumash*

**Question:** How did the tribes of Gad and Reuben change their minds after their talk with Moses? The people of Gad and Reuben understood the subtle messages in Moses' response and they reworded their assurance accordingly; now they put their families ahead of their livestock. Also they committed themselves only to fight, as Moses had stipulated. *Chumash*

Numbers 32:28 So Moses gave orders concerning them to אֵלֶּזָר Eleazar the priest and Y’hoshua the son of Nun and the leaders of *the* tribes of the sons of Israel: 29 And Moses said to them, “if the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over אָתּ Jordan with you, every man armed for battle, before יהוה and if the land is conquered before you; then you will give them אָתּ the land of Gilead for a possession: 30 But if they do not cross over with you armed *for battle*, they will have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” 31 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered saying, “We will do as אָתּ יהוה said to your servants. 32 We will pass over armed *for battle* before יהוה *into* the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side of *the* Jordan *may be* ours.” C-MATS

**Question:** Why do you think it is important for a group's morale to have everyone participate? There is a certain power and excitement involved with doing something as a group, or team. When everyone works together, they are highly motivated and can do more than they could by themselves. But this type of feeling is only created if everyone is really willing to participate. Each member of a group gives to it more than he is aware.

**Question:** What special responsibilities does a person have when he or she becomes a member of a team? Being part of a team means you should become a "team player" -- this means you go out of your way to pitch in to the group effort, even if you don't particularly feel like it. It means focusing on the needs of the team and trying to help to fill those needs as best you can. If everybody on the team were to be only concerned about himself or herself, the group would never get anywhere. Team players help everyone else get into the "team spirit".



**Spiritual Exercise:** Are you a team player? Do you cooperate with your family members? Do you work well with others at your job? Do you keep a positive attitude and the "We can do this" spirit? Do you complain and bring down others in your family or job? This week encourage others and work together without complaining to achieve your common goals.

**Question:** How do complainers at work affect how you perform your job? How can you keep them from affecting your work ethic? Avoid those who you know are complainers. Seek positive people to work with. If this is impossible, then bring a positive attitude with you to work and maybe your positive outlook will influence them to see life in a more positive way.

**Numbers 32:33** And Moses gave to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, אֶת־ the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land with the cities on the coasts and the cities of the country around it. C-MATS

**Question:** The tribe of Manasseh had not asked for land on the east bank; why did Moses now include them? Seeing that the land of Gilead was too large for only two tribes, Moses asked if any other tribes would prefer to settle there. In response, part of Manasseh volunteered, perhaps because they had abundant flocks. The term “half” is used in connection with Manasseh, but it can also mean part, as it does in this case, because only two of Manasseh's eight families settled on the east bank (**And the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh all the region of Argob together with Bashan, which was called the land of giants. Jair, the son of Manasseh, took אֶתְּ all the country of Argob to the coasts of Geshuri and Maachasi and called אֹתָם them after his own name, אֶתְּ Bashan-havoth-jair to this day. And I gave אֶתְּ Gilead to Machir. Deuteronomy 3:13-15**) Moses tried to avoid the danger that the two tribes on the east bank would tend to be isolated from the rest of the nation and fail to benefit from the greater holiness of Israel. By placing half of Manasseh there, he assured that the eastern part of Manasseh would maintain close contact with their family to the west, and this closeness would have a beneficial effect on the tribes of Gad and Reuben as well. *Chumash*

## MASSEI (*stages*)

**Numbers 33:1** These *are* the journeys of the sons of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the direction of Moses and Aaron. **2** And Moses wrote אֶתְּ the *stages of their journeys* by the order of יְהוָה: and these *are* their journeys according to their *stages*. **3** And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morning after the Passover the sons of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. **4** Because the Egyptians were burying אֶתְּ those יְהוָה had killed among them: all their firstborn and יְהוָה executed judgments *on all their gods* also. **5** And the sons of Israel moved from Rameses and camped in Succoth (*booths*). C-MATS



Rameses



Jericho

Numbers 33:50 And יהוה spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near Jericho* saying, 51 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘when you have passed over אֶת־ Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52 You will drive out אֶת־ all the inhabitants of the land before you and destroy אֶת־ all their pictures (*stone figures*) and destroy all their molten images (*metal statues*) and demolish all their high places: 53 Drive out the inhabitants of אֶת־ the land and live in it: I have given אֶת־ the land to you to live in. 54 And you will divide as an inheritance אֶת־ the land by lot among your families: *and those tribes with more you will give more אֶת־ inheritance and to those tribes with fewer numbers you will give less אֶת־ inheritance: every man's inheritance will be in the place where his lot falls; according to the tribes of your ancestors.* C-MATS

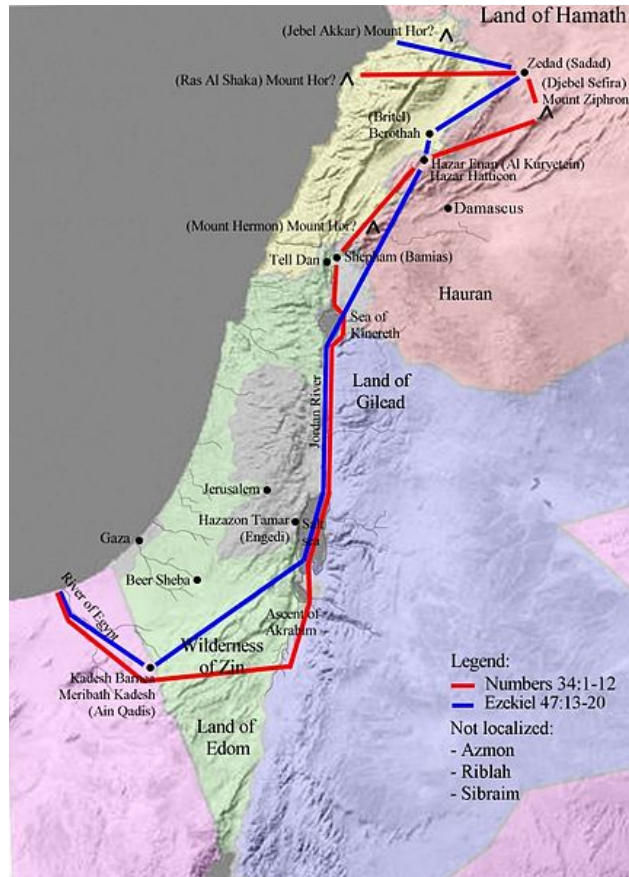
**Question:** Who are the “tribes of your ancestors”? The Land was divided into twelve provinces, one for each tribe. Levi was excluded from receiving a province, but the number remained at twelve because Manasseh and Ephraim each received a portion. *Chumash*

