



## **Parshiyot Matot / Masei**

July 26, 2025

*Torah:* Numbers 30:1-36:13

*Haftarah:* Jeremiah 2:4-2:28

*Shlichim:* Colossians 3

*Ketuvim*

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Today, we have a double *parasha*, *Matot/Masei*. *Matot*, meaning “tribes,” begins: *1 Moses spoke to the princes of the tribes of Bnei-Yisrael saying, “This is what Adonai has commanded: (Numbers 30:1 TLV). At that time, Israel was encamped in the Plains of Moab by the Jordan River across from Jericho, their final place of encampment before entering the Land of Canaan.*

The *parasha* begins with Moses instructing Israel regarding ADONAI’s commands about vows and oaths. (30:1-16). Vows established by ADONAI apply to us today, but should be carefully considered. About 200 years after that time, a commander of Israel’s army from the Tribe of Manasseh named Jephtha made a rash vow. Facing a seemingly hopeless fight against the Ammonites, he made a vow: *30 Then Jephthah vowed a vow to Adonai and said, “If You will indeed give the children of Ammon into my hand, 31 then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the children of Ammon, it will be Adonai’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” (Judges 11:30-31 TLV). You know the story. The first thing to come out of his house was his young daughter, his only child, his pride and joy. When Jephtha’s story concludes, we’re left with the impression that he did fulfill his vow. We can all agree that it was a very foolish vow.*

We sometimes make vows today. Yeshua has not said, “Don’t make vows.” The first vow that typically comes to mind is probably the “wedding vow.” These are multiple vows that a bride and groom make to each other, but in vowing to each other, there is an implied underlying vow to ADONAI. *23 Then the man said, “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh from my flesh. This one is called woman, for from man was taken this one.” 24 This is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife; and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:23-24 TLV). It was Adam who spoke in verse 23, but it is ADONAI who states that a man must cling to his wife. When we say, “Until death do us part,” we are speaking to ADONAI. His words mean that it’s forever, for better or for worse.*

The most essential vow we will ever make is to Yeshua. When we say yes to Yeshua, we are making a lifelong vow, a promise to follow and serve Him forever. Sometimes, we reverse the horse and cart, focusing more on what He can do for us than serving Him. Yes, He desires to do things for us, and He does. He fills us with His Holy Spirit, loves us, and heals us. He also wishes to meet our needs, but it is He who decides what they are. But make no mistake, a commitment to Yeshua as Savior is a vow—one we must keep if we want to receive the most significant benefit of trusting Him: eternal life. But we don’t receive it until we run the race, and we must stay faithful to our vow to Him to reach that goal. Some break their vow to Yeshua and turn away from Him, and only He knows who they are. But He will accept them back if they come to Him, confess their sins, and sincerely renew their commitment to Him. Vows to ADONAI are solemn, and we should not make them lightly. Yeshua did not ban vows but emphasized the importance of honesty in one’s commitments and faithfulness to them.

Yeshua did not directly address vows, but He did speak about swearing. He said: 33 *“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall carry out your oaths to Adonai.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear at all—not by heaven, for it is the throne of God; 35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. 37 But let your word ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’—anything more than this is from the evil one.”* (Matthew 5:33-37). He used *remez*, a Hebrew interpretive method, to refer to several *Torah* passages like this one: 12 *“You are not to swear by My Name falsely, and so profane the Name of your God. I am Adonai”* (Leviticus 19:12). (also found in Numbers 30:2 and Deuteronomy 23:122). In 1st-century Israel, swearing oaths was often used to prevent lying. While the *Torah* warns against making false vows or breaking vows and oaths, it does not compel a person to make a vow or an oath. The rabbis of Yeshua’s time also warned against making vows to claim you did not lie. Yeshua said, “Let your yes be yes and your no be no.” In American courts of law, a person formerly had to “swear to tell the whole truth, so help you God.” The current statement is “Do you swear or affirm?” As a court witness, we are not required to swear. We can affirm and let our yes be yes, and our no be no. Our vow to Yeshua is Yes, L-rd!

*Parasha Matot* continues with ADONAI commanding Israel to “take vengeance” on the Midianites, who had colluded with Moab to induce the Israelites to commit sexual sins and to worship their local god, *Baal Peor*. Following ADONAI’s instructions, they killed the male Midianites and their five kings, and also the Prophet Balaam, who had advised the Midianites to tempt Israel after he failed in cursing them. The method of dividing the captured goods is also explained. (31:1-54).

