

Matot-Masei – Tribes-Journeys

Numbers 30:2-36:13

VOWS

Year One: Numbers 32: 1-15



RELATED WORDS

tribes = MATOT = מטות

Related Words

staff, stick, rod, baton, stem, twig, tribe, headquarters	<i>mateh</i>	מטה
personal staff	<i>mateh ishi</i>	מטה אישי
General Staff	<i>ha-mateh ha-c'lalee</i>	המטה הכללי
headquarters	<i>mateh rashi</i>	מטה ראשי
bread, staff of life	<i>mateh lechem</i>	מטה לחם
<i>Note also:</i> bed	<i>mitah</i>	מטה

journeys of = MAS'EI = מסעי

Related Words

journey, travel, march, trek, departure, campaign, rally	<i>masa</i>	מסע
maiden voyage (trip firstling)	<i>masa b'chorah</i>	מסע בכורה
quarried stone (stone transported)	<i>ehvehn masa</i>	אבן מסע
travel books, travelogues	<i>sifrei masa'ot</i>	ספרי מסעות
passport (trip document)	<i>t'udat masa</i>	תעודת מסע
transported, conveyed	<i>musa</i>	מסע
bon voyage, have a good trip	<i>n'siah tovah</i>	נסיעה טובה!
to take (arrange) a journey	<i>arach masa</i>	ערך מסע

Outline of This Week's Parashah Matot (Torah Portion):

30:2[1] Vows and Oaths to YHVH; Vows of Minors and a Married Woman

31:3 The Battle Against Midian—Vengeance for the Balaam Affair

31:13 Moses Rebukes the Military Leaders for Sparing the Female Midianites

31:21 The Laws of Koshering War Spoils and Utensils

31:25 The Division of War Spoils

32:1 Reuben and Gad's Request to Be Granted an Inheritance on the East Bank of the Jordan

32:6 Moses' Objection to the Request for Fear the Eastern Tribes Will Defect From the Western Tribes

32:16 Clarification of the Request: The Eastern Tribes Vow to Send Soldiers to Aid the Rest of the Tribes in Taking the Promised Land West of the Jordan River

32:20 In Light of These New Conditions Moses Concedes

Outline of This Week's Parashah Masei (Torah Portion):

33:1 Summary of Israel's Wilderness Journey

34:1 The Boundaries of the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael)

34:16 The Leaders of the Tribes Who Will Lead the Israelites into Their Promised Land Possession

35:1 Cities For the Levites (in Place of a Designated Territory)

35:9 Cities of Refuge for One Who Kills Another Unintentionally

36:1 Laws Concerning Tribal Intermarriage to Preserve the Integrity of the 12 Tribes

Matot-Massei in a Nutshell

Moses conveys the laws governing the **annulment of vows** to the heads of the **tribes** of Israel. **War** is waged against **Midian** for their role in plotting the moral destruction of Israel, and the Torah gives a detailed account of the war spoils and how they were allocated amongst the **people**, the **warriors**, the **Levites** and the **high priest**.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh) ask for the lands **east of the Jordan** as their portion in the Promised Land, these being prime pastureland for their **cattle**. Moses is initially angered by the request, but subsequently agrees on the condition that they first join, and lead, in Israel's conquest of the lands **west of the Jordan**.

The forty-two **journeys** and **encampments** of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the land of Canaan. The **boundaries** of the Promised Land are given, and **cities of refuge** are designated as havens and places of exile for **inadvertent murderers**. The **daughters of Tzelafchad** marry within their own tribe of Manasseh, so that the **estate** which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe.

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A Study On Vows

The Bible has a lot to say about vows we make before Elohim. Making promises is serious and we need to think before we speak or make a promise. We need to be people of our word before God and our Community

Many times we all have made rash promises to God without thinking before we speak only to not keep our promises.

Vows should be kept, therefore not taken lightly.

