



## Parshas Matos & Massei 2022, unity above all

*The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah. May all those who need experience a speedy and quick recovery with G-d's help.*

*The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

Our Parshas begins with Moshe teaching the leaders of each tribe many laws concerning oaths and promises. He teaches them how to make and annul a vow 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: Towards the end of the Parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu designates six cities of refuge for those who mistakenly killed another person. They must move and remain in the city of refuge until the death of the current Kohen Gadol, the high priest. But why is the life of the high priest attached to the freedom person who killed accidentally? What is the connection between the Kohen Gadol and the city of refuge?!

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentary answers this question with a simple explanation. He writes that when the Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies each Yom Kippur, he prays for the nation's welfare. He asks that there be plentiful rain and grain, that no woman should have a miscarriage and that the kingship stay in the tribe of Yehuda.

Rashi explains that within that prayer is a blessing that no misfortune, trouble or disaster befall the Jewish people. But an accidental death is a catastrophe that will have a lasting impact on the nation, contrary to Kohen Gadol's prayers. Since his prayers are indirectly connected to this event, his life is also attached to the city of refuge.

However, the Rabbeinu Bachya, Rav Bachya Ben Asher, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that the connection between Kohen Gadol and the city of refuge is twofold. First, the duration of Kohen Gadol's position was usually over 20 years, during which the pain should decrease to the point of not seeking retribution.

Secondly, when a Kohen Gadol passes away, the entire nation goes into a state of sadness and mourning. According to the Rabbeinu Bachya, these feelings should invoke a sense of solidarity as they mourn their nation's spiritual leader. These emotions should eliminate the desire to seek retribution and cause more death within the nation.

Rabbeinu Bachya maintains that the Kohen Gadol is not only necessary but essential to the unity and harmony of the people. His position as the nation's representative before G-d should evoke a spirit of humility and holiness as he prays for the Jewish people.

This profound lesson is ever more relevant as we are in a period of mourning for the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem. These three weeks are a time of solidarity and connection as we mourn for the loss of G-d's physical homes. We must let go of nonsensical grudges, judgments and resentments for a greater purpose, being G-d's children and chosen people.

In our daily life, it is imperative to realize that a significant aspect of being truly happy and content is not allowing hate to stay in our hearts. We must remove all animosity, hostility and hatred before they affect and change our G-dly perspective.

Whether right or wrong, deeply resenting or hating someone primarily affects our happiness and well-being. As we begin to live off that dark energy and do things we never thought we would.

But suppose we do not allow hate and animosity to seep into our hearts; we begin to realize that real happiness is a choice. In fact, the harder it is not to hate, the more we experience G-d's love despite our many imperfections.

**“Sometimes it seems as if we have just enough religion to make us hate one another and not enough to make us love one another.**

**But the answer to that is more faith, not less:  
faith in G-d who asks us to love others as He loves us.”**

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*