

Torah Weekly

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July 9-15, 2023
20-26 Tammuz, 5783

Torah Reading: Matot-Massei:
Numbers 30:2 - 36:13

Haftarah: Jeremiah 2:4-28;
Jeremiah 4:1-2

**PARSHAT
MATOT-MAASEI**

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Promises, Promises...

I have always been intrigued by the traditional way in which diamond merchants seal a deal. They shake hands and say "Mazel and Brocha" ("good fortune and blessing"). Once those few words have been said, the deal is done and it has all the power of a legal, contractual transaction.

It is a tribute to the diamond fraternity that in their industry, a word is a word. In some other industries, even a contract isn't worth the paper it's written on. Here, the spoken word is deemed to be binding and irrevocable. Interestingly, the "[Mazel](#) and [Brocha](#)" principle has been upheld in arbitration cases throughout the world.

This week's Torah portion, Matot, opens with an injunction about the sanctity of our words: "*And Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes . . . if a man takes a vow . . . he shall not desecrate his word; whatever issues from his mouth he shall do . . .*" ([Numbers 30:2-3](#)).

A word is a word. Promises are promises. And the words we utter are sacred and inviolate. If we disregard what we say, we have profaned and desecrated our words. That is why many people are careful to add the words *bli neder*—"without vowing"—whenever they say something that might be construed as a vow, so that, should they be prevented from fulfilling what they expressed their intention to

do, this would not constitute the grave offense of violating a vow. This, of course, in no way diminishes the regard we hold for our words, and the need to carry out one's promises even if one stipulated that it is not a vow.

The question is: Why was this commandment given to the "heads of the tribes"? Surely, it applies to each and every one of us. A simple answer is that since it is usually leaders who make the most promises, it is they who need the most cautioning.

Politicians are infamous for campaign promises, which—once they are elected—are rarely fulfilled. They tell about a candidate who promised to lower taxes if he were elected. As soon as he took office, he raised taxes. When he was challenged by the people about his unkept promise, he actually admitted that he had lied. The naïve electorate thought that was quite a genuine confession, and promptly decided that he was the most honest politician they had ever met. We are a gullible people indeed.

Many books have been published on the subject of business ethics. While there are a great many laws and nuances to this theme, at the end of the day, the acid test of business ethics is, "Did you keep your word?" Did you carry out your commitments, or did you duck and dive around them? It makes no difference how other companies are

behaving. It matters little whether our competitors are corrupt. We must honor our promises, and that is the ultimate bottom line.

Whether in our business relationships or in the *tzedakah* pledges we make to the synagogue or to other charities, our word should be our bond. Even if we are worried about the immediate financial costs, we can be assured that, with the passage of time, the reputation we will acquire by speaking truthfully and keeping our word will more than compensate any short-term losses.

Leave the spin doctoring to the politicians. A Jew's word should be sacred.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Journeys

"Journeys," the name of the last Torah reading in the Book of Numbers, could well be the title of our people's history. Wandering through wilderness or civilizations, voluntarily or by expulsion, is part of the biography of virtually every Jew alive today, or of his parents or grandparents. From where do a people derive the stamina of spirit to survive these endless, often tragic, wanderings?

When Israel left Egypt, their forty years in the desert were not spent in aimless wanderings. Their every move was "by the word of G-d," the [Torah](#) tells us. Torah teaches the doctrine of individual providence, of [G-d](#)'s interest and concern

with every individual. thought of G-d's Torah rejects the abandoning anyone to the caprice of an indifferent fate or the hazards of "nature."

Whether we are aware of it or not, we go not by our decision but by G-d's will. We do not go; we are sent—and He who sends us accompanies us. The Jew never felt alone, though he was surrounded by enemies. The Jew who kept his soul alive was never dependent on other people's approval of his religious life, whether those others were coreligionists or non-Jews. His strength came not from men but from G-d, and He was always there. Certainly, many succumbed, lacked the strength to live as individuals, independent and free. But they were lost to our people; their descendants are not numbered among Jews.

This was always and is today the beauty of Judaism—that life is purposeful, that it has meaning and coherence. It may not always meet with our immediate approval, the vicissitudes of life may be beyond our comprehension, but the assurance is given us that the tragedies are not in vain and the joys are not fortuitous. Israel may travel a long and sometimes difficult road, but always we go "by the word of G-d" until the wanderings of Israel are ended eternally.