We will be looking at what the Word of God says about making vows in order to help us in our walk

When a Man Makes a Vow

Num 30:1 Moses spoke to the princes of the tribes of Bnei-Yisrael saying, “This is what Adonai has commanded:

Num 30:2 Whenever a man makes a vow to Adonai or swears an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he is not to violate his word but do everything coming out of his mouth.

When An Unmarried Woman Makes A Vow

Num 30:3 Suppose a woman in her youth vows to Adonai or obligates herself by a pledge in her father’s house.

Num 30:4 If her father should hear her vow or her pledge with which she obligated herself and her father says nothing to her, all her vows and every pledge by which she has obligated herself will stand.

Num 30:5 But if her father should forbid it on the day of his hearing it, none of her vows or pledges by which she has obligated herself will stand. Adonai will forgive her because her father has forbidden her.

When a Married Woman Makes A Vow

Num 30:6 “Suppose she should marry, after her vow or a rash promise of her lips by which she obligated herself.

Num 30:7 Now if her husband hears about it but says nothing to her on the day he hears about it, her vows will stand and her pledges by which she has obligated herself will stand.

Num 30:8 But if her husband should hear about it and on the day he hears it he forbids it, he thereby nullifies her vow and her rash promise by which her lips have obligated her, and Adonai will forgive her.

When a Divorced Woman or Widow Makes A Vow

Num 30:9 Any vow or obligation of a widow or a divorced woman will be binding on her.

Vows Not Nullified By Husband

Num 30:10 If in her husband’s house she vowed or obligated herself by pledge under oath,

Num 30:11 and her husband should hear it and say nothing to her, not forbidding her, all her vows and every pledge by which she has obligated herself will stand.

Num 30:12 But if her husband should nullify them on the day when he hears of them, nothing from her lips, whether vow or pledge, will stand. Her husband has nullified them and Adonai will forgive her.
Num 30:13 Her husband may ratify or veto any vow or sworn oath to deny herself.
Num 30:14 “But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day, then he is confirming all her vows and all her oaths that are on her. He confirms them by saying nothing to her on the day of his hearing about it.
Num 30:15 But if he nullifies them after hearing about it, he will bear her guilt.”
Num 30:16 These are the statutes that Adonai gave to Moses relevant to relationships between a man and his wife, as well as between a father and his young daughter still living in his house.

Example of a Rash Vows

#1. Jephtha’s Awful Vow – Judges 11:29-40

Jdg 11:29 Then the Ruach Adonai came upon Jephthah, so he marched through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he crossed over to the children of Ammon.
Jdg 11:30 Then Jephthah vowed a vow to Adonai and said, “If You will indeed give the children of Ammon into my hand,
Jdg 11:31 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.”
Jdg 11:34 Now when Jephthah arrived at his home in Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. Now she was his only child. Besides her he had no son or daughter.
Jdg 11:35 Upon seeing her, he tore his clothes and said, “Alas, my daughter! You made me bow down in grief—you’ve made me miserable! For I have opened my mouth to Adonai, and I cannot take it back.”
Jdg 11:36 “My father, you have opened your mouth to Adonai,” she said to him. “Do to me what proceeded from your mouth—since Adonai brought vengeance on your enemies, the children of Ammon.”
Jdg 11:37 She said further to her father, “Let this thing be done for me. Let me be alone two months, so that I may go on the mountains and mourn my virginity, I and my companions.”
Jdg 11:38 “Go!” he said. So he sent her away for two months. So she left, she and her companions, and mourned on the mountains because of her virginity.
Jdg 11:39 Then at the end of two months she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow he had made—so she was never intimate with a man. So it became a custom in Israel,
Jdg 11:40 that the daughters of Israel would go annually to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

Now according to the Rabbis, she was not killed as a sacrificed but was sent away and never married and stayed a virgin her entire life due to her father’s vow. However due to the rash vow his daughter would never marry or have children.

