



**Partners In Torah**

**San Diego-Los Angeles**

**Study Guide**

***76Matos – Masei תשפ"ג***

***Authored by Rabbi Avi Cohen***

***Partners Detroit***

*7/11/2023*

## *Partners In Torah*

### *Mission Statement:*

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant. Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.**

*Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.*

**Welcome.**

**Thank you for coming!**

**Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.**

This week we conclude the book of Numbers, which chronicles the travels and events as the Jewish nation journeyed from Egypt to the edge of the promised land, Israel. Aharon and Miriam have already passed away, and Moshe has transferred his High Priest duties to Aharon's son Elazar. Because Moshe would not merit bringing the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, he installed the new leader chosen by Hashem, Yehoshua. As the Jewish people stood poised to finally enter the land, just a few items remained that Moshe would tend to before leaving this world, items that all pertained to the Land of Israel that Moshe so wished to enter, *viz*, instructions to the Jewish people once they went in.

Moshe first told them that they would have to rout all the land's inhabitants and rid the land of any idol worship. Then, he would define the borders of the land of Israel and instruct Yehoshua how to divide and distribute the land among the tribes. Moshe would choose the forty-two cities where the Levites (who received no land) were to live, and, finally, he would designate the three cities of refuge in Israel for one who kills by accident.

Having Moshe take care of these matters before the Jewish people entered the land accomplished two purposes: It involved Moshe in the conquering and settlement of the Land of Israel that he so much wanted to enter. And Moshe's holiness would enter the land through the acts with which he was involved, as it says in the Talmud (Bava Batra 56a).

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל. כל שהראהו הקב"ה למשה חייב במעשר

*Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel, "Everywhere in Israel that Hashem showed Moshe became holy and became obligated in tithes.*

As Moshe looked out over the Land of Israel and detailed its precise borders, the land within those borders became holy and, as well, obligated in the laws that pertain only to the crops grown in Israel. Just his look created holiness, and so for sure did his actual involvement.

*Before the establishment of the modern State of Israel, Palestine, as it was then called, was under the control of the British mandate. Starting in 1936, the Arabs rioted in Palestine and the Jewish people living in Palestine were in danger. They could not even travel to from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv for fear of being shot.*

*In 1937, the British government realized they had to do something about it, so they sent a commission called the Peel Commission, led by Lord Peel, a member of the House of Lords, to do an investigation on how to solve the Palestine problem .*

*They held the investigation in the Jerusalem Supreme court building, and they sat like a court. Three large tomes rested on a pulpit in the courtroom: The Bible, the New Testament and, the Koran. Every witness would have to swear on his respective bible before testifying before the Peel Commission.*

*Ben Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, was called as a witness and gave an impassioned 4 hour speech as to why the land of Israel should be given to the Jews. In it he quoted many proofs from the Tanach that the land of Israel belongs to the Jews.*

*Opposed to this solution, were the seven Arab nations surrounding Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq.*

*After his speech, came the interrogation.*

*Lord Peel. "Mr. Ben Gurion, may I ask you a personal question?"*

*Ben Gurion: "Of Course!"*

*Lord Peel: "Where were you born, Mr. Ben Gurion?"*

*Ben Gurion: "In Plonsk!"*

*Lord Peel: "In Plonsk? Where is Plonsk?"*

*Ben Gurion: "In Poland!"*

*With that, Lord Peel leaned into the microphone and said very deliberately.*

*"This is a very strange phenomenon. All the Arab witnesses who came here to testify were born here in this country. Nashashibi, Useba, Huseni and Altal. Most of the Jewish witnesses were not born here at all, like you. Russia, Galitzia, Rumania, Poland, Lithuania; mostly from Eastern Europe.*

*I want to ask you a question.*

*If someone is living in a home and may have been born in that home, and someone else comes and tells him to go away, leave the home. 'It is mine, it belonged to my father.' Maybe he is correct maybe he is not. International law says, and the ethical thing to do is very simple: You ask that person. 'Do you have a document, the deed, that this home belongs to your family?'*

*Here, we call that document a kushan, a Turkish word carried over from the Ottoman Empire that used to be in control of Israel. Do you have a kushan that this home Palestine belongs to your family?"*

*Spontaneously, Ben Gurion picked up the Bible from the pulpit and said, "Of course we have a kushan! This is our kushan, Lord Peel! The Bible says that the Lord promised this land to our forefather Abraham, and then to his son Isaac, and then to his son Jacob. We are undoubtedly the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and this kushan is better known than any document from any official office."*

The very boundaries of the Land of Israel that would be given to the Jewish people are in the Torah.