Numbers 33:55 But if you do not drive out אֶת־ the inhabitants of the land before you; then *those* who you let remain *in the land will become irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides and will afflict you in the land in which you live.* 56 Also it will come to pass, *that* I will do to you as I thought to do to them.” C-MATS



**Question:** What does it mean, “I will do to you as I thought to do to them”? יהוה declares that the Israelites must rid the Land of the corrosive Canaanite presence, and if they fail to do so, they will suffer the fate יהוה had intended to impose upon the Canaanites, and be driven out. Only in the perspective of יהוה's wisdom can this passage be understood. No human ruler has the right to decree that an entire population is to be exterminated or exiled, but יהוה revealed that the Canaanite presence was incompatible with both the Land's sacredness and Israel's mission on earth. History is the most conclusive proof of this, for the fact was that the Israelites could not bring themselves to eliminate all the Canaanites, with the result that the Israelites were drawn to idolatry and wickedness, and were in turn periodically oppressed and finally run out of the Land and exiled. *Chumash*

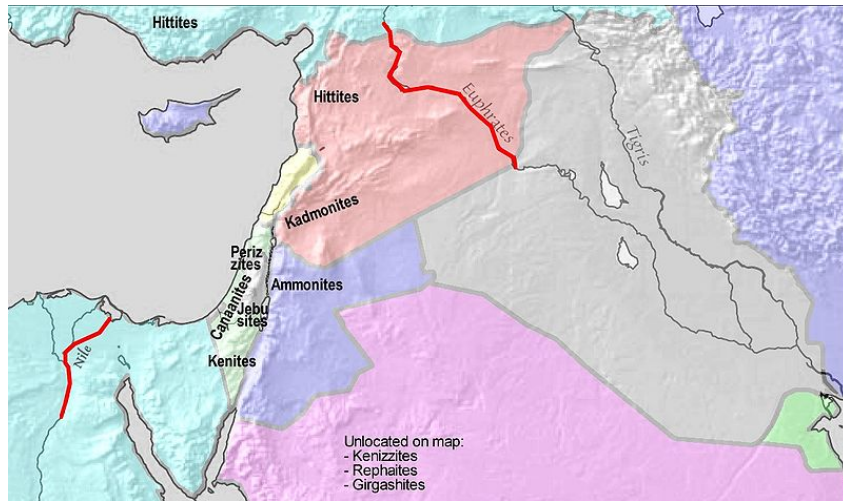
**Numbers 34:1** And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, 2 “Command אֶת the sons of Israel that when you come into the land of Canaan; (this is the land that will fall to you for an inheritance, all the land of Canaan as defined by these borders.) C-MATS



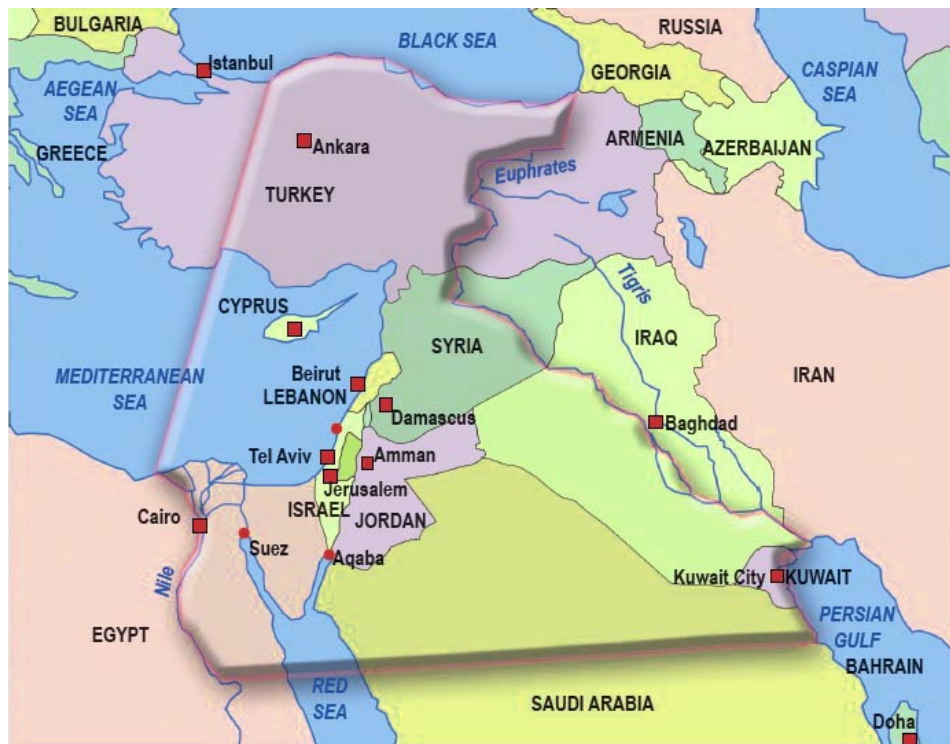
The Land of Israel as described by Numbers 34:1-12 (red line)

**Numbers 34:13** And Moses commanded אֶת the sons of Israel saying, “this is the land which you will inherit by lot, which יהוה commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half tribe: 14 Because the tribe of the children of Reuben, according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers have *already* received their inheritance; and half the tribe of Manasseh has received their inheritance: 15 The two and one-half tribes have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan near Jericho eastward towards the sunrise.” C-MATS

**Question:** What borders were being described by Moses at this time? The borders described here give the area of the Land from the time of Joshua's conquest to the destruction of the First Temple. During the Second Temple era, the territory under Israel's control was smaller. However, the Torah states that the Land extends as far north as the Euphrates, which is near the Turkish border. This suggests that the Euphrates will not become the border until Messianic times. (**Deuteronomy 1:7 Turn and go to the mountains of the Amorites and to all *the places* near there on the plain, in the hills and in the lowland and in the south and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, to the great river Euphrates. 8 I have set before you אֶת- the land: go in and possess אֶת- the land which יהוה swore to your fathers.**)



The Land of Israel according to Deuteronomy 1:7



The Future Land of Israel during Messianic Times



**Question:** How much of the Promised Land was actually conquered? The pink area indicates the lands that were inhabited by Israelites or under direct central royal administration during King David's Rule (according to the Bible). Notice that Philistia (Palestine) was never conquered and is a "thorn in their flesh" even until today.