By Rabbi Zalman Posner

Sunday, July 9, 2023 --- 20 Tammuz, 5783

Passing of Rabbi Avraham Chaim Na'eh (1954)

Rabbi Avraham Chaim Na'eh (1890-1954) was born in Hebron to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Na'eh, a Lubavitcher chassid and dean of the Magen Avot, a yeshiva founded by the [S'dei Chemed](#). With the outbreak of World War One, the Ottomans, who controlled the Land of Israel at the time, expelled anyone who was not a citizen of the empire. Most of the exiled Jews, including Rabbi Avraham Chaim, gathered in Alexandria, Egypt. During his time there, Rabbi Avraham Chaim founded Yeshivat Eretz Yisrael and wrote the halachic work *Shenot Chaim*, a concise digest of halachah for Sephardic Jews. In 1918, he returned to Palestine to work for the Edah HaChareidit (a prominent Orthodox communal organization), under Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld.

Rabbi Na'eh best known for his halachic works *Ketzot ha-Shulchan* and *Shiurei Torah* ("measurements of the Torah"), in which he converted archaic halachic measurements into modern terms. Contemporary halachic authorities follow his measurements to this day.

Monday, July 10, 2023 --- 21 Tammuz, 5783

Baal Shem of Worms (1636)

The noted Kabbalist Rabbi Eliyahu ben Moshe Loanz, known as "Rabbi Eliyahu Baal Shem" of Worms, Germany, passed away on the 21st of Tammuz of the year 5396 from creation (1636 CE). He was a grandson of the famed *shtadlan* (Jewish activist) R. Joselman of Rosheim, and the author of *Michlal Yofic* commentary on Ecclesiastes.

Tuesday, July 11, 2023 --- 22 Tammuz, 5782

R. Shlomo of Karlin (1792)

[Rabbi Shlomo](#) (1738-1792), Chassidic Rebbe in the town of Karlin, Russia (near Pinsk), was killed in the pogroms which accompanied the Polish uprising against Russia.

Wednesday, July 12, 2023 --- 23 Tammuz, 5783

R. Moshe Cordovero (1570)

Passing of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (1522?-1570) of Safed, the Holy Land, known as the "Ramak", authoritative Kabbalist and author of *Pardes Rimonim*.

Thursday, July 13, 2023 --- 24 Tammuz, 5783

Jews of Jerusalem are set aflame (1099)

When the crusaders captured Jerusalem during the First Crusade, the Jews of Jerusalem fled into a synagogue. The crusaders then set flame to the synagogue, burning alive all the Jewish men, women, and children who had taken refuge there. All Jews were barred from living in the city of Jerusalem for the following 88 years.

Friday, July 14, 2023 --- 25 Av, 5783

Passing of Rabbi Aharon Berachia of Modina (1639)

Rabbi Aharon Berachia ben Moshe of Modina (? - 1639) was an Italian Kabbalist and a student of Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano. At the request of the Burial Society at Mantua, he instituted rites for them. The author of many Kabbalistic works, he is perhaps best known for his work *Ma'abar Yabbok*, which contains mystical dissertations on purity and holiness. He also wrote additional prayers to be offered for the sick and the dead, as well as a code of conduct for their treatment. Many of the prayers recited at the gravesites of the deceased were composed by him. Tradition has it that an angel called a "maggid" would come and study with him, similar to the angel that would visit [Rabbi Yosef Caro](#).

Shabbat, July 15, 2023 --- 26 Tammuz, 5783

Frankists Vanquished (1759)

The Frankist sect was created by Jacob Frank, who claimed to be the reincarnation of the false Messiah Shabbetai Zvi. In the mid-1700's, he sought to create a new religion that would incorporate both Judaism and Christianity, leading to the formation of the Frankist sect, centered in Poland.

In 5519 (1759), the bishop of Lvov arranged for a debate between the Frankists and three prominent Jewish leaders: [R. Israel of Mezhibuzh \(the Baal Shem Tov\)](#), R. Chaim Rappaport, and R. Yitzchak Dovber Margulies. The four-day debate ended with a resounding victory for the rabbis, and the date was instituted as a day of rejoicing, celebrating the successful halt of the Frankists' evil influence.