

We must each follow the advice given to us by the Prophet Micah, as he summarized what our Creator expects from each human being:

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:5-8).

Certainly, we all have choices. *I pray that we all choose wisely.*

Mattot Tribes

Numbers 30:2[1]-32:42
Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

Mas'ei Stages “Final Instructions”

Numbers 33:1-36:13
Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4 (A);
2:4-28; 4:1-2 (S)

This week’s double selection, *Mattot* and *Mas'ei*, concentrates on the final instructions that are given to the Ancient Israelites as they were preparing to enter into the Promised Land. The forty years of wandering in the wilderness were coming to a close. God has some additional commandments that will assist the people as they enter into their inheritance.

As you read these instructions, you will note that they cover a wide variety of topics. They deal with issues concerning oath-taking by daughters and wives,⁴⁷ the astounding military victory over the Midianites,⁴⁸ the details about the spoils of war and how to divide them,⁴⁹ and the request by the Reubenites and Gadites to settle on the east side of the Jordan.⁵⁰ We also see a roadmap summary of Israel’s entire

⁴⁷ Numbers 30:1-16.

Be sure to consult the previous teaching on this subject, offered in *TorahScope, Volume I*.

⁴⁸ Numbers 31:1-24.

⁴⁹ Numbers 31:25-54.

⁵⁰ Numbers 32:1-42.

journey through the wilderness,⁵¹ and a description of the proposed borders for the land they will receive,⁵² including delineation of the tribal leaders⁵³ and the establishment of cities for the Levites to occupy.⁵⁴ Details concerning cities of refuge⁵⁵ and how the justice system was to operate are given,⁵⁶ as are details on how inheritance for daughters was to be handled.⁵⁷ This wide array of material seems to wander all over the board. As you read and meditate upon these final instructions, you might wonder if there is any rhyme or reason for how broad they are. If there is one thing for certain: there are many background studies that can be launched from *Mattot-Mas'ei*, for better understanding of how these laws were to be followed in an Ancient Near Eastern context.

One hint that there was a sense of urgency, to get these last instructions communicated, comes at the opening of Numbers ch. 31, as the Lord told Moses to prepare the Israelites for the battle against the Midianites:

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people’” (Numbers 31:1-2).

If you will recall from last week in *Pinchas* (Numbers 25:10-30:1[29:40]), Moses had just reiterated the details about the daily offerings and the appointed times (Numbers 28-29), and how important it was for Israel to remember these commemorations in a very specific manner. Just prior to this, Moses had laid his hands upon his successor Joshua, who, with the high priest Eleazer, was preparing to replace the duo of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 27:15-23). Moses knew his days on Earth were winding down. Just after the census was taken to determine who had died in the plague resulting from the idolatry and licentiousness induced by Balaam’s advice to Balak (Numbers 26), Moses knew that the Promised Land would be apportioned out to the Israelites, but he was also mindful that the Levites were not to receive a physical inheritance because they were to be in full time service to minister. Moses was also confronted with the issues about inheritance for these ancient families, particularly those who only had daughters and no sons. In Numbers 27, he relayed God’s thoughts on the rightful means for handling the process of passing property on to the future generations. After he did this, the Lord told Moses that once he saw the Promised Land he would die:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was; for in the wilderness of

⁵¹ Numbers 33:1-49.

⁵² Numbers 34:1-15.

⁵³ Numbers 34:16-29.

⁵⁴ Numbers 35:1-5.

⁵⁵ Numbers 35:6-15.

⁵⁶ Numbers 35:16-34.

⁵⁷ Numbers 36:1-13.

Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water.’ (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, ‘May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd’” (Numbers 27:12-17).

At this point in the narrative, it appears that Moses was finally resigned to his impending death, and like any good shepherd, his concern was for the sheep of his fold. Interestingly, Moses did not suggest Joshua, but instead asked the Holy One to only appoint someone over the people. He was not presumptuous about whom he might have chosen, but instead was still depending on God’s voice to make the selection. In *Mattot-Mas’ei* we realize that the defeat of the Midianites will trigger his death, and so Moses was rapidly explaining to Joshua and Eleazar some last minute details about how to handle the issues I previously listed.

Moses had to be very pleased with what he was witnessing in his final days of life. Even though his life was a very unique adventure from the bulrushes of the Nile to now overlooking the Jordan, he witnessed an astounding victory over the Midianites that must have been comforting, considering all of the errors that Israel committed along the way. It is recorded for us that after companies and squads were selected for the army from each of the twelve tribes, the cohesiveness of the people of Israel was finally on display:

“Moses spoke to the people, saying, ‘Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD’s vengeance on Midian. A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war. So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand” (Numbers 31:3-6).

It appears from the reading that the Israelites were finally “getting their act together.” Not only were they prepared to induce God’s vengeance upon the Midianites for the sin of Baal Peor, but the victory was blessed incredibly by Him, as not a single Israelite died in the ensuing battles:

“Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, approached Moses, and they said to Moses, **‘Your servants have taken a census of men of war who are in our charge, and no man of us is missing’**” (Numbers 31:48-49).