### The Land for the Levites



Numbers 35:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho saying, 2 “Command את the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites cities to live in from their inheritance of land; and you will also give to the Levites suburbs (common-land) for the cities around them. 3 And they will have the cities to live in; and the surrounding area will be for their cattle, possessions, and animals. C-MATS

**Question:** How did the Levis use the land around their city? The land was used for animals, those used for riding and carrying burdens; for wealth, sheep, and cattle; and for all their needs, such other uses as beehives, dovecotes, and the like. The outer area of the land was used in the cultivation of agriculture. Chumash

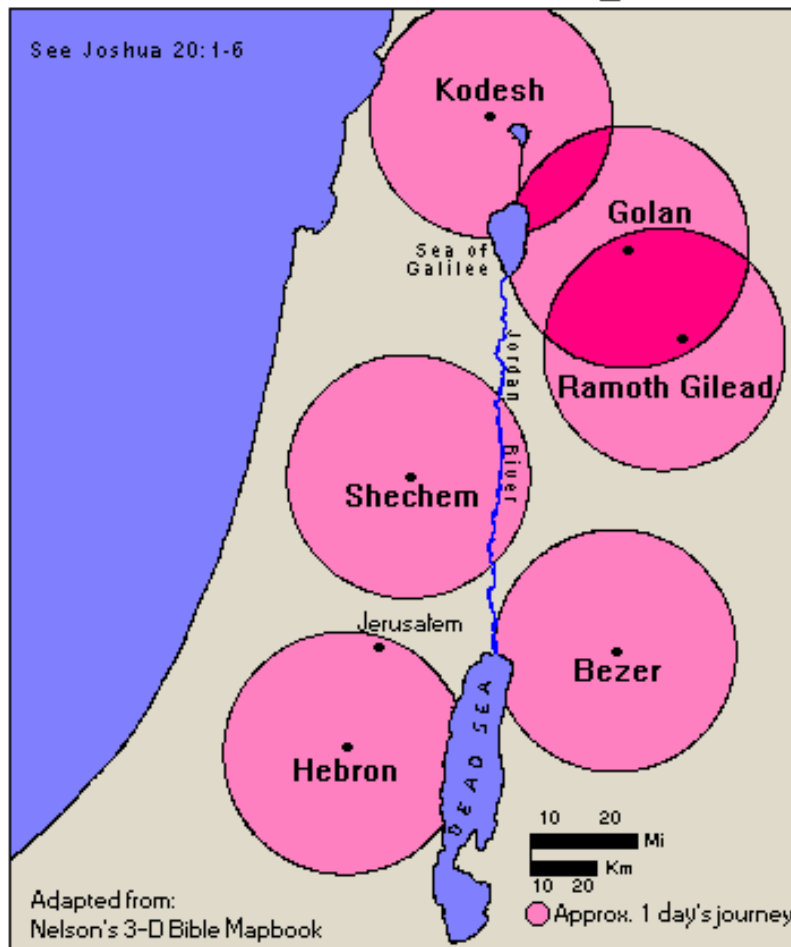
**Question:** Where did the Levis live since they were given no share of the Land? The tribes were commanded to set aside forty-eight cities for the Levites, whose tribe was not to receive a regular portion of the Land. These cities provided not only dwelling places for the tribe of Levi, but the Levis devoted themselves to the service of יהוה and teaching the nation יהוה’s laws. In this way all parts of the nation would be exposed to the "legion of יהוה", thereby enabling them and their children to learn from the example of the Levites. Chumash



48 cities of the Levites

Numbers 35:4 And the suburbs of the cities, which you will give to the Levites, *will reach* from the wall of the city outward about 1000 cubits (1500 feet) around it. 5 And you will measure outward from the city on **אֶתְ** side eastward 2000 cubits (3000 feet) and southward 2000 cubits (3000 feet) and westward 2000 cubits (3000 feet) and northward 2000 cubits (3000 feet), and the city *will be* in the middle of the land: this will be *their open land* around the cities. 6 And among the cities, which you will give to the Levites, *there will be* **שֵׁשׁ** six cities for refuge, which you will appoint for *the person who kills someone* that he may flee there: *plus an additional 42 cities*. 7 So all the cities, which you will give to the Levites, *will be* 48 cities and *their surrounding areas*. 8 And the cities, which you will give, *will be* from the possession of the sons of Israel: from *those tribes who have many cities* you will give many cities; but from *those who have few cities* you will give few cities: everyone will give cities to the Levites according to his inheritance which he inherited.”9 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, 10 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘when you cross over **אֶתְ** Jordan into the land of Canaan; 11 You will appoint the cities that will be cities of refuge; so that the killer may flee there, *if he has killed a person accidentally*. 12 And they will be cities of refuge from the avenger (*dead person’s next of kin*); so that the *person who killed someone* does not die until he stands before the community in judgment. C-MATS

## Cities of Refuge



**Question:** Why did יהוה set up cities of refuge? Whenever someone takes a life, there are four general possibilities: (a) If the act was accidental to a degree that the perpetrator was blameless, he is absolved of responsibility; (b) if the act was unintentional, but with a clearly defined degree of carelessness, the perpetrator is exiled to a city of refuge; (c) if the circumstances of an intentional murder were such that the court cannot carry out the death penalty, or if there was a high degree of negligence -- called "unintentional, but close to intentional" -- the sin is too grave to be absolved by exile; (d) if killing was intentional, and the murderer was properly warned and his act was witnessed, he is liable to execution by the court. Only the court has the authority to decide which of the above applies, and until it does so, a close relative of the victim, the avenger of the blood, has the right to kill the perpetrator. To prevent him from doing so in the event the killer does not deserve that fate, the Torah provides that the perpetrator should flee to one of the cities of refuge where he will be safe from the wrath and vengeance of the relative, pending the decision of the court. *Chumash*

**Numbers 35:13** And from these cities which you give the Levites, you will give six cities for refuge. 14 You will give three cities of refuge on this side of the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan. 15 These six cities will be a refuge, both for the sons of Israel, the foreigner, and the resident alien among them: that everyone who kills any person accidentally may flee there. C-MATS

**Question:** Who is a "resident alien"? A resident alien is a non-Israelite who is permitted to reside in the Land because he agrees to observe the Seven Noahide Laws. *Chumash*

**Question:** What are the 7 Noahide Laws?

1. Idolatry is forbidden. Man is commanded to believe in the One יהוה alone and worship only Him.
2. Incestuous and adulterous relations are forbidden. Human beings are not sexual objects, and pleasure is not the ultimate goal of life.
3. Murder is forbidden. The life of a human being, formed in יהוה's image, is sacred.
4. Cursing the name of יהוה is forbidden. Besides honoring and respecting יהוה, we learn from this precept that our speech must be sanctified, as that is the distinctive sign which separated man from the animals.
5. Theft is forbidden. The world is not ours to do with as we please.
6. Eating the flesh of a living animal is forbidden. This teaches us to be sensitive to cruelty to animals. (This was commanded to Noah for the first time along with the permission of eating meat. The rest were already given to Adam in the Garden of Eden.)
7. Mankind is commanded to establish courts of justice and a just social order to enforce the first six laws and enact any other useful laws or customs.

