



South Head Youth Parasha Sheet

PARASHAT MATOT



Parashat Matot teaches us the importance of our words. One might think that the words we speak are not important. However, this is not so. The Torah teaches us that words are very important. A Jew should be careful with the words he uses, particularly when making a promise. This is because when we make a promise we are responsible to keep it. For this reason, it is actually best to avoid making promises, because when a person breaks his promise he has committed a sin. Therefore, rather than making a promise, it's a good idea to say the words 'Bli Neder'. These words translate to mean 'it's not a promise'. So when a person says that he is going to do something, and adds in the words 'Bli Neder' he is not bound by any promises. Therefore, if he forgets to do what he said he was going to do, the person has not committed a sin.

Of course, there is the off-chance that we might forget to say the words 'Bli Neder' and we might actually promise to do something which for some reason we do not end up doing. Therefore the Torah teaches us a few ways of undoing a promise. A person may go to a Beit Din, a Jewish Court or to a great Torah scholar and explain to the Beit Din or the Torah scholar the promise he made. The Beit Din or Torah scholar can then nullify the promise for the person if they find a good reason to cancel it. The Torah also teaches us that a father can nullify a promise made by his twelve to twelve and a half year old daughter by simply saying, 'your promise is invalid'. However, a father only has until sunset on the day he hears the promise, to nullify the promise. If he waits any later, then he is unable to cancel the promise. Similarly, a man can also nullify some promises made by his wife, but he must do so before sunset on the day that he hears the promise. Otherwise it is too late.



The Gemara relates a story about nullifying a promise. There was once a great Torah sage named Rav Manna. Rav Manna once made a promise that he would never drink his father's wine. When his father found out about Rav Manna's promise he became very upset. Rav Manna felt very bad that he had upset his father and immediately regretted making his promise. His father asked him, 'if you had realized that I would be upset about your promise would you have made it?' To which Rava Manna responded, 'no'. Upon hearing this response, Rav Manna's father declared his son free from his promise. Rav Manna's father was a great Torah scholar and therefore he was allowed to nullify his son's promise because he found a good reason for canceling it.

The Torah tells us that if a person under the age of Bat or Bar Mitzvah makes a promise, she/he is not required to go to the Beit Din to cancel it. This is because a child's promise is not valid. Nevertheless, the sages tell us that it is important to train children from a young age, not to make promises.

There are a few situations in which the sages recommend making a promise. For example, if a person finds himself in danger, he can promise Hashem that he will give Tzeddakah, in the hope that Hashem will save him. An example of a famous person who made a promise while in a dangerous situation is a forefather Yakov. Yakov fled his homeland for his uncle Lavan's house as his brother Esau wanted to kill him. Yakov knew that his uncle Lavan was also a wicked man who would try to destroy him. On the way to his uncle Lavan's house, Yakov stopped at Har Hamorayah, also known as Mount Moriah, to pray. While at Har Hamorayah, Yakov made a promise to Hashem. He promised Hashem that if He returned him safely to his father's (Yitzchak's) home, then he would offer sacrifices to Hashem on Har Hamorayah upon his return home and he would also set aside one tenth of

whatever he earned for Hashem. Of course, Hashem protected Yakov throughout the twenty years that he worked for his uncle Lavan. Upon his return to Israel, Yakov delayed offering his sacrifices to Hashem. As a consequence, Hashem punished him. One of the punishments was that his daughter Dina was kidnapped by the people of Shechem. When this happened, Yakov immediately realized his mistake and hurried to fulfill his promise.

The Parasha also speaks about the Jewish people's preparation for war against Midiyan. Hashem tells Moshe to send the Jewish people to fight against Midiyan as a consequence of the women of Midiyan causing the Jewish men to sin in Parashat Balak. He also tells Moshe that following the war, it will be time for Moshe to leave this world. You may recall that there were two nations who sent their women to cause the Jewish men to sin. These were the nation's of Midiyan and Moab. However, Hashem only commands the Jewish people to fight against Midiyan. One reason for this is because Hashem foresaw that in the future a righteous woman named Ruth would be born to the nation of Moab. Ruth would convert to Judaism and she would be the great-grandmother of King David. It was because of her that Hashem commanded the Jewish people not to harm the Moabites.

Even though the Midiyanites had a very strong army, Hashem instructed Moshe not to send all the Jewish men to war. The reason for this is that Hashem didn't want any of the men who had been previously associated with the women of Midiyan to go to war. When Moshe asks the Jewish men to prepare for war, they refuse to co-operate. They knew that the Moshe would die immediately after the war and so they didn't want to bring his death closer! Moshe doesn't know how to get the men to prepare for war and so Hashem tells him to cast lots. Any soldiers whose name is picked from the lot has no choice but to go to war. Moshe then calls Pinchas, our hero from last week's Parasha, and tells him that he will be the Kohen who is anointed for the war. He also tells Pinchas that when he goes out to war he should carry the Aron (Ark) with the broken Luchot (tablets of stone) inside and the Tzitz (the headband worn by the Kohen Gadol). The Kohanim then blow Moshe's two silver trumpets to signal the start of the battle.

As the Jewish army approached Midiyan they saw Bilam running towards them. Bilam had heard that his wicked advice of having the Midiyanite and Moabite women sin with the Jewish men had caused 24 000 Jewish men to die in a plague. He was therefore on his way to collect his money from King Balak. When he saw the Jewish people coming he tried to discourage them from attacking. But the Jewish people did not listen to him. They captured him and he was sentenced to death by the Jewish Court. The Jewish army won the war against the Midiyanites. This was a very big miracle. Another miracle was that not one Jewish soldier died in the war. This was a very big miracle because the Midiyanites army was much larger than the Jewish army.

The Jewish soldiers brought back a large amount of booty from the Midiyanites, including gold, pots, pans and other dishes. The Jewish people weren't permitted to use the dishes as the Midiyanites had used them from non-Kosher food. Elazar, one of Aharon's sons taught the Jewish people how to make the dishes Kosher. He told the Jewish people that some dishes can be Koshered and others cannot. The dishes that can be Koshered are dishes made from all types of metal. On the other hand, all dishes made from earthenware cannot be Koshered and cannot be used by a Jew if they were previously used to cook non-Kosher food. The laws of Koshering dishes can be found here: http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/82667/jewish/Koshering-Your-Kitchen.htm.

Mission: Visit our Keilim Mikvah (dishes Mikvah).

It was great seeing you in Shule! We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family! Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew.

