



## Parshas Matos & Massei 2022, gratitude above all

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna & in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Yahrzeit of Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi. May his holy teachings continue to give us an insight into G-d's wisdom!*

Our Parshas begins with Moshe teaching the leaders of each tribe many laws concerning oaths and promises. He teaches them how to make a vow and annul it and under which circumstances a person can cancel a vow made by another.

G-d then instructs Moshe to retaliate against Midian for sending their women into the Jewish camps to sin. Moshe gathered one thousand soldiers from each tribe and appointed Pinchas to lead the attack against Midian.

The Jewish army emerged victoriously and killed their kings and every fighting-age male, including Balaam, the non-Jewish prophet who tried to curse the Jewish people. When the soldiers returned from battle, they gave Moshe an exact total of the spoils of war and divided it equally amongst themselves.

However, a question comes to mind: G-d commanded Moshe to avenge the Jewish people. As the Pasuk writes (31:1-2) "*G-d spoke to Moshe saying - you shall surely avenge the Jewish people and battle the Midianites and then you shall be gathered to your kin.*" But Moshe didn't lead the Jewish army into battle; instead, he chose Pinchas to command them. Why didn't Moshe personally lead the Jewish army into battle and destroy Midian?

Rashi gives a simple explanation. He writes that Pinchas was specifically chosen because of his courage and bravery.

Pinchas fearlessly killed the tribal leader and Midianite princess he was publicly consorting with; therefore, he was given the opportunity to finish the punishment and destroy Midian.

However, Rashi gives another explanation that is even more profound. He writes that because of gratitude, Moshe did not personally lead the Jewish army into battle. Since Moshe sought refuge in Midian from Pharaoh after killing an Egyptian slave master, he did not directly command the Jewish army.

We see a similar idea in the first three plagues, Blood, Frogs, and Lice. G-d commanded Moshe, who instructed Aaron to begin the plagues. The first two plagues hit the Nile River, and the third began hitting the sand.

Moshe did not want to harm the Nile that kept him alive by hiding him from Pharaoh when he was a baby. Likewise, Moshe had a similar appreciation for the sand by the third plague because it covered the dead Egyptian slave master. Since he lived in Midian for many years saving him from Pharaoh, Moshe did not personally lead the Jewish attack on Midian.

Rashi's powerful lesson about Moshe's gratitude is practical now more than ever. Since we live in a world that values immediate gratification because how they feel now is more important than their ultimate goals. Rather than realizing the importance of gradual but sustained happiness and success, they seek instant pleasure and bliss.

However, the Jewish idea of gratitude is recognizing that I am not in charge, entirely contradicting the notion of selfishness. **Jewish gratitude is admitting that I need G-d to give me life constantly.** I need a spouse to complete my G-dly soul. I need the light of the Torah to pave my path in this dark world. I need friends and family to motivate me to stay on the right course. **I need G-d because, without Him, I am nothing.**

**"Gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues,  
but the parent of all others."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*