**Numbers 35:16** And if a man strikes him with an instrument of iron so that he dies, he is a murderer: the murderer will be put to death.17 And if a man strikes him with a stone in his hand large enough for him to die and he dies, he is a murderer: the murderer will be put to death.18 Or if a man strikes him with a hand weapon of wood capable of killing someone and he dies, he is a murderer: the murderer will be put to death. C-MATS

**Question:** Why does יהיה require the court to inquire about the sort of weapon used in the murder? The size and type of weapon used to harm someone must show that the blow was struck intentionally and it was capable of causing death. For example, if someone struck his adversary with a pillow and he died somehow, the assailant cannot be liable to the death penalty because his "weapon" should not have caused death under any reasonable circumstances. The Torah is saying that by its nature, an iron weapon is assumed to be dangerous and lethal, so that is why the court must inquire into the capacity of the weapon. The court must also consider such factors as the part of the body that was struck, the strength of the perpetrator, and the physical condition of the victim. *Chumash*

**Numbers 35:19** The *next of kin avenger* will kill אֶת the murderer himself when he meets him, and he will die. C-MATS

**Question:** Who is the "*next of kin avenger*"? The avenger is a close relative of the victim, who has a special role. In all other capital cases, the responsibility to impose the death penalty is exclusively that of the court; even when the witnesses carry out the sentence they do so as agents of the court. (Deuteronomy 17:7 **The hands of the witnesses will be first to stone him and then all the people will stone him to death. In this way you will keep the evil away from you.**) Here, however, though the relative serves as the agent of the court when it rules that the murderer is liable to execution, he also has the independent "extra-legal" right to execute the murderer even in cases where he is beyond the legal reach of the court, where he was grossly negligent or if he escapes execution because he was improperly warned not to kill (Deuteronomy 19:6 **Otherwise the next of kin avenger while in the heat of anger will pursue the killer and overtake him and kill him, since the way is long; even though he was not worthy of death and he did not hate him in the past.**). *Chumash*

**Numbers 35:20** But if a man pushes him out of hatred or accidentally throws something at him causing him to die; 21 Or in hatred strikes him with his hand that he dies: the man that struck him will be put to death; *because he is a murderer: the next of kin avenger will kill אֶת the murderer when he meets him.* 22 But if a man pushes him suddenly without hatred or throws something at him 23 Or a stone, with which a man may die, if the man did not see him and threw something at him that he died, and the man was not his enemy, and did not want to do him harm. C-MATS

**Question:** Why is the person responsible for the crime punished, if he did not intentionally murder the victim? The person used careless behavior, while absolving him from the death penalty, would subject him to exile. Though the person is not blameless, he is not a "murderer". If, for example, he turned a corner holding a drawn knife and the victim, coming from a different direction, was pierced by it and died, the person is not blameless because he should not have held the knife in so dangerous a manner, but he cannot be held guilty of intentional murder. *Chumash*

**2 Numbers 35:4** Then the congregation will judge between the killer and the *next of kin avenger* according to these judgments: 25 And the congregation will deliver אֶת the killer out of the hand of the *next of kin avenger* and the congregation will take him to the city of his refuge where he has fled: and he will live in that city until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the sacred oil. 26 But if at any time the killer comes outside אֶת the border of the city of refuge where he has fled.

**Numbers 35:27** And the *next of kin avenger* finds him outside the borders of the city of refuge and the **אֶת־** *next of kin avenger* kills him; then the *next of kin avenger* will not be guilty of murder: 28 Because *the killer* should have remained in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the killer can return into the land *he owns*. 29 So these *things* will constitute a statute of judgment for you throughout *all* your generations *wherever you live*. 30 Whoever kills a person, the murderer **אֶת־** will be put to death by the *testimony* of witnesses: but one witness will not testify against any person *and cause him* to die. C-MATS

**Question:** Can one person's testimony bring the death penalty? The death penalty for murder applies only when the crime is proved by the testimony of valid witnesses, not by other evidence, and that a single witness has no standing in the court, either for or against the defendant. In monetary cases, however, a single witness may testify and the court must decide how much credibility to give him. *Chumash*

**Numbers 35:31** Also you will not take a ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death: but he will be put to death. 32 And you will not take a ransom *for him* who has fled to the city of refuge, so that he can come to live in the land again until the death of the priest. 33 So you will not pollute **אֶת־** the land in which you *are living*: because the blood defiles **אֶת־** the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed in it *unless the man that shed the blood is killed*. 34 Do not defile **אֶת־** the land where I live, which you will inhabit: because I יהוה live among the sons of Israel.

**Question:** How does יהוה view the sin of murder on His Land? The sin of murder and of condoning it is much worse in Israel than elsewhere, because of the Land's great sacredness. The guilt that one brings on the Land refers primarily to things that are not what they appear, such as the hypocrisy of a guilty person pretending to be innocent. The punishment for this sort of institutionalized hypocrisy fits the crime, because the Land will cease to be fruitful (**Deuteronomy 28:38** You will carry much seed out *into* the field and will gather little in because the locust will eat it.); it will appear to be fertile, but will yield meager harvests. Since יהוה rests among His people even when they are contaminated, those who contaminate the Land cause יהוה to dwell amid their contamination, a grievous sin. (**Leviticus 16:16** And he will make atonement for the sacred *place*, because of the uncleanness of *the* Children of Israel and because of their transgressions *and all their sins*: and he will do *the same* for the Tabernacle of the Congregation that remains there **אִתָּם** *with them* in the midst of their uncleanness.) *Chumash*