The *Torah* does not say that Balaam was a Prophet of ADONAI, but it does state that he received messages from ADONAI. And we learn that Balaam’s failure to curse Israel was due to fear of ADONAI, but his true motive all along was mammon, money. When he didn’t receive payment for cursing Israel, he later returned and advised the Moabite king on how to succeed against Israel by tempting them with their gods and sex. He nearly succeeded, but when Pinchas stopped the plague ADONAI had brought upon Israel because of their sins, Israel followed His command to attack Moab. Pinchas was one of the priests who led the Israelites into battle against the Moabites. But it is Balaam who provided the message for us today. Don’t be like him! Yeshua said to the congregation at Pergamum: 14 *“You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who was teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before Bnei-Yisrael, to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.”* (Revelation 2:14b TLV). We don’t make actual sacrifices to idols today, but certain things in our lives can become “sacrifices to idols.” Placing excessive emphasis on wealth and possessions is a form of idolatry, essentially sacrificing our ideals and hard-earned money to them, when our focus should be more on ADONAI. Being self-centered with an exaggerated sense of self-importance and pride is, in effect, sacrificing those emotions to ourselves. And regarding sexual sins, ADONAI’s word is explicit. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman, and homosexuality is considered an abomination in His eyes. Sex outside of marriage is a sin. ADONAI has only authorized sex between males and females within the bonds of marriage.

*Parasha Matot* concludes with Moses’ response to the request made by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, along with half the tribe of Manasseh, who approached him with a request. Because the land was suitable and they had large flocks and herds of livestock, they desired to settle in the land they had just conquered east of the Jordan River. Moses agreed on the condition that they take up arms and cross the Jordan River with the others, remaining until ADONAI had driven out all His enemies. They accepted the conditions, agreeing that their families would stay in Gilead with their flocks and herds until the land was conquered. (32:1-42).

The second *parasha*, *Masei*, meaning “journeys,” begins: *1 These are the journeys of Bnei-Yisrael when they came out of Egypt by their divisions under the hand of Moses and Aaron.* (Numbers 33:1 TLV). It is mainly a list of the 42 locations where Israel camped after leaving Rameses in Egypt, serving as a reminder for future generations. (33:1-56). While camped at Mount Hor, Aaron, the *Kohen Gadol*, died at the age of 123 in the fortieth year after leaving Egypt. (33:38 and previously reported in 20:22-29). ADONAI also provided Israel with instructions on what they must do after crossing the Jordan River. He said: *52 You must drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. You must destroy all their idols and cast images, and demolish their high places. 53 You will take possession of the land, so you will settle in it, because I have given it to you to possess. 54 “You are to divide the land by lot according to your families.* (Numbers 33:52-54a TLV). And He warned them about what would happen if they didn’t drive out Canaan’s inhabitants; they would become “barbs in their eyes and thorns in their sides,” and would cause trouble for them in the land. We have “barbs and thorns” among us today. Rather than drive them out, we wish to introduce them to Yeshua. And that day is coming for many in our land.

There are lessons for us today in almost every passage in the *Torah*, and this one is no exception. Although we are not commanded to drive anyone out of our land today, the idols, images, and high places worshipped by some can tempt us. *Sha’ul* said: *1 Therefore, if you have been raised up with Messiah, keep seeking the things above—where Messiah is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Focus your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Messiah in God. 4 When Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him, in glory!* (Colossians 3:1-4 TLV). We don’t often think about our relationship with Messiah Yeshua in this way, but we are members of His royal court—priests and kings with Him. (1 Peter 2:9), who have already been seated with Him in the heavenly places, serving our King in His Kingdom. We will be revealed in glory with Him when He returns and makes Himself known to the people of the earth. By living for Yeshua, we are rewarded with a crown of righteousness. *Sha’ul* wrote: *8 In the future there is reserved for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not to me only, but also to everyone who has longed for His appearing.* (2 Timothy 4:8 TLV). We should not be content to remain in this world, loving our earthly lives more than our future lives with Yeshua. Our hearts should yearn for Him to appear. What *Sha’ul* next said to the people of Colossae also deals with the sins of Balaam: *5 Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you—sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed—for that is idolatry.* (Colossians 3:5 TLV). Idolatry, or offering sacrifices to idols, amounts to the same thing. As followers of Yeshua, we are called to resist the temptations presented by the world, which have become increasingly accessible today due to our society's transformation into a culture of permissiveness.

Next in *Masei*, ADONAI described the boundaries of the future Land of Israel that would be allocated to 9 ½ of Israel’s tribes, because 2 ½ tribes — Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh — had already received their inheritance east of the Jordan River. He also said that Eleazer the *Kohen* and Joshua would supervise the land division, with assistance from a leader from each tribe. (34:1-29). Long before Abraham’s descendants went into captivity in Egypt, ADONAI made a covenant with Abram and promised him land bordered by the wilderness to the south, Lebanon to the north, the Euphrates River to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west (Genesis 15:18-21), approximately 300,000 square miles. Compare that to Egypt, which spans approximately 387,000 square miles. While Israel today is roughly the size of the State of New Jersey, it will one day be significantly larger. On that day, it will be Israel’s land, a land governed by their King Yeshua, Son of David. The agents of *HaSatan* will no longer threaten them, but each tribe will live in its allotted space, as foreshadowed in *Parasha Masei* and also prophesied by Ezekiel (47-48).