Once the borders of the Land of Israel were established, Moshe gave the instructions on how to divide and distribute the Promised Land to the twelve tribes.

Our Sages teach us that Hashem started the world from the holiest place in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies. In that, the holiest place in the world, there is a stone called the אבן השתיה - The Foundational Stone. Upon it sat the Ark in the first Temple; and in the Second Temple, where there was no Holy Ark, its tip filled the Holy of Holies.

The Talmud (Yoma 54b) explains:

ושתיה היתה נקראת: תנא שממנה הושתת העולם

*The stone was called, שתיה - The foundation. Why so? Because from it, the world was founded.*

From this stone, the world spread out, and the land immediately surrounding it, Eretz Yisrael, was deemed holy. Being holy meant that one could achieve the greatest spiritual heights in that place.

This was the site upon which Noach brought his sacrifices after he exited the ark; this is the site where Avraham Avinu fell into a deep slumber during the ברית בין הבתרים - the Covenant of the Pieces; this was the site of the altar upon which Yitzhak was bound; and this was the site upon which Yaakov rested his head when he had his dream of the ladder. From the beginning of time, this was a holy site, and holy events through holy people occurred there.

This is why, when Avraham Avinu established himself as Hashem's faithful servant, Hashem promised this land to his children. Since his children would become a holy nation, one that would represent Hashem in the world, they would need to do so from the holiest place in the world, the Land of Israel.

The promise went from Avraham to Yitzchak and from Yitzchak to Yaakov, who had twelve sons, the kernel of the Jewish nation. Each son was different, and, based on his personal qualities and characteristics, had a unique role to play in the entirety of the Jewish nation. They and their families, a total of seventy people, went down to Egypt and there grew into the critical mass needed, 600,000 men, to be the nation to receive the Torah.

Just as in the wilderness, each tribe had a unique flag and a specific position around the Mishkan, symbolic of his unique mission, so, too, in the Land of Israel, Hashem had chosen a specific place in the Land for each tribe to live, which would complement that tribe's mission.

How would Hashem indicate to each tribe what was to be its predetermined inheritance? Hashem told Moshe (Numbers 33: 54).

נַחֲלֹתֵיכֶם וְהַתְּנַחֲלֵתֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ בְּגֹרֶל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֵיכֶם לְרַב תִּרְבּוּ אֶת  
נַחֲלֹתוֹ וְלִמְעַט תִּמְעִיט אֶת נַחֲלָתוֹ אֶל אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא לוֹ שְׁמֵהּ הַגּוֹרֵל לוֹ יִהְיֶה  
לְמִטּוֹת אֲבֹתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנַחֲלוּ

*54) You shall give the land as an inheritance **by lot** to your families; to the many you shall increase its inheritance, and to the few shall you decrease its inheritance; wherever its lot shall fall, his shall it be according to the tribes of your fathers shall you inherit.*

Hashem then told Moshe (Numbers 34:17,18):

יֵזֶ (יז) אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יִנְחֲלוּ לָכֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן  
וְיִהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון  
יח) וְנָשִׂיא אֶחָד נָשִׂיא אֶחָד מִמִּטָּה תִקְחוּ לִנְחֹל אֶת הָאָרֶץ

*17) These are the names of the men who are to take possession of the Land for you: Elazar the Kohen and Yehoshua the son of Nun. 18), and one leader from each tribe shall you take to possess the Land.*



Sometimes, when someone doesn't know how to choose between two options, he may invoke a lottery or just flip a coin to help him decide. Similarly, when people cannot decide who should do something or who should get something, they will draw lots and leave it to the "luck of the draw" to make the determination. Sometimes a lottery will be used when there is a danger of favoritism on the part of the benefactor. A lottery makes it impartial by removing the decision from the benefactor.