**Numbers 36:1** And the *leaders* of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke to Moses and the princes, *the leaders* of the sons of Israel: 2 And they said, “יהוה **אֶת־** commanded my master *Moses* to give **אֶת־** the land for an inheritance by lot to the sons of Israel: and my master *Moses* was commanded by יהוה to give **אֶת־** the inheritance of Zelophehad, our brother, to his daughters. 3 And if they became married to any of the sons from *the other* tribes of the sons of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and will be added to the inheritance of the other tribe into which they marry: so it would be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4 And when the Jubilee of the sons of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry: so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.” 5 And Moses commanded **אֶת־** the sons of Israel according to the word of יהוה saying, “The tribe of the sons of Joseph *is right in what they say*. C-MATS



**Question:** What problem did the elders of the tribe of Manasseh have? The elders of the tribe of Manasseh recognized that their tribe might have a problem, which they now sought to avoid. Since the daughters of Zelophehad would receive the portion of the Land destined for their late father, and their heirs would be their future husbands or sons, the province of Manasseh would be diminished if any of the five daughters were to marry out of the tribe. This was not a hypothetical problem, because these women were righteous and wise, so it was natural that they were sought as mates by men from all the tribes. But if they were to marry outside of their tribe, the Divinely inspired apportionment of the Land would be corrupted, because part of the province of Manasseh would pass to another tribe. *Chumash*



Daughters of Zelophehad

**Numbers 36:6** This is the thing which יהוה commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, let them marry whom they think is best; but they can only marry into the family of the tribe of their fathers. **7** So the inheritance of the sons of Israel will not change from tribe to tribe: because every one of the sons of Israel will keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. **8** And every daughter, who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the sons of Israel, will be a wife to one of the families from the tribe of her father, so that the sons of Israel may enjoy the inheritance of his fathers. **9** Neither will the inheritance be changed from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the sons of Israel will keep his own inheritance.” **10** So as commanded אֶת־ יהוה Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: **11** For Mahlah, Tirzah and Hoglah and Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to their father's brothers' sons: **12** And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. **13** These are the commandments and the judgments which יהוה commanded by the order of Moses to the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. C-MATS

**Question:** How does the Book of Numbers end? The Book of Numbers, which contains so many saddening instances of Israelite infidelity to יהוה and to the Land He had promised them, closes with an inspiring story of a tribe and its daughters who loved Israel. The Book of Numbers ends by saying that the commandments were given through Moses, literally, in the hand of Moses, a term that does not appear in the last verse of Leviticus. This alludes to a basic change in the nature of the covenant between יהוה and Israel. The covenant of Leviticus was founded on the first Tablets of the Law, which Moses broke. Now, at the Plains of Moab, Moses forged a new covenant, based on the second Tablets, which he held "in his hands", signifying that the covenant was eternal. *Chumash*

## Do you know?

1. The Torah teaches that we should never break a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A father can break a vow of his \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A husband can break the vow of his \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Moses told the Israelites to kill all the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Moses rebuked all the officers of the army, because they saved the Midianite \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The men who went to war had to remain outside the camp and be purified for \_\_\_ days.
7. The booty from the battle was divided between the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The captains of the army brought יהוה a gift of \_\_\_\_\_ to thank him for not one of their men being lost in battle.
9. To keep their land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad promised to go to \_\_\_\_\_ with the other tribes until they had conquered all their land of inheritance.
10. Moses wrote all the \_\_\_\_\_ of their journeys as יהוה ordered him to do.
11. The Israelites' journeys lasted for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
12. The inheritance of the tribes was decided by \_\_\_\_\_.
13. What 2 ½ tribes had inheritance east of the Jordan River?
14. The Levites were given \_\_\_\_\_ cities in the land of Canaan as their inheritance.
15. Moses assigned \_\_\_\_\_ cities of refuge.
16. A city of refuge allowed a person to stand before a \_\_\_\_\_ before the next of kin avenger killed him.
17. If a man kills another man intentionally, then he is condemned to \_\_\_\_\_.
18. If a man kills another man accidentally, then he can flee to a city of \_\_\_\_\_ to protect him from the next of kin avenger.
19. The testimony of at least \_\_\_\_\_ people must convict a murderer.
20. The daughters of Israel were required to marry a man from their own \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answers:**

1. Vow/oath
2. daughter
3. wife
4. Midianites
5. women
6. seven
7. men who went to war and the congregation
8. gold jewelry
9. War
10. stages
11. 40
12. lots
13. Reuben, Gad, ½ Manasseh
14. 48
15. 6
16. court
17. death
18. refuge
19. 2
20. tribe

## Haftorah



Jeremiah the Prophet

Jeremiah recounts how יהוה appointed him as prophet -- despite his initial reluctance to accept the task -- and tells of the encouragement יהוה gave him to fulfill his crucial mission. He then describes two prophetic visions he was shown. The first featured an almond tree branch. יהוה explained to Jeremiah that just like an almond tree is very quick to blossom, so too יהוה will carry out his plan -- to punish the tribe of Judah for their sins -- in due haste. The second vision was that of a boiling pot whose foam was directed northward. יהוה explained that this was an allusion to the afflictions the Israelite people would suffer at the hands of the people from the north of the Promised Land, namely Babylon. יהוה will cause the kingdoms of the north to lay siege on Jerusalem and Judea and He will pass judgment on the tribe of Judah due to their abandonment of יהוה's ways and their idol worship. יהוה then encouraged Jeremiah to deliver the prophecy and not to fear the people who would certainly not take kindly to such harsh words. The *Haftorah* ends with a reassuring prophecy to the people that יהוה would still love them and protect them.

**Jeremiah 1:1** The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: **2** To whom the word of יהוה came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. **3** It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, to *the* end of *the* eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, to *the* carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. **4** Then the word of יהוה came to me, saying **5** Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you and I ordained you a prophet to the nations. **6** Then said I, alas, Master יהוה certainly I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. **7** But יהוה said to me, say not, *that* I *am* a child: for you will go to all that I will send you and whatever I command you, you will speak. **8** Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with you to deliver you, said יהוה. **9** Then יהוה put forth אֶת־ his hand and touched my mouth. And יהוה said to me, certainly, I have put My words in your mouth. **10** See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant. **11** Also the word of יהוה came to me, saying Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said I see a rod of an almond tree. **12** Then said יהוה to me, you have seen well: for I will watch over My word to perform it. **13** And the word of יהוה came to me *the* second *time*, saying what do you see? And I said I see a seething pot; and the face of it *is* toward the north. **14** Then יהוה said to me, out of the north evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. **15** For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, said יהוה; and they will come and they will set every one his throne *at* the entering of the gates of Jerusalem and against all the walls of it round about and against all the cities of Judah. **16** And I will utter My judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, who have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods and worshipped the works of their own hands. **17** You therefore gird up your loins and arise and speak to them אֶת־ all that I command you: be not dismayed at their faces, otherwise I confound you before them. **18** For, certainly, I have made you this day a defended city and an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes of it, against the priests of it and against the people of the land. **19** And they will fight against you; but they will not prevail against you; for I *am* with you, said יהוה, to deliver you. **Jeremiah 2:1** Also the word of יהוה came to me, saying **2** Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying so said יהוה; I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal (*wedding ceremony*), when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land *that* was not sown. **3** Israel *was* sacred to יהוה and the firstfruits of His increase: all that devour him will offend; evil will come on them, said יהוה. **4** Hear you the word of יהוה, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel: **5** So said יהוה, what iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me and have walked after vanity and are become vain? C-MATS

