

**Matot-Masei Selected Shorts – Number 38**  
*Rabbi Eliot Malomet July 10, 2021 Rosh Hodesh Menachem Av 5781*

**במדבר ל"ג:**

(ג) אישׁ כִּי־יָדָר לָהּ אֶוֹת־שָׁבַע שְׁבַע־לְאָסֶר אֶסֶר עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ כְּכֹל־הֵיבֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה:

**Numbers 30:3**

(3) *If a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath imposing an obligation on himself, he shall not break his pledge; he must carry out all that has crossed his lips.* We cannot overestimate the power of a vow. Even little vows. They can raise the dead. Elisha Porat, Israeli poet (1938-2013):

*Minor Vows* -גדרים קטנים

The vows that I make to myself are minor vows: such as to visit my father's grave on days of joy; such as to run in the evening after the flight of the herons in the distance; to be once again a child ascending an imaginary tower; to be filled with the scent of approaching darkness, with the whiteness of flowering citrus.

The things that I wish for myself are minor things: such as to vow and to vow until I have gathered enough strength to raise the dead. (tr. Cindy Eisner)

**במדבר ל"א:**

(ב) נָקָם נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת הַמִּדְיָנִים אַחַר תְּאֵסֶף אֶל־עַמִּיד:

**Numbers 31:2**

*"Avenge the Israelite people on the Midianites; then you shall be gathered to your kin."* Moses could have stayed alive longer by putting this off. Instead he immediately organizes the operation. This shows his greatness. (Bemidbar Rabbah 22:2). But why would this be his last act? Perhaps because the Midianites remained an existential threat to Israel. It would be wrong of Moses to leave the people at risk. Perhaps it was to signal divine justice. Or consider this example: When Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995, Carmi Gilon, the head of the Shin Bet, submitted his resignation. During that time though, there was a series of bombings; and plans were in the works to eliminate arch terrorist, Yahya Ayash, "the Engineer" who was responsible for them. In January 1996 Ayash was killed and subsequently, Gilon retired. Admiral William McRaven oversaw the Osama Bin Laden

operation retired a not long after its completion. In the Princess Bride: After Inigo Montoya kills the six-fingered man who killed his father, he says: *I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it's over, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life.*

**במדבר ל"א:**

...וְאֵת בָּלְעָם בְּוִבְעוֹר הָרְגוּ בְּחָרָב:

**Numbers 31:8**

(8) *...They also put Balaam son of Beor to the sword.* The scoundrel gets his comeuppance.

**במדבר ל"ב:**

(א) וּמִקְנֵהוּ רֹב הָיָה לְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן וּלְבְנֵי־גַד עֲצוּם מְאֹד וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ גִּלְעָד וְהִגִּיהוּ מִמְּקוֹם מְקוֹם מִקְנֵהוּ:

**Numbers 32:1**

(1) *The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very great numbers. Noting that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were a region suitable for cattle, they petitioned Moses for permission to settle the territory east of the Jordan.* Why is this significant? Because in the previous parasha, the apportionment of tribal territories was accomplished by lot, suggesting that it was not political and that it was God who ordained the allotment. The Talmud, states that it was done by the Urim ve-Tumim. One could have regarded this petition as a form of rebellion against the divine framework. But rather than escalate this into a full-blown conflict, Moses makes a deal with them. You fight alongside your brothers and then settle the land. Moses' aim is tribal solidarity. He understands that were they not to share the military burden it would have disastrous repercussions for the future people.

**במדבר ל"ב:**

(ד) הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הִפְּהָהּ לְפָנַי עֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶרֶץ מִקְנֵה הָאֵל וְלַעֲבָדָיו מִקְנֵהוּ: {ס}

**Numbers 32:4**

(4) *the land that the LORD has conquered for the community of Israel is cattle country, and your servants have cattle.* And if you read last week's parasha closely, you're going to need a lot of cattle! A staggering number of animals were needed for the operation of the mishkan. Close to 1500/yr for daily, shabbat and festival offerings. Estimate: at least 6.25 sq. miles of pasture. Add to that the hundreds of thousands of sheep needed for Passover and yearly consumption and we are talking the need for hundreds of square miles of pastureland. Modern Jordan is about 34,500 sq. miles, of which 2.26% is arable. = ~780 sq. miles. That's probably a little more than what they needed. As shepherds, they epitomize the pastoral life of biblical Israel. They want to maintain a free pastoral lifestyle. The economic ideals for the nation, the

pastoral ideals, and the pledge of solidarity to the rest of the tribal union make this a good deal.