Firstly it is important to emphasize that Judaism has always viewed human sacrifices as a reprehensible abomination. Regarding the Canaanites, Moses

says: “For every abomination to G-d which He hates, they did to their gods; for also their sons and their daughters they would sacrifice in fire to their gods.”³

Based on this idea, many of the biblical commentators⁴ maintain that Jephthah did not offer his daughter as a sacrifice. In fact, his original vow, “whatever comes forth . . . shall be to G-d, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering,” had a dual intention: if it will be a person, then it “shall be [consecrated] to G-d”; and if it should be an animal, then “I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” (The Hebrew prefix ו which precedes the words “I will offer it” can be translated as “and” or “or.”)

According to this interpretation, Jephthah's daughter was sent to the mountains to live in seclusion. She never married and dedicated her life to the service of G-d. Rabbi Naftali Silberberg,

Common Vows In The Bible. There are nothing wrong with Vows, as long as they are honored.

#1. Jacob's Tithes – Genesis 28:20-22

This vow was to honor God with his tithes for protecting him on his journey.

Gen 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow saying, "If God will be with me and watch over me on this way that I am going, and provide me food to eat and clothes to wear,

Gen 28:21 and I return in shalom to my father's house, then Adonai will be my God.

Gen 28:22 So this stone which I set up as a memorial stone will become God's House, and of everything You provide me I will definitely give a tenth of it to You."

#2. Hannahs Vow – 1 Samuel 1:11, 27-28

Hannah honored her vow to God when she gave birth to a son when he was old enough she gave him into Gods service and he became one of the greatest prophets in Israel, Samuel.

1Sa 1:11 So she made a vow and said, "Adonai-Tzva'ot, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your handmaid, remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but grant Your handmaid a son, then I will give him to Adonai all the days of his life and no razor will ever touch his head."

1Sa 1:27 For this boy I prayed, and Adonai has granted me my petition that I asked of Him.

1Sa 1:28 So I in turn dedicate him to Adonai—as long as he lives he is dedicated to Adonai." Then he bowed in worship there before Adonai.

#3. Elkanah's Yearly Vow – 1 Samuel 1:21

Elkanah was Hannah's husband and he made a vow offering which he fulfilled.

1Sa 1:20 So it came to pass at the turn of the year that Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She called his name Samuel, "because I have asked Adonai for him."

1Sa 1:21 When the man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer the annual sacrifice to Adonai and to fulfill his vow offering,

#4. Jobs vow with his eyes – Job 31:1

Here we see a vow or covenant of the eyes to keep eyes pure and not look at anything that would cause us to lust after our eyes.

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes not to pay attention to a virgin.

#5. David's Vow – Psalm 132:2

David made a vow to build a Temple for Adonai. David honored his vow by collecting all that would be needed to build the temple. However the fulfillment of the vow would be completed by Solomon his son since God would not allow him to build the Temple since he was a man of war.

Psa 132:1 A Song of Ascents. Adonai, remember David, all his afflictions,

Psa 132:2 and how he swore to Adonai, vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

Psa 132:3 "I will not enter the tent of my house nor lie on my bed,

Psa 132:4 nor will I will give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids,

Psa 132:5 till I find a place for Adonai, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."

#6. Jonah's Vow – Jonah 2:9-10

After Jonah's rebellion and punishment in the belly of the whale, he repented and vowed to complete the call to preach to Ninevah repentance. He was rescued and was able to complete his vow.

Jon 2:9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the LORD."

Jon 2:10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

#7 Paul's Vow – Acts 18:18

Paul completed a Nazarite vow he made to God and to pay for others who were completing their vows as well.

Act 18:18 Paul, having stayed many more days, said farewell to the brothers and set sail to Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchrea Paul had his hair cut off, for he was keeping a vow.

Ref: Nazirite Vow

Num 6:2 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and say to them: Any man or woman who desires to vow a Nazirite vow to be separate for Adonai,

Num 6:3 is to abstain from wine and any other fermented drink. He is not to drink any vinegar made from wine or any fermented drink, or any grape juice, or eat grapes or raisins.