Jeremiah 2:6 Neither said they, where *is* יהוה that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land *that* no man passed through and where no man lived? 7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit of it and the goodness of it; but when you entered, you defiled אֶת־ My land and made My heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say where *is* יהוה? And they that handle the Torah knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after *things that* do not profit. 9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, said יהוה and with your children's children will I plead. 10 For pass over the isles of Chittim and see; and send to Kedar and consider diligently and see if there be such a thing. 11 Has a nation changed *their* gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for *that which* does not profit. 12 Be astonished, O you heavens, at this and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, said יהוה. 13 For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. 14 *Is* Israel a servant? *Is* he a home born *slave*? Why is he spoiled? 15 The young lions roared on him and yelled and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant. 16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken *the* crown of your head. 17 Have you not procured this to yourself, in that you have forsaken אֶת־ יהוה your Elohim, when He led you by the way? 18 And now what *have you to do* in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what *have you to do* in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? 19 Your own wickedness will correct you and your backslidings will reprove you: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that you have forsaken אֶת־ יהוה your Elohim and *that* My fear *is* not in you, said Master יהוה of hosts. 20 For of old time I have broken your yoke and burst your bands; and you said I will not transgress; when on every high hill and under every green tree אַתְּ you wander, playing the harlot. 21 Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a well established seed: how then are you turned into *the* degenerate *plant of* a strange vine to Me? 22 For though you wash yourself with lye (*soap*) and take you much soap, *yet* your iniquity is marked before Me, said Master יהוה. 23 How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: *you are* a swift dromedary (*young female camel*) breaking loose in her ways; 24 A wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness that sniffs the wind at her pleasure; *in* her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they will find her. 25 Withhold your foot from being unshod (*shoeless*) and your throat from thirst: but you said there is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers and after them will I go. 26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so *is the* house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes and their priests and their prophets, 27 Saying to a tree, you *are* my father; and to a stone, אַתְּ you have brought me forth: for they have turned their back to Me and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, arise and save us. 28 But where *are* your gods that you have made yourselves? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble: for *according to* the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah. C-MATS

## Brit Chadasha

John 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Mashiach Y'shua. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of Elohim in Mashiach Y'shua. C-MATS

**John 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, Elohim shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. C-MATS**

### **“Journey Through Life”**

It's exciting to be on a journey. We get to see new places and meet interesting people. And every step of the way we know we're getting closer to our destination. The Torah tells us about the 40-year journey of the Israelite people, which began after they were freed from slavery in Egypt, and which ended when they finally reached the Land of Israel. Some places they stayed longer and some places shorter, but each stop was necessary to get them where they had to go. We may not realize it, but our whole life is one big journey. The families we have, the places we live, and the people we encounter are not by chance. They are all part of יהוה's carefully arranged plan to help us grow spiritually into who we have the potential to become. All that happens to us helps us to get there, even if we don't see it. Once we learn to look at life this way, we begin to enjoy the journey more and more.

### **"STOPS ALONG THE WAY"**

My friend Amy has a funny way of looking at things.

I saw her the other day in school. Since it was a new term we started talking about the classes we were taking. I told her that I was very excited about studying French this year. She told me that she had also signed up for French but all the classes were full, and so she was assigned to the Russian class instead.

"Russian!" I said. "You must really be disappointed!"

Amy just smiled. "I guess I'm going to need it for something someday. Otherwise I wouldn't have been placed there."

Well, if it were me, I think I would have locked myself in my room for three days.

I didn't bump into Amy again until it was almost winter break. Of course we spoke about where we would be going for vacation. She told me that she planned all year to take this amazing trip down to Disney World but, at the last minute, her parents had changed their minds and decided to take everyone on a historical trip to Europe instead. She and her family were going to get passports that afternoon.

"Uggh, how boring," I thought. But believe it or not, Amy just took it all in stride. "It was meant to be, I guess. This is just another stop on my journey through life. Maybe someday I'll find out why," she said calmly.

That's sure *not* the way I would have reacted!

But you haven't heard anything yet. Just last week I invited all the kids over for a sleepover birthday party at my house. I knew Amy would be excited because she loves these kind of things, but guess what? She said she couldn't come because they were having guests from out of town. Some lady was coming that was her Mom's second cousin. Amy hadn't even met her before, but she had to stay home.

Now I was sure Amy would be mad. But I almost fell over when she just cheerfully said, "I guess it's just part of my life's plan that I meet her instead of going to a party."

I told you that she had funny way of looking at things. But you wouldn't believe what happened. I got a call yesterday that blew my mind.

It was Amy. At first I didn't even recognize her voice because she was so excited. It turns out that the lady cousin of her Mom's is a famous teacher who makes educational movies and who is about to fly to Moscow to make a film about Russian kids. She invited Amy to come with her for two weeks to assist her and be in the film. They would stay at the best 5-star hotels and be interviewed on Russian TV. Since it is educational, Amy would even be allowed to miss school and get school credit for it.

Sounds great right? But there's more. The filmmaker said she could only take someone along who could speak at least a little Russian and had a ready passport since they had to leave right away. "Just think," Amy said to me, "If I hadn't 'gotten stuck' taking Russian, if I hadn't gone to Europe and needed a passport, and if I hadn't missed out on your party to meet this lady, I would never have been able to go on this dream trip!"

Well, I was speechless.

It now seems to me that Amy's way of looking at things really isn't so funny after all. In fact, maybe that's how I'm going to start looking at things from now on.