Can you imagine how proud Moses must have been when he got this report? *Not one of the soldiers sent into battle was missing.* This is an incredible testimony to show that when Israel worked together in harmony, victory was achievable. When you read the account of how the Levites performed their functions via the guidance of Phinehas, and that all of the kings, *including Baalam*, were slain, that all of the

cities were captured and burned, all of the booty was taken, and all of the people and livestock were captured (Numbers 31)—you see a vivid picture of absolute victory.

In spite of Moses' aged condition, Moses still had the faculties to give some final details to the Israelites about how to handle the captured people and the booty. This is particularly poignant, so that the men of Israel did not fall back into temptation over possible sexual favors. Moses also wanted the people to avoid becoming unclean by contacting corpses, garments, and various vessels confiscated in the war:

“Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. **Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.** And Moses said to them, ‘Have you spared all the women? **Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.** Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves. And you, camp outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day. You shall purify for yourselves every garment and every article of leather and all the work of goats' *hair*, and all articles of wood” (Numbers 31:13-20).

At this juncture, we are reminded that Balaam had actually counseled Balak to have the Israelites bring curses upon themselves (Numbers 31:17). While Israel as a nation cannot be cursed by outsiders, it can curse itself by falling into the sin of fornication or being contaminated by the spoils of war. Moses knew his people well, and he also knew the sinful inclinations of the human heart. To the very end of his life, he warned and continually instructed the people of Israel.

As you contemplate this, this is probably the way we should all depart this Earth. For those of you who have children and grandchildren, imagine wanting to continue to give instructions to your beloved all the way to your last breath. For someone like Moses, who had such a huge spiritual responsibility, the urge, to continue correcting and fine-tuning his protégées to the very end, is what one would expect. Now that the victory over the Midianites was complete, echoing in the back of his mind had to be the comment from God about being “gathered to your people” (Numbers 27:13). Over the course of nearly forty years, Moses had witnessed the Exodus generation die off. In these remaining chapters of Numbers, he spoke out instructions that would aid the new generation, which would take inheritance of Canaan.

As you read each of the different vignettes of *Mattot-Mas'ei*, the final instructions from Moses were earnest attempts to communicate about issues that he

knew would be addressed in the years, if not millennia, after his departure. Since Moses had the spiritual authority over such an unruly group of people, and understood the human propensity for individuals to “do their own thing,” he faithfully communicated what God wanted, so order could be present as the Israelites entered into the Promised Land.

How should these instructions from Moses affect us today, as we seek to obey God’s Torah and incorporate its principles into our lives?

We need to recognize that the problems with humanity are not that unique, as they often repeat themselves over the generations in different places and times. What we see today are patterns firmly imbedded in the human psyche. But for Believers in Yeshua today, things should be different. With those of us who have the Holy Spirit to guide us, we should be moving closer to desiring order and direction in our lives. As we grow and mature in faith, we are to become more and more like our Lord and Savior, Yeshua, every day. Today, however, far too many who claim belief in the Messiah have moved not only away from words of Moses’ Teaching, but His own teachings as well!

The question we have to ask ourselves, as we come to the close of Numbers, is whether we will be willing to study and inculcate the Torah’s instruction into our hearts and minds, so that the Ruach HaKodesh can bring them forth in an orderly manner. Are we willing to submit our wills to the will of the Holy Spirit who resides inside of us, and who desperately wants to use us to perform God’s work? Are we willing to pass our knowledge and wisdom onto the succeeding generations? Where will you be in your relationship with God when you are preparing to die? Are you committed to fully serving the Lord?

Consider the words of Paul imprisoned in Rome, as he reflected back on his life, and perhaps thought that he would die soon:

“Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Messiah Yeshua. **Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua.** Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained. **Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us”** (Philippians 3:12-17).⁵⁸

Paul, just like Moses, had a vision for his life and understood that he was called to the service of the Holy One. Both understood order and the pattern of life that they were called to walk in order to glorify the Almighty. But what about your life?

⁵⁸ Many scholars are agreed that Paul was released from the imprisonment described here, but that he eventually was arrested again. The Epistle of 2 Timothy may actually be considered Paul’s farewell address.

Have you discovered what God has called you to do in today's emerging Messianic movement?

If you have not discovered what you should be doing, I would recommend that you read and listen again to the final instructions that have come down through the ages, from the many servants of God who have preceded us. Most importantly, look at the ministry example of Messiah Yeshua, and understand that you are being conformed to His likeness. You will be amazed at just how profoundly you are empowered to perform God's tasks in the Earth when you take His Word seriously!

My friends, these final instructions are important for all of us to consider. In the coming weeks, we will be examining even more final words from Moses as we approach the end of the Torah cycle and read through Deuteronomy. Of course, in Deuteronomy we will witness Moses reiterate many of his earlier teachings—but who among us does not need to continually rehearse the truths of who we are and know who our spiritual forbearers were? We need to understand and emulate their triumphs, and likewise hopefully avoid their mistakes. **If we can do these things, we will be able to have victory over the battles that we face through the power of Yeshua!**