Num 6:4 All during his days as a Nazirite he is not to eat anything from the grapevine—even the seeds or skins.

Num 6:5 All the duration of his Nazirite vow, no razor is to come on his head until the time of his consecration to Adonai is over. He is to be holy, and the hair of his head is to grow long.

Num 6:6 All the days of his separation to Adonai, he is not to go near a dead body.

Num 6:7 Even if his father, mother, brother or sister should die, he is not to make himself unclean, because his consecration to God is on his head.

Num 6:8 All the days of his separation, he is to be consecrated to Adonai.

Vow's were to be made – Leviticus 23:37-38; Numbers 29:39

Voluntary Vows – Numbers 30:2; Eccl. 5:4-6

Vow Not to be Broken – Lev 5:4-13, Lev 22:18-25, Numbers 15:2-16, Numbers 30:2-16, Deut 23:18-22

Price of vows determined by age and sex – Lev 27:1-25

Edible things were offered in Vows – Lev 7:16-18; Deut 12:6-26; Judges 18:14

Certain things were forbidden to offer- Deut 23:18-23

Others Verses:

Job 22:27

Psalms 22:25, 50:14, 56:12, 61:5, 65:1, 66:13, 76:11, 116:14-19

Proverbs 20:25

Nahum 1:15

Yom Kippur – The Annulment of Vow – If we are supposed to keep our vows why do we ask they be annulled on Yom Kippur?

How can one annul a vow?

Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon

לשיעור זה בעברית:

Parshat Matot opens with the laws of vows. As vows are considered serious issues, a man who makes a vow is obligated to uphold it. Why? Regarding vows, the Torah says (Matot) "he shall not desecrate his words", in other words, he shall not renege on his words. The Seforno (ibid.) comments that Parshat Kedoshim uses similar wording: "You shall not swear falsely by My Name, thereby desecrating the Name of your G-d", and from here the Seforno concludes that a person who transgresses his vow desecrates G-d.

Yet despite this, our Sages taught us that, in certain cases, it is possible to annul a vow. How could such a thing be possible? How is it possible to annul a vow to which a person obligated himself?

In order to understand this, let us try to examine the essence of vows. Seemingly, vows are something possessing great significance, as man takes upon himself additional prohibitions.

However, there is a problematic statement in this: does man not have enough Torah laws that he needs to add his own personal commandments?!

Another problem that exists in vows is the detachment from society. The commandments connect the entire Nation

of Israel to G-d, and therefore the commandments belong in principle to all of Israel (however there are groups with specific affiliation to the commandments, like the priests). When a person takes an oath and prohibits himself from performing something new, he indeed removes himself from the framework of society. Now, there is something which is permitted for all of Israel, but for him prohibited.

How is it possible to annul vows?

There are two types of vow annulment:

A "Loophole": Had the person making the vow considered some facts at the time he took the vow – he would not have taken the oath. When we discover this fact, the vow is defined as a mistaken vow. For example, the Gemarra in Nedarim tells of a person who made a meal and suddenly saw people coming toward him. He feared that they wanted to join him for the meal, so he therefore took an oath preventing them from enjoying the meal. When they got closer, he saw that his father was among the group of people. He said "Had I known Father was with them I would not have sworn".

Remorse: There are facts that changed in reality since the time that the person made the vow. If these facts existed up front – he would not have taken the oath. In other words, a person made a vow about a specific thing, and at the time that he swore all the facts were clear, however later one of the facts changed. Now the person who swore has remorse, but he does not want to uproot the principle of the vow, but rather he wants to annul it henceforth.

Miamonides (Law of Shavuot 6:1) writes that one of the situations defined as remorse is also if "he changed his mind to something else". In other words, when a person thinks differently than how he thought in the past, then he can have remorse for the vow and annul it henceforth.