**Question:** How can seeing whatever happens to us as 'stops along life's journey' help us to enjoy life more? When people make the mistake of thinking that their life is just a random set of events without a deeper meaning, they feel confused and frustrated if things don't seem to go their way. How much more enjoyable their life would be if they chose to realize that everyone they meet and everything that happens to them is really a meaningful part of a marvelous journey planned for them by יהוה.

**Question:** Each individual should adopt the outlook that "the entire world was created for me." How can we understand this? How would having such an outlook affect our view of life? Each of us is unique and has a special and important mission in life. For this reason, יהוה has placed each of us in a life situation that will encourage and challenge us to go forward and accomplish what we are in the world to do. In effect, each one of us stars in our own life's story with the rest of the world playing a supporting role. Realizing this can help us develop an optimistic viewpoint that everything and everyone we encounter, even if unpleasant or unexpected, is "heaven sent" to help us grow.

**Question:** Sometimes seemingly unfortunate events do in fact turn out to be fortunate. But sometimes it just doesn't turn out that way. Can we still say that what happened was part of our life plan and for the best? Indeed, there is no guarantee that we will come to see or understand how some baffling and seemingly unfortunate life occurrences are for the best. In times like these we must try to develop our faith in יהוה and trust that He truly cares about us and is guiding us. We have faith that the good, although hidden, is there and will ultimately reveal itself to be good, if not in this world then in the next.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Can you think of a time when you felt יהוה was sending you a message? Look for the messages that יהוה is sending you this week through life's sometimes unexpected events.

**Question:** Do you think a person could always find something to enjoy or appreciate in his life? While there are some extreme situations that would require super-human effort to enjoy, the overwhelming majority of life's events and experiences are packed with potential for interest and enjoyment - we just have to search it out.

**Question:** Life has been described as a 'journey, ' what does that idea mean to you? One idea is that we have been put in this world to grow personally and develop our character and, as such, our life is a journey toward that end. In a deeper sense, our life in this world is just a temporary part of a journey to a world of everlasting spiritual ecstasy. The Torah is a map of how to navigate that journey successfully.

**Question:** Based on the above, does that mean we should ignore the world in front of us, since it isn't the end-point or goal? Not at all. יהוה wants us to enjoy this world; he gave it to us as a gift. However, He wants us to stay focused, not to harm others, and realize that the 'paths' we choose in this world, to the extent that we live in a meaningful and ethical way, will determine how easily we will arrive at our journey's destination.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Which believer has not experienced many wanderings in his existence? But whatever the disappointments already encountered, we must always go forward. Future salvation for each individual beckons us to rise to the next challenge. Are you ready for the next challenge that יהוה will give to you today? Will you win the battle and grow stronger? Will you give up and end in defeat? Do not grow weary but continue moving forward. יהוה will bless you for your courage.

**Phil 3:12 I press on to take hold of that for which Yahusha took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which יהוה has called me heavenward in Yahusha. Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, Yahusha, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. C-MATS**



## "THE WRITING ON THE WALL"

It had seemed like innocent fun to Alex at the time. The wall behind the school looked like the perfect canvas just waiting to be painted. The boy and his friend Sean aimed their spray cans, and were really getting into it painting their masterpiece on the school wall.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere came Hank, the school guard, who put a quick end to their fun.

"Hey, no graffiti allowed!" he yelled, chasing the kids with surprising speed for a man his age.

Sean managed to slip away, but Alex found himself firmly in the older man's grip, caught literally red handed, with the red spray can still in his hand.

"Oh no, I'm in BIG trouble!" he panicked as he waited for the guard's next move. Would he bring him to the principal? Would they kick him out of school? His parents were going to be so upset! "Please, Hank, just don't tell my parents," he pleaded. "I'll do anything. I'll pay for the damage, I'll stay after school for a month...."

Alex prepared for the worst, as he meekly looked up at the red-faced guard, still huffing and puffing from the chase. After what seemed like forever, the man spoke up in a serious, but calm tone of voice. "Listen kid, I won't turn you in, and I'm not gonna make you pay no money..."

Alex felt total relief.

"But you gotta give me your *word* that you'll never, ever do this again!"

"That's *it*?" thought Alex, amazed at his good fortune.

He gratefully nodded his head, as the man loosened the grip on his arm. "I promise," he said softly.

But as he started to back away, the guard looked him deep in the eye, and said words that sent a chill down Alex's spine. "Don't think you got off easy. Remember, you gave me your word, and a man who doesn't keep his word is not a man."

Time passed, and the incident was forgotten. Until one day, during summer vacation when Alex, Sean, and another guy were biking around town. They were passing by the school building, when suddenly Sean pulled over to the side of the road. He took a couple of cans of spray paint out of his pack, and turned to Alex with a sly smile.

"Now's our chance to finish the 'masterpiece' we started last spring." Noticing Alex's uncomfortable look, Sean reassured him. "And don't worry, *this* time we won't get caught. Nobody's guarding the school now, and just in case, we'll each take turns as lookout. Let's go!"

The boys rode into the school parking lot, and quickly ducked behind the building. Sure enough, not a soul was around. "Okay, Picasso, you go first. Start writing!" winked Sean, handing Alex a spray can.

"Why not?" Alex thought. It would be a lot of fun, and there was plenty of other graffiti on the wall already. And there was no way they would get caught.

The boy picked up the can to spray, but suddenly he felt a funny feeling in the pit of his stomach. The vision of old Hank popped into his head, and with it, the guard's solemn words, "You gave me your word, and a man who doesn't keep his word is not a man." Alex lowered the can.

"Hey, c'mon, let's go. We haven't got all day!" prompted Sean, impatiently.

Alex again took aim. What was the big deal? After all, he promised back then, and now was now. He hesitated. No, he just couldn't do it! He had given his word, and that was worth a lot. It was worth even more than some summer fun.

"Sorry, Sean" he said, shaking his head and handing him back his can of paint. "I'm out of here. I promised I wouldn't do this, and my word is too good to scribble it away on a wall."

Alex walked across the parking lot to his bike as his friends got to 'work' on the wall. But as he started to ride off, he again heard old Hank's voice, but this time it wasn't in his head! He turned around to see Sean and his other friend helplessly locked in the big man's grip. The guard had been on duty after all, and this time he was going to report the graffiti! Alex felt bad for his friends, but even more scared for himself. Would he get in trouble too? Especially after last time!

But the guard seemed to have read Alex's mind, because with a smile, and a wave of the hand, he put the boy at ease. "Don't worry kid. I saw and heard the whole thing. I know it was a struggle for you, but I see in the end, you really are a man of your word."

