

**מסכת שבת**

Hello all! Just a short one this week and then next week we will be able to finish the third Perek of Messechet Shabbat. This week's Mishna is the second third of Mishna Vav Perek 3 Messechet Shabbat.

The Mishna permits moving an oil-lamp as long as it is new, never having been used. This is because the container is still clean and free of grime, allowing its use for other purposes which are permitted on Shabbat, such as storing small items or even drinking out of! However, once a lamp has been used, it becomes dirty and greasy and will be used for no

purpose other than relighting. Therefore it is Muktzeh on Shabbat as lighting is forbidden and it has no use for Shabbat.

Rabbi Shimon disagrees and says that all oil-lamps may be moved apart from one which is actually burning. He disagrees that the dirty state of the lamp can make it Muktzeh but if actually lit, movement may extinguish the flame. Therefore, even a dirty lamp may be moved provided that it is not lit whilst being transported.

**Shabbat Shalom**

**'Parasha Digest – Matot-Maasei**

ראשון: The laws of personal vows are detailed and Moshe is instructed to "take revenge" against Midian. In the battle, both Balak and Bilaam are killed.

שני: In the aftermath of the war, Moshe instructs the soldiers regarding the applicable laws of Tumah - impurity, and deals with the division of the booty between the soldiers, community, and the Mishkan.

Note verses 22 and 23 which teach us the laws of how to make kosher our vessels, and the Torah requirement for metal vessels made by a non-Jew or purchased from a non-Jew to be immersed in a mikvah before being used. (The Rabbis extended this law to included glassware.)

In appreciation for the fact that not a single soldier was lost in battle, the Generals and Captains donate their personal percentage of the captured gold to the Mishkan. The total weight of the donated gold weighed 837.5 lbs.!

רביעי - שלישי: Moshe is approached by the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and 1/2 of Menashe to acquire the Trans-Jordan territories captured from Sichon and Og. Moshe first treats their petition with suspicion; however, an agreement is reached between the 2 1/2 tribes and Moshe: Trans-Jordan in exchange for manning the front lines in the campaign to take Eretz Yisroel.

המישי: Moshe instructs the Bnei Yisroel to clear out the Land from all negative influences, and sets the Biblical boundaries of the Land.

ששי: New leaders are appointed to oversee the division of the Land, and the 48 Levitical cities, including the 6 Cities of Refuge, are mandated.

שביעי: The laws regarding the inadvertent murderer are detailed, and the prohibition against marrying outside one's tribe is established. This prohibition was only for the generation that occupied the Land.

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**East Bank Settlers**

This week's Parshiot are Matot and Maasei. In the first of these, we have a very strange episode. After 40 years of wandering round the desert, Bnei Yisrael are finally preparing to enter the holy land of Israel. This has almost occurred once before: 40 years previously, Bnei Yisrael had been on the verge of reaching Israel when the incident with the spies had shown a reluctance of some of them to leave the desert. This caused a period of wandering for 40 years. However, even at the end of this, we obviously had not learnt the lesson! Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe ask to be excused from settling in the land for which they have waited so long. They claim to want to "build for their flocks and cities for the small children" (32:16). Moshe agrees to let them live outside of the Promised Land, but appears to bargain with them by getting them to agree to help the others fight for the land first. Why did Moshe agree to let them live outside of the promised land, and what did he bargain from them?

have to examine the dialogue between Moshe and these tribes. When Moshe responds to them (32:24), he tells them to "build for yourselves cities for your small children and pens for your flocks". Whilst in their request they put animals first, here Moshe switches it round and says the children first.

What Moshe was really telling them was that if they're really looking out for the well-being of their children, then look after them (i.e. their perspectives) first, BEFORE you build yourselves buildings and flocks. This can also be why he allowed them to settle outside the Land altogether: Moshe understood that it wasn't that the tribes lacked faith in their destiny because they were willing to fight for it with everyone else, but rather that from their perspective living right outside the Land would be better for THEM. Being able to accept other perspectives, despite initial fears and uncertainties, is the true test of being a thoughtful Jew and an understanding person.

To fully understand the whole incident we **Shabbat Shalom**

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## 'Guard the Day of Shabbos to Sanctify It...'

Shmuel Straus, a banker in the city of Karlsruhe, Germany in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, enjoyed a happy life, free to spend his extra time raising his children, doing good deeds and studying Torah from his vast library of Jewish books. Shmuel earned just enough to support his family without any worries. He was known to be G-d-fearing and thus did all of his business dealings honestly.

Shmuel's first business venture was to run a small bank, given to him by his father-in-law following his marriage. With a permit from the government, Shmuel would mainly exchange currencies and invest money for people. He owned a special coat with two large pockets, one where he would place account receivables and one for currency exchange.