Seemingly, the whole subject of annulling vows is surprising. If a person vowed a certain thing – he should uphold his word! And even if we understand vow annulment with the 'loophole', a situation in which the facts were not known upfront, in the case of remorse, and certainly in the case of changing his mind, we need to understand how it is possible to allow someone to annul his vow and not keep his word!

This subject matter has led to much anti-Semitism throughout the generations. In the debate of Rabbi Yechiel from Paris (5001, and similarly the debate of Nachmanides in the year 5023) there was a complaint against the Jews that it is impossible to believe them, since "he will stand on Yom Kippur and say: "All my vows". Moreover, this complaint repeated itself in periods closer to us. About 160 years ago (5612) in Russia they came out against the wording of 'All vows', and it was amended and clarified as printed in Chayei Adam (Klal 144).

And indeed, there are Gaonim and Rishonim (Rabbi Hai Gaon, Shaarei Teshuva 38; Rabbi Natrunai Gaon, Laws from the Gaonim 122; Meiri, Chibur HaTeshuva p. 815; Responsa of the Riva"sh 394 in the name of the Rit) that were also opposed to the recital of 'All vows', but precisely from the opposite direction: there is no annulment here at all, only deception. And through it the public comes to scorn vows and to seek ways around them. The Mishna (Chagiga 10a) says that vow annulment lacks foundation, and is not stated explicitly in the Torah. Nachmanides

(beginning of Matot) explains that maybe the parsha of vow annulment was only explicitly said to the Tribal heads, because we need to conceal vow annulment from the Nation of Israel so they don't act frivolously in regards to vows

This is seemingly the reason of some of the Gaonim who were against saying 'All vows'. In the period of the Gaonim they were very concerned that people would take an oath lightly, and therefore they abstained from dealing with the laws of vows. In the day of Mar Rabbi Yehuai Gaon vows were not reviewed in the Beit Medrash for over 100 years, and there was no one who knew to be satisfactorily precise about it (answer brought in the Rif, end of Nedarim), and the Rishonim wrote that this is also the reason why "the language of vows is unusual" (Rosh Nedarim 2b, Tosefot ibid 7a), and the Mesechet is not arranged and revised like the other Mesechtot.

Despite this, our Sages permitted vow annulment in certain cases. And what really is the significance of the issue of vow annulment? It seems that indeed there is tremendous importance in man keeping his word and doing what he promised. Therefore, in general the Sages were against vows. However, something more important than man keeping his word is admitting his mistakes! To admit that the previous decision or statement was mistaken, and that "he changed his mind"! (according to my master and father-in-law Rav Blumenzweig).

Men continue on their earlier path since they are unable to say to themselves: we made a mistake, we need to change (it is very difficult to hear someone say "I made a mistake"!).

On the one hand, we need to stick to the things we obligated ourselves to. We need to keep our promises, desires, aspirations, etc. However, if we make a mistake – we need to be honest enough to say we erred. We need to be a nation courageous enough to change things that are wrong, to ascend and elevate, to ascend and be sanctified.

Therefore, usually "he shall not desecrate his words" – we need to keep the vow literally (and we therefore need to be careful in general and not take an oath). However, there are cases when it is permissible and even a commandment to annul the vow. And so it is, as said, not only in the world of vows. We need to know to adhere to our missions, our thoughts, our dreams; but we also need to know to occasionally examine things, to stop and think whether we are on the right path, and to be courageous enough to go on another path if we feel we erred.

May it be His will that we merit to do G-d's will in the world, to submit our will to His will, and to be ready to fully accept on ourselves the yoke of Heaven!

In The Final Words of our Messiah Yeshua

Mat 5:34 But I tell you, do not swear at all—not by heaven, for it is the throne of God;

Mat 5:35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

Mat 5:36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black.

Mat 5:37 But let your word 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' 'No'—anything more than this is from the evil one."