**במדבר ל"ג:א'**

(א) אלה מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים לצבאתם בנד-משה ואהרן:

**Numbers 33:1**

(1) These were the marches of the Israelites who started out from the land of Egypt, troop by troop, in the charge of Moses and Aaron. The recitation of the 42 places of the journey is a sacred song. This reminds us that this entire book has been a book of lists.

**במדבר ל"ו:י"ג**

(יג) אלה המצוות והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' בנד-משה אל-בני ישראל בערבת מואב על ירדן ירחו:

**Numbers 36:13**

(13) These are the commandments and regulations that the LORD enjoined upon the Israelites, through Moses, on the steppes of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho. But the book concludes with miscellaneous commandments. The stage is set for the final act: Moses' farewell valedictories and the laws that will shape their lives in their land. *Hazak Hazak ve-Nithazek!*

**The Book of Numbers by the Numbers**

Parashas	11	Mitzvot	52	People killed	48,951
Chapters	36	Percentage of mitzvot	8.5%	Complaints etc.	10
Verses	1,288	God's name	350	Individuals named	A lot!
Words	16,408	Moses' name	216	God threatens the people	Too many times!
Letters	63,530	God speaks to Moses	49		

**Verses from Numbers that Appear in Jewish Liturgy**

במדבר ו:כ"ד-כ"ו (כד) יברכה ה' וישמרה: {ס} (כה) יאר ה' ופניו אליה ויחנה: {ס} ישא ה' ופניו אליה וישם לה שלום: {ס}	<b>Numbers 6:24-26</b> (24) The LORD bless you and protect you! (25) The LORD deal kindly and graciously with you! (26) The LORD bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace!	Daily liturgy, Shemoneh Esreh and Shabbat Blessings over children.
במדבר י"ז:ל"ה-ל"ו (לה) ז ויהי בנסע הארון ויאמר משה קומה ו ה' ופצו איביה ונגסו משנאייה מפניה: (לו) ובגדה יאמר שובה ה' רבבות אלפי ישראל: ז {פ}	<b>Numbers 10:35-36</b> (35) When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: Advance, O LORD! May Your enemies be scattered, And may Your foes flee before You! (36) And when it halted, he would say: Return, O LORD, You who are Israel's myriads of thousands!	Torah Service
במדבר י"ב:י"ג (יג) ויצעק משה אליה לאמר אל נא רפא נא לה: {פ}	<b>Numbers 12:13</b> (13) So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, pray heal her!"	Kabbalat Shabbat –Yedid Nefesh
במדבר י"ד:י"ט-כ' (יט) סלח-נא לעון העם הזה כגדל חסדך וכאשר נשאתה לעם הזה ממצרים ועד-הנה: (כ) ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך:	<b>Numbers 14:19-20</b> (19) Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt." (20) And the LORD said, "I pardon, as you have asked.	Kol Nidre service
במדבר ט"ו:כ"ו (כו) ונסלח לכל-עדת בני ישראל ולגר הגר בתוכם כי לקליהם בשגגה: {ס}	<b>Numbers 15:26</b> (26) The whole Israelite community and the stranger residing among them shall be forgiven, for it happened to the entire people through error.	Kol Nidre Service
במדבר ט"ו:ל"ז-ל"ח (לז) ויאמר ה' אלי-משה לאמר: (לח) דבר אל-בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם ועשו להם ציצת...	<b>Numbers 15:37-41</b> (37) The LORD said to Moses as follows: (38) Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments ...	Daily Sh'ma
במדבר כ"ד:ה' (ה) מה-טבו אהליך יעלב משכנתיך ישראל:	<b>Numbers 24:5</b> (5) How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel!	Upon entering the synagogue
במדבר כ"ה:י"ב (י) וידבר ה' אלי-משה לאמר: (יא) פינחס בן-אלעזר בן-אהרן הכהן השיב את-חמתי מעל בני-ישראל בקצו את-קנאתי בתוכם ולא-כליתי את-בני-ישראל בקנאתי: (יב) לכו אמר הגוי נתו לו את-בריתי שלום:	<b>Numbers 25:10-12</b> (10) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (11) "Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites by displaying among them his passion for Me, so that I did not wipe out the Israelite people in My passion. (12) Say, therefore, 'I grant him My pact of friendship.	Recited at a Brit Milah