Then, ADONAI instructed that the Levites receive their inheritance in forty-eight cities and their surrounding pasturelands. Six of their towns, three east of the Jordan and three in the Land of Canaan, would be designated as cities of refuge, where sanctuary would be provided for those who unintentionally killed someone, shielding them from revenge by the victim's family. A “manslayer” had to stay in the city until the *Kohen Gadol* died, after which he could go back to his own home. But if he left the city of refuge and was found by a “blood avenger,” he could be killed without guilt being placed on the avenger. (35:1-34).

The establishment of the “cities of refuge” is another example of ADONAI’s grace, love, and mercy towards everyone He created. *Sha’ul* wrote: *12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves in tender compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience— 13 bearing with one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord pardoned you, so also you must pardon others.* (Colossians 3:12-13 TLV). Grace is also involved. When we bear with and forgive one another, we show grace because Yeshua has shown grace to us. *14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfect harmony.* (Colossians 3:14 TLV). Above all things, put on love. We achieve this by recognizing that love is the foundation of all these other actions and relationships, including those with our spouses, family, and friends. We should be like mirrors, reflecting ADONAI’s love to those around us.

It’s not easy to live up to those standards, and we all fail sometimes. That’s why we need to keep repenting, asking Yeshua for forgiveness so we can always stay in *Torah* righteousness. Basically, “*Torah* righteousness” is the foundation of our life in Messiah as it’s the condition Yeshua has called us to fulfill. He said: *6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* (Matthew 5:6 TLV). Our divine character involves extending grace, mercy, and love to others, but our righteousness depends on our actions: our obedience to ADONAI. As followers of Yeshua, we can be righteous, and we must strive to be righteous!

*Torah* righteousness refers to the understanding that a follower of Yeshua can be considered morally correct or “righteous” by obeying the instructions and regulations specified in the Bible. This means that we are to live our lives by following the commandments and principles found in the Holy Bible, which we understand to be ADONAI’s will for us. In the 3rd century CE, Rabbi Simlai proposed that there are 613 commandments in the Five Books of Moses, and while there may be, those that require either the Temple or the Levitical Priesthood are not active for followers of Yeshua. That leaves about 150 *mitzvot*, *Torah* commands applicable to us, that we should be aware of. There are also commandments in the rest of the *Tanakh*, including the Books of the Prophets; how many, I don’t know, but we are responsible for them. Additionally, someone has counted, and there are 1,050 commandments in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua’s Apostles. It’s probably impossible for humans to know all the commandments of the *Tanakh* and the *Shlichim*, but we understand that they all reflect what ADONAI has taught us in His *Torah*. When we understand and follow the commands that we do know, we’re likely obeying the many other commandments we’re not explicitly aware of. But we can learn each of the active *Torah* commandments, and we should. Learning around 150 is not burdensome.

Regarding the commandments of the *Tanakh*, which were the only Scriptures he had, *Sha’ul* said that he was blameless. (Philippians 3:6). As a Pharisee, he knew the *Torah* well and believed that it was what ADONAI had commanded him to do. He regularly repented when he failed, asking Yeshua for forgiveness. I appreciate how the Complete Jewish Bible presents these words of Yeshua’s disciple John: *3 Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah; indeed, sin is violation of Torah.* (1 John 3:4 CJB). According to John, disobeying *Torah* commands is a sin.

For us today, the commands of the *Torah* are found in all the books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Disobeying an active command is a sin. Is this nitpicking? No! Obedience is what ADONAI expects of Yeshua's followers.

As His disciples, we are instructed to "rightly divide" ADONAI's word. *Sha'ul* told Timothy: *15 Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15 TLV). As Yeshua's disciples, we are expected to understand "the word of truth," which today covers much more than what Timothy needed to learn. The key for us is to stay clean before ADONAI, and we do this by regularly repenting of our sins. And when we do this in the light of "Torah righteousness," as *Sha'ul* did, we are blameless. We are not blameless because we don't sin, but because we have obeyed Yeshua's command to repent. He said: 17..., "*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (Matthew 4:17 KJV). This does not necessarily imply one-time repentance, but rather the state in which we should strive to be as members of the Kingdom. Since we are citizens of Yeshua's kingdom, we should always strive to remain in a constant state of repentance, a condition of cleanness before Him.