**Question:** How would you feel if someone asked you to do something you had promised not to do? Although we may feel like doing it, especially if it's something fun, still since we promised, we should keep our word and not do it.

**Question:** How did Alex feel when he found out that Hank had really been watching them? He was very glad that he had kept his word, and not sprayed paint on the building, even though he had been tempted.

**Question:** Let us imagine for a moment that Alex had given in, painted graffiti on the wall and got caught with the others. Would this have been any worse than when he was caught the first time? Why or why not? It would have been much worse. The first time, he was doing something that wasn't right, a matter of improper actions. Everybody slips sometimes. But breaking his word, whether he had been caught or not, would be something deeper. It would be showing a lack of trustworthiness, which is a basic character trait that affects all of a person's actions.

## A Truthful No

Our word - and the promises we make - are not something to take lightly. In this week's portion (30:3) we learn about how important it is not to say we'll do something unless we really mean it. We should say 'yes' when we mean yes, and 'no' when we mean no.

### YES AND NO

Jonathan was relaxing on his bed with his Gameboy when he heard his mom's voice calling him from the bottom of the stairway.

"Jonathan! Jon, do you hear me?"

Jonathan pressed 'pause,' dragged himself off his bed and stuck his head out of the doorway to his room.

"Yeah, Mom. What's up?"

"I need some more formula for the baby. Could you run over to the One-Stop on your bike and pick some up for me? She's going to be up from her nap in a little while, and she's going to be hungry!"

That was the *last* thing Jon felt like doing right then, but he didn't feel like getting into an argument with his mother either.

"Um, sure Mom, no problem. Just give me five to finish up my game, okay?"

"Well, all right, but just five minutes, okay? I left money on the table. I'm going to rest a bit until she wakes up."

"Okay."

With that, Jonathan, happy to have avoided a scene, returned to his former position and lost himself in his Gameboy once again.

After about an hour, Jonathan was startled out of his latest game by the sound of shrieking coming from the room next door. *Uh-oh*, he thought to himself. *The baby must have taken a real short nap.*

His mom came into the room holding a weeping, hysterical baby. "Jonathan, I can't find the formula you went out to get. Where did you leave it?"

"Sorry, Ma. I didn't go yet. I don't really want to go."

"If you didn't want to go, why did you tell me you would do it? I was counting on you."

"I know, Ma. I didn't want you to feel bad if I said no, so I said yes."

"But Jonathan, I feel a lot worse now when I have nothing to give the baby! Why did you say yes when you really meant no? Now you have no choice. Run to the store and get the formula, before I take away your Gameboy for the week."

*The next day, at school...*

"Hey, Larry, guess what?"

"Hey, Jon, what's up?"

"I got the new, updated version of Bats and Bones for two players. Why don't you come on over to my house this afternoon and we'll play? We can use my dad's big computer screen. I'm sure he'll let!"

"Cool, Jon. Thanks for the invite. What time?"

"Come about five, okay?"

"Okay. You got it."

Jonathan rushed home from school that day to get everything ready for his friend. He called his dad at work and asked him for permission to use his screen, and his dad agreed. Jon carefully disconnected the screen and attached it to his own computer, but it took a lot longer and was more complicated than he thought, and he had to disturb his dad a few times to ask him some questions. When he finally got that done, he realized his room was a mess, and he ran around stuffing things under his bed and throwing stuff away so it would at least look decent. Then he couldn't find the disc with the game! He ran all over the house looking for it, and he finally found it behind the couch pillows in the den, where he'd carelessly thrown it the last time he used it. Finally, he realized there was nothing good to eat in the house, so he jumped on his bike and made it to the One-Stop in no time flat.

At 4:59, he threw himself down on the couch and waited for his friend to arrive, huffing, puffing, and exhausted from all his efforts. At 5:20, he started to get a little worried, wondering when Larry would show up. 6:00 - still no Larry. At 6:30 he tried to call Larry's house, but there was no answer.

*He must've had to stop somewhere on the way here and he got held up,* thought Larry. At 7:00 he gave up, and went into the kitchen to eat his supper, which had long gone cold.

Next day, Jonathan went looking for Larry first thing. "Where were you yesterday?" he almost shouted. "I waited for you the whole afternoon! I called your house and there was no answer!"

Larry was calm. "I know. We went to my grandmother's house yesterday. We'd been planning it for weeks. Besides, I already have Bats and Bones at home."

Jonathan was confused. "But if you already knew you were going somewhere, why did you agree to come over to my house? Why did you say yes when you really meant no?"

He was shocked to hear his mother's words coming right out of his own mouth!

"Um I don't know ... you looked like you really wanted me to come and it just seemed kinda easier to agree than going through the whole, 'Well, why not,' conversation and making you disappointed or whatever. Usually whenever people ask me to do things, I just say yes, and either I go or I don't. What difference does it make anyway?"

Jonathan was silent. All he could think about was the disappointed look on his mother's face and how he let her down.

"Your words do make a difference," Jonathan said slowly.

Larry just shrugged and walked away, but Jonathan took the lesson home with him and let it stay for a long time. From then on, everyone knew that Jonathan's word was as good as gold. By him, yes meant yes and no meant no. Period.

**Question:** What life-lesson do you think Jonathan learned from what happened? He had told himself that he didn't have to stick to doing what he said he would and that it was better to agree to do something and not really mean it than to get someone upset by saying 'no'. But after he saw how he had messed up his mom and how much it hurt when his friend did it to him, he realized that a person's word should be kept and therefore he would only say he'd do something if he meant it.

**Question:** Why do you think it hurts people more when we say 'yes' and don't do it than if we say 'no' in the first place? While no one likes having his requests refused, it is preferable to facing the bigger let down of counting on someone for something and then having it not happen.

**Question:** What, if anything, is ethically wrong with not keeping one's word? Besides the harm it can cause others who make decisions based upon what one has told them, it undermines the stability of the world as people cease to trust each other and can no longer interact in good faith.

**Question:** Are there any situations when it is right to tell people what they want to hear, even if it isn't what you truly mean? Certain times, such as when we give someone a compliment to lift their spirits, there is room to exaggerate for the sake of kindness. However, in general, people ultimately feel better when we are straight with them, even if they seem disappointed at first.

### **Resources:**

*The Stone Edition of The Chumash*

*The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures* **C-MATS** [www.AlephTavScriptures.com](http://www.AlephTavScriptures.com)

"Weekly Torah Portion" from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) (stories)