The lottery in this case was not to prevent hard feelings between the tribes or to absolve Yehoshua of complaints of favoritism. The lottery here was Hashem's way of telling each tribe that this is the parcel of land that I, Hashem, have chosen for you. The choice was based on one criterion: what piece of land is most spiritually compatible with the mission of your tribe.

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 21:9) describes the process of the lottery.

ומעשה נסים היה בגורל אלעזר בן אהרן מלובש אורים ותומים וקלפי הגורל לפני יהושע שנאמר (יהושע יט) ויריתי לכם גורל פה לפני ה' ועד שלא יעלה הגורל אלעזר אומר ברוח הקדש גורל שבט פלוני עולה שיטול ממקום פלוני ויהושע פושט ידו ועולה שנאמר (שם יט) אלה הנחלות אשר נחלו אלעזר הכהן ויהושע בן נון וזו היתה יתירה שהיה הגורל צווח בשעת עלייתו אני גורל פלוני השבט עלייתי לו במקום פלוני ומנין שהיה הגורל מדבר דכתיב על פי הגורל

*The lottery was miraculous. Elazar the son of Aharon wore the Urim VeTumim incorporated in the breastplate of his garment.*

(The breastplate with the twelve stones on it had the names of all the tribes written on them. When a question was asked of the Urim Vetumim, the letters spelling the correct answer to the question would miraculously light up, and the High Priest would read the solution.) *The bowl with the lots was before Yehoshua... Even before the lot was drawn, through Divine intuition (the Urim Vetumim), Elazar would say, "the lot of tribe X is to take this particular parcel of land. Then, Yehoshua would draw a lot from the bowl, and it would be the same tribe that Elazar had just spoken about. Not only that, the lot itself would announce as it was being drawn, "I am the lot for such and such a tribe, and this is the parcel it receives," echoing what Elazar had just learned from the Urim Vetumim.*

The lot revealed Hashem's spiritual plan for each tribe in Israel, from the beginning of creation. It allocated to each tribe the parcel of land that was compatible with its mission. Every tribe received its parcel as it related to the entire land of Israel and as it applied to that tribe individually. Each tribe received what it needed to fulfill its mission in the world.

It took the Jewish people 14 years to conquer and settle the land of Israel.

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 23:12) adds a new dimension.

(יב) זש"ה (תהלים קיא) כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל יכול הייתי לבראות לכם ארץ חדשה אלא בשביל להראות לכם את כחי אני הורג את שונאיכם מפניכם ונותן לכם את ארצם לקיים מה שנאמר כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים

The verse in Psalms (111:6) says:

*6)The strength of His deeds He declared to His people, to give them the heritage of the nations.*

*Hashem said to the Jewish people. "I could have created a new land for you, but I wanted to show you My might, and how I kill your enemies before you, to give you their land..."*

When the Jewish people conquered the Land of Israel, they never lost a soldier. (There was one instance, but it was the result of a sin that someone had committed.) Their enemies fell before them like flies, and they had nothing to fear, for Hashem fought their battles for them. Why? To show them that their mission in Israel was a spiritual one, and that Hashem is paving the way for them to live a holy life in the land.

The Jewish nation is a holy nation, and they were given a holy land through which they could achieve the greatest heights of holiness. When Israel was in its heyday, during the reign of Kings David and Solomon, these heights were truly achieved. Unfortunately, the Holy Temples have been destroyed and we are left to mourn for them, wishing that they would be rebuilt so we could once again serve Hashem properly in the land of Israel.

Considering the above connection of the tribes to their respective parcels of land and that there was a deep spiritual connection between them, we begin to understand the complexity of inhabiting the land of Israel even today. The holy land has something to say about who dwells on its soil. When the

Jewish people were not holy enough, the land expelled them. Indeed, the Torah (Leviticus 18:28) warned us about this.

וְלֹא תִקֵּי אֶרֶץ הָאָרֶץ אֶתְכֶם בְּטַמְאָכֶם אֹתָהּ

*28) Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it.*

The holy land cannot tolerate contamination. It is a holy land and its job is to help the Jewish people be holy. When they are not, the land of Israel is not the place to be.

