

Parashas Mattos

Parsha Summary

Moshe teaches the tribe's leaders about the laws of vows, and under what circumstances might a father or a husband annul his daughter's/wife's oaths.

God tells Moshe to wage a war of revenge against Midian for seducing the men of Israel and causing a plague. Under the leadership of Pinchas, they formed an army to kill all the men and burn the cities, while they took the animals, women and spoils. Moshe was angry that they did not also kill the women, who were most at fault for seducing the Israelites. The army therefore killed the adult women as well. Moshe taught the nation the procedure of purifying or purging the utensils that the army took as spoils of war. God had the nation apportion the spoils with half going to soldiers and the other half for the people. One 500th of the soldier's portion and one 50th of the nation's portion should be given to Elazar the Kohen as a donation to God.

Reuvain and Gad had a very large flock, and so they asked Moshe if they can settle in the lands that they had just conquered instead of crossing the Jordan. Moshe first admonished them, reminding them how the previous generation was punished for rejecting the land. The two tribes assured Moshe that they would join their brethren in conquering the land and return home to the east of the Jordan only after Israel was settled, and so Moshe accepted and allowed Reuvain, Gad, and half of the tribe of Menashe to settle in those lands. The conquered kingdoms of Sichon and Og were thus given to Reuvain and Gad. Machir ben Menashe conquered the area of Gilad and settled there, and Yair ben Menashe conquered 'it's environs' [*havotei hem*] and settled there.

Classic Questions

Why did Moshe gather the tribal leaders to teach them specifically laws of vows?

- **Rashi:** Moshe accorded them the honor of being taught first, before the nation
 - **Commentaries on Rashi:** specifically these laws, because judges can annul a person's vows, and even an individual leader, but only the greatest scholars
- **Ibn Ezra:** this was taught connected to the next sections, where the leaders of the tribes are charged with making sure that Reuven and Gad keep their vow to join Israel's battles
- **Ramban:** better that the masses are not aware of the possibility of having vows annulled

What were the two tribes really after, and why did Moshe initially refuse but concede eventually?

- **Rashi, Chazal:** Gad and Reuven incorrectly prioritized their material wealth
- **Ramban:** Moshe suspected that the tribes feared the nations of Canaan and did not believe God would fight for them, and so he accepted their deal to join in the battles
 - **Ralbag:** Moshe thought they'd frighten the other tribes from entering the land
- **Bechor Shor:** Moshe misunderstood, but in fact the tribes were actually intending to lead the battles, which they could do more easily if their families were elsewhere
- **Akedas Yitzhak:** their sin was in not mentioning God's role in conquering or wealth, so Moshe had them acknowledge that all past and future conquests are from God
- **Abarbanel:** these two tribes were motivated by a wish to dwell separately in a fertile land, but Moshe misunderstood their request as motivated by fear of the enemy nations

Parashas Ma'asei

Parsha Summary

All the encampments of Israel's travels are listed here. God tells Moshe to prepare the people for entering the land, that they conquer the enemy nations. God also gives Moshe the land's geographic boundaries to apportion to the tribes with the exception of the tribes of Reuvain, Gad, and half of Menashe's tribe who took their lot to the east of the Jordan. God appoints the people to be in charge of apportioning the land, and tells Moshe to set aside cities for the Leviim with empty lots around them, as well as cities to be a refuge for one who committed unplanned manslaughter.

The male members of Tzelafchad's family complained to Moshe that his daughters' inheritance would cause their sections of the land to be given to their husband's families. Moshe therefore told them that God said that the daughters of Tzelafchad should marry within their tribe, and they did so.

Important "Chazal"s and "Rashi"s (**Mattos-Ma'asei**)

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A Short Vort