



Parshas Matos & Massei 2019, long-term success

This week's Parsha Perspective is sponsored by the Birman family in memory of Efraim Ben Shaul, may his soul be uplifted and his memory a blessing.

Our Parshas begin with Moshe teaching the leaders of each tribe many laws concerning oaths and promises. The Parsha recounts in detail the war against the country of Midian; this battle was in retaliation for the chaos they created amongst the Jewish nation.

Moshe gathered one thousand soldiers from each tribe and mounted an attack against Midian. They 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.

The Parsha continues with the tribes of Reuven and Gad coming to Moshe with a strange request. They asked that their part of the land not be in Israel but on the other side of the Jordan River. They reasoned that there was an abundance of fields to feed their many flocks of sheep.

As expected, Moshe was upset with their request. He saw this petition as following the same footsteps of the spies who did not want to enter the land and discouraged the entire nation from doing so. The betrayal of the spies angered G-d immensely and had drastic consequences for the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Moshe took their wish into consideration.

Moshe returned to the tribes of Reuven and Gad with a compromise; they must fight along with the Jewish armies against the nations of Cana'an.

Only after they are victorious and the ten tribes settle in the land of Israel can they go to their portion. Moshe announced that they would sin before G-d if they did not accept this agreement.

The tribes of Reuven and Gad took Moshe's compromise and later fought heroically with the rest of the Jewish armies. Moshe was attempting to keep the unity amongst the Jewish nation even if they were not in the geographic location.

A question comes to mind: When they asked for their portion to be on the other side of the Yarden, they said, (32:16) *"We will build sheep-pen for our flocks and cities for our children."* However, when Moshe replied, he switched the order. He said (32:24) *"Build cities for your children and enclosures for your sheep."* Why did Moshe change the order of their reasons?

In Parshas Vayigash (46:28), when Yaakov found out that his son Yosef was still alive, he started to prepare for the journey to Egypt. However, it was not before he sent his son Yeudah there first.

Rashi explains that the reason that Yaakov sent Yeudah first was to create a school for the children. This way, they will learn the Torah and keep to their faith even in Egypt. Yaakov put the needs of his children before his own. Instead of rushing to Egypt to see his son, he ensured the environment was conducive to future generations' faith.

As we see in Vayikra Rabbah (32) that Yaakov's foresight enabled the Jewish people to not change their names, dress, or language during their enslavement in Egypt. **Moshe switched the order of Reuven and Gad's rationale to teach them what is vital for the future. It is not their sheep but rather their children's education.**

The Midrash Rabbah on Shir HaShirim writes (1:3,1) that when the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, G-d asked for a guarantor that they would keep the Torah. The Jewish people replied, **"Our fathers will be our guarantors."**

However, G-d did not accept their reply. Then they said, "**Our prophets will be our guarantors.**" This, too, G-d did not agree with.

When they said, "**Our children will be our guarantors,**" — G-d replied, "**They are good guarantors, and for their sake, I will give the Torah to you.**"

The mistake of the tribes of Reuven and Gad was their priorities. They valued the instant gratification of the abundance of food for their flock over the long-term success of having their part of the land that G-d said is flowing with milk and honey.

In our daily life, it is imperative we understand that everlasting success is built on the many small choices and sacrifices you make every day. Whether you aim to build a secure and successful business or a family imbued with a strong sense of value and purpose, you must remember it is the smallest decision that can make the most significant difference in the long run.

"You cannot build a long-term future on short-term thinking."

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini