

Shabbat Spice

PARSHAT MATOT-MASEI



Keep Your Word, Keep Your Freedom

By Nataly Cohen

In Covenant & Conversation, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Z"l discusses an interesting concept that "*freedom depends on people keeping their word.*" He describes a chain reaction that illustrates that in a world where there is no trust, there are no social relationships. And when social relationships fail, society will rely on law enforcement or other forms of force. And when force is used, society is no longer free. The only way for society to have healthy and flourishing relationships, Rabbi Sacks believes, is if people honor their word and act on it.

How does this idea connect to this week's Parasha, Matot-Masei? We see that the Parasha begins with Moshe explaining to the heads of the tribes the laws of making a vow or oath, and the specific circumstances in which these vows or oaths could be annulled.

The main idea that encompasses this concept is seen in Numbers 30:3:

אִישׁ כִּי־יִדַּבֵּר לַיהוָה אֶוֹת־שָׁבַע שָׁבַע לְאָסֵר אֶסֶר עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה
וְעַל דְּבָרָו כִּכְלֵי־הִיצָא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה

"If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to prohibit a prohibition upon himself, he shall not profane his word; according to whatever comes from his mouth shall he do."

The Jewish people have been in the desert for 40 years and are now about to enter Eretz Yisrael.

They are entering into a new phase where laws are being implemented into society. How could a nation establish themselves without the word of their people? How could there be communication and relationships without trust? And so, this is one of the many reasons why the rules of keeping vows and oaths were implemented.

This can be seen in the situation with the tribes of Reuven and Gad, when they decided that they would rather settle to the east of the Jordan River, where the land was more suitable for living. Moshe needed to rely on their word that they would at least help their nation establish themselves in the west of the river, where Hashem told them to go. It all depended on the two tribes keeping their word.

How can we bring this concept of trust and keeping our word into our day to day lives, even if it is not between you and Hashem? Thank G-d, we all have some form of a relationship, if it's a friend, member of our family, spouse, or even an acquaintance. We each have the responsibility to uphold that trust between each other so that we can continue experiencing relationships with those we care about. And without those relationships in our lives, we lose all privilege of personal freedom. We can accomplish this freedom through the power of speech. Every word we utter has meaning and we must stick to each and every one of those words.

CANDLE LIGHTING 7:50PM | SHABBAT ENDS 8:58PM

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PARSHAT MATOT-MASEI



Mindfulness in Speech

By Rachel Livian

In this weeks parsha Benei Israel goes out to an epic war with Midyan.

In the pasuk following their win it says, "*Moshe became angry with the generals of Benei Israel.*"

One pasuk later it says, "Moshe said to them, '*Why did you leave the women of Midyan alive? Those were the women that made us sin!*'"

Now this is strange... Why does it say that Moshe was angry and then wait until the next pasuk to state why he was angry? Why not say, "Moshe was angry because..."

Moshe is teaching us a very valuable lesson that we should all recognize. When someone is angry, they should not respond right away.

This is something especially difficult for us in this instant generation.

We are so quick and impulsive. We want everything fast- fast responses, fast food, fast everything! (My mother calls us the "Amazon Prime generation"!)

There is a joke that states: The two hardest things for people these days are dieting and gossiping. Both of them can be solved if we just kept our mouths shut.

When we are upset and we want to lash out and respond, the best thing to do is to be patient and hold back.

When Moshe responded to Benei Israel in the following pasuk, he didn't just continue with his anger, he spoke softer.

If we take one lesson from this parsha, it should be that we must always think before we speak, especially when we are angry.

Wishing everyone a beautiful and meaningful Shabbat! ❤️

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