One Friday morning, before going to the *bris*, of his friend's son, he put on the special coat he would wear on Shabbos, holidays and special occasions, and transferred the wads of cash he'd ordinarily keep in his other coat. Following the celebration, he continued on his way to work as usual, changing money and accepting payments.

At midday, he stopped his work to assist in the preparations at home for the holy Shabbos. After his wife lit the Shabbos candles, he put on his Shabbos coat, and bid farewell to his wife and small children and then headed to the synagogue for the Friday night prayers.

Shabbos was a special day for Shmuel, and he'd spend it in prayer, learning and precious time with his family. For the Shabbos meal, they would always have many guests. That Shabbos was no different. As he walked the quiet route back from the synagogue, he'd take the time to gather the words of Torah he would say at the Shabbos table. His guests would soon arrive with their families at his home.

Shmuel sat on the bench on the side of the road as he gathered his thoughts, when he suddenly realized that his pockets were still filled with wads of money from that day's dealings.

Greatly aware of the principle of not "carrying on Shabbos", Shmuel sat rooted in his place, sweating about what to do with the money. Such a large sum would take months to replace, yet he could not bear the idea of using money

that he had carried home on Shabbos.

Sitting in the deserted street, he suddenly thought about the joy he would receive from knowing that he had done the right thing, and so he quickly unbuttoned his coat, dropping the wallets on the ground. A blanket of relief immediately swept over him. He knew that he would have to repay many debts, and that his financial future was in doubt. However, his trust in G-d empowered him to make a decision that inside he knew was right.

That Shabbos was extra joyous for him. He felt that he passed the great test G-d placed in his way, and had prevailed triumphantly. His extra joy was a mystery to his family and the many guests who had been to his table before.

As the sun faded and the stars came out, Shmuel said the special prayer recited over wine at the conclusion of Shabbos. His wife held the special candle and the family passed around the special fragrance to soothe the soul upon the departure of the beautiful Shabbos.

After saying the after-blessing on the wine, Shmuel relayed to his family what had transpired on Friday night, thus revealing the reason for the extra-joyous Shabbos.

The same night, Shmuel decided to check the route he'd used the previous day, hoping to find the wallets he'd dropped. He did! And as Shmuel opened the door to his home, the family breathed a sigh of relief, for the wallets were intact with the full sum of money inside them.

A few days later, the Minister of Finances of the Baden region heard about the trustworthy Straus bank, and entrusted Shmuel with a huge sum of money. The investment in the bank spread and many well-to-do people invested their money with Shmuel.

Today, Shmuel's legacy lives on in Jerusalem, where the Straus Courtyard, a place of Torah learning, stands in his name. His children sold Straus & Company in 1938 when they fled from Germany and relocated to California.

(adapted from chabad.org)

**Shabbat Shalom**

### Thought for the Week

Torah study is not just an intellectual exercise; it is a re-enactment of our receiving the Torah at Sinai. We emphasize this point in the blessings we recite over Torah study. We refer to God as the *הנותן התורה*, the One who *gives* the Torah, not the *התורה*, He who *gave* the Torah. Just as the Torah was given in a fiery environment so must we learn it with fiery enthusiasm.

The Torah teaches us that everything that came in fire (Torah) has to pass through fire. One must become ablaze with love of Hashem and for His word. (*R' Tzvi Hirsch of Nadvorna*).

## Fire and Water

“כל דבר אשר יבא באש תעבירו באש וטהרו”

R' Moshe Feinstein suggests that the laws pertaining to purification of vessels contain a major message. Hashem allows us to purge ourselves of spiritual contamination; just as pots can be purged and restored to their previous clean state, so too the soul of a Jew is never irreparably damaged by sin. It can always be restored to its pre-sin level through immersion in Torah.

In the same section of the *Yerushalmi* that we are told that Shimon ben Shetach established schools for young children we are also told the law that impurities in metal vessels always reassert themselves. R' Meir Shapiro explains homiletically the common thread that runs between the two statements. Even if one smashes a metal vessel, the Tumah remains deeply embedded. Only fire or boiling water can bring it to the surface. When educating our children we must implant Torah values deeply within their hearts and minds and instill in them the spiritual fire needed to bring the values to the surface.

In light of what R' Moshe and R' Shapiro said we can better understand the above Pasuk and what exactly is meant when we compare the Torah to fire and water.

The Chidah understands the Pasuk as a metaphor for the purification of the soul. The evil inclination arouses in us a burning desire for pleasures. They stain our soul and impede our ability to advance spiritually. The only way to fight the fire is with fire, the fire of Torah. Hashem tells us in Jeremiah 23:29 that *My words are like fire*. Only the fire of Torah can extinguish the fire of the evil

inclination.

But how exactly does this process take place? The fight against the Yetzer Hora is a continual pitched battle and it is only when the dust settles, quite literally, and we pass onto Olam Haba that the war is over.

R' Yisroel Salanter describes the battle as