*Parasha Masei* concludes with a discussion about the daughters of Zelophehad from the Tribe of Manasseh, who had previously petitioned Moses for their inheritance of their father's land. Zelophehad died in the wilderness, leaving only five daughters. ADONAI declared that they could inherit the land, but they were required to marry within their tribe. By not marrying men from other tribes, Zelophehad's tribal inheritance would stay within Manasseh's territory. (36:1-13).

This is yet another example of ADONAI's attributes, His fairness to His people Israel. Moses, speaking for ADONAI, wrote: 20 "*Justice, justice you must pursue, so that you may live and possess the land that Adonai your God is giving you.*" (Deuteronomy 16:20 TLV). By seeking justice, the people of Israel would display a vital aspect of ADONAI's character. The ancient rabbis have identified even more attributes of ADONAI in the *Torah* that they call "The Thirteen Attributes of ADONAI." When Moses had taken the two new tablets up the mountain for ADONAI to write the words from the first tablet on them, ADONAI spoke to him. The *Mechon-Mamre* Bible puts it this way:

**6** And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed: 'The **(1)** LORD יהוה, the **(2)** LORD יהוה, **(3)** God אֵל, **(4)** merciful רַחוּם **(5)** and gracious רַחֻן, **(6)** long-suffering אַרְךְּ אַפַּיִם, **(7)** and abundant in goodness וְרַב-חֶסֶד **(8)** and truth וְאֱמֶת; **7** **(9)** keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִּים, **(10)** forgiving iniquity וְנָשָׂא עֲוֹן and **(11)** transgression וּפְשָׁע and sin וְחַטָּאָה; **(13)** and that will by no means clear the guilty וְנִקָּה; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and unto the fourth generation."

The rabbis interpret this as: **1. ADONAI** Who is compassionate before a person sins, **2. ADONAI** Who is compassionate after a person sins, **3. El**, bestowing kindness, **4. rachum**, merciful, **5. chanun**, gracious, **6. erekh appayim**, slow to anger, **7. rav chesed**, full of kindness, **8. emet**, truth, **9. notzer chesed la'alafim**, showing kindness for a thousand generations, **10. noseh avon**, forgiving iniquity, **11. feshah**, forgiving transgressions, **12. chata'ah**, forgiving sin, and **13. nakeh**, pardoning, but not removing guilt.

How many more words are there that describe our G-d? We instantly think of omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, but how many other ways can we describe Him? He is the Son, the Creator, the Almighty, the Most High, the Eternal, the Provider, the Protector, the Healer, and

so much more. We can hardly begin to understand who ADONAI is. This is our G-d who stands with us.

He has asked us to love Him. *5 Love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* (Deuteronomy 6:5 TLV). After the risen Yeshua had appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room, He met them again at the Sea of Galilee. *Shimon Kefa* and six other disciples were there when *Kefa* said he was going fishing. They fished all night but caught nothing. At dawn, they saw Yeshua standing on the bank but didn't recognize Him. After He told them where to throw their net and they caught so many fish that they couldn't haul them in, Peter recognized Yeshua. Once ashore, they saw Yeshua with a fire, some fish, and bread, and He served them breakfast.

When they had finished breakfast, Yeshua asked *Kefa*: *15 ... , "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"* (John 21:15b TLV). What Yeshua asked was, "Do you *agapas* (ag-ap-as) me," what we usually call 'agape' love, said to be the highest form of love — selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. Using the same word, *agapas*, Yeshua asked a second time, *16 "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"* (John 21:16b TLV)? Then Yeshua asked him a third time, *17... "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"* (John 21:17b TLV). This time, His question was, "Do you *phileis* (fee-LEH-is) me?", the type of love called *phileó* (fee-LEH-oh), which refers to brotherly love, or love within a family. There are many ideas about this, and we can only speculate as to Yeshua's meaning. Still, while *agape* love is an unconditional love, it is also a broader type of love, such as ADONAI's love for all of us and the kind of group love we are to have for everyone. But by saying "*phileo*," Yeshua emphasized a personal level, referring to Peter's love for Him in their affectionate person-to-person relationship. That's the kind of love relationship Yeshua wishes us to also have with Him, *phileo*! Seek Yeshua daily.

We know that ADONAI and Yeshua love us. How are we to love them? Yeshua's words to *Shimon Kefa* show that, while we are to love Him with *agape* love, a love that is sacrificial and unconditional, we also should love Him personally and individually, on a one-to-one basis. We shouldn't be satisfied with our present relationship with Yeshua, but should seek daily to have a deeper and more intimate *phileo* relationship with Him. And love means commitment. Yeshua is calling us to a higher level of commitment to Him. *Sha'ul* sought a higher level, and we should too. He wrote: *14 I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua.* (Philippians 3:14 TLV). May He count us faithful! *Shabbat shalom*!