We should thus not think that it is solely the might of the Israeli army that is keeping us in Israel. Although the nations around us have not gone to war with us for many years, they realize that they will not win, they have attempted to make life in Israel untenable through the thousands of rockets and explosives with which they continue to bombard the innocent men, women, and children. They continue to kill innocent men, women, and children whenever they can. It is miraculous that there have been so few casualties from these relentless attacks.

Do you remember the 1991 Gulf War, when 39 scud missiles hit Israel and there was only one person who died directly as a result? Is this the Israeli Army protecting us? Or is it Hashem protecting his people?

Hashem protects His people when they are righteous and fulfill His will. It is because of the many Kollel men and Yeshiva boys studying Torah, day and night, that Hashem protects His people. It is because of the thousands of pure, holy children learning in cheder that Hashem protects His people. There is no other answer.

Someone once asked an Arab captured for shooting missiles into Israel, "Can't you guys aim? You never hit your target!" The man answered, "We aim perfectly, but their G-d gets in the way and diverts the missile." The fellow then asked him, "So, then why do you bother if you know it won't succeed?" to which he answered, "We keep hoping He will make a mistake!" (Fat chance!)

Here is a story to underscore that point. (I did not edit the story)

A true and amazing story told by Ohad Shaked:

The Rosh Yeshiva says, "One of my students who I haven't heard from in many years contacted me on Sunday to ask where to study Torah in Ramat Gan. I was glad he called. I was surprised by his question, being that he was far from Torah and mitzvot. So, I asked him why he wanted to know," and this was his response back (I am not allowed to give his name): "I'm going to be released in a couple of months, and I want to learn in a Yeshiva – I saw the Almighty with my own eyes!"

He said nothing more and nothing less. "What happened?" I asked him.

"I observed the hand of Gd today with my own eyes. Now I know FOR SURE that there is a Gd!! No one told it to me...I didn't hear it from someone else...I saw this happen with my own eyes. I am an integral part of the iron dome operation. What we do here is an exact science and I cannot give many details of what we do. The other day a missile was headed directly for Tel Aviv...aimed at one of the 3 big towers in the middle of the city. We sent up one missile to intercept it, and we missed. We sent a second one, and we missed. We sent a third one to intercept...and we missed. Something even remotely like this has only happened two

other times ever that I am aware of. I was in shock! We are very exact and very good at what we do. We do not miss. So to miss 3 times is not possible. By this time, disaster was imminent. We alerted all of the emergency crews within and around Tel Aviv to evacuate, but by this time there was little that could be done. Their missile was only four seconds from hitting. We began the procedure of sending off one final missile to try and intercept it just before it came down knowing that casualties were still imminent. Now, you must understand, our calculations are based on physics and aerodynamics and weather (wind, atmosphere, humidity) and are complete...there is NOTHING we don't take into account. This is how it is able to work so precisely. But all of a sudden, as we were scrambling to do anything and everything that we could to save Tel Aviv, all of a sudden, OUT OF NOWHERE, came up a huge wind...one that was not on the radar...one that DID NOT EXIST before...and blew the missile from over Tel Aviv all the way into the Sea and dropped it off exactly safely into the water where no one was injured!!! We were all in shock!!! I stood up and started screaming 'There is a G-d!' 'There is a G-d!' 'There is a G-d'!!! You must understand...there was NO WIND...and then there was A HUGE WIND. This is not a couple of inches of a "move" that any gentle breeze could influence...this is MILES. It was nothing other than the hand of Gd!! I saw the Hand of Hashem fling the missile into the sea! I saw it with my very own eyes!!! The wind was not there before and it was not there after. It didn't come from somewhere, it came from *NOWHERE*. And after it moved the missile to the sea, it disappeared! So, after seeing this, I can no longer deny the existence of Gd. I put tefillin on right after this, and I took upon myself to keep Shabbat. Yesterday was my first Shabbat to keep and it was the best Shabbat of my life."

This is what he told me. I was so excited that it even brought a tear to my eye. "Ashrecha" (praiseworthy are you) I said to him, "that you merited to witness this incident and to understand that it's from Hashem (G-d)!" 'lo bichayil vi-lo b'koach...ki im B'ROOCHI amar Hashem'.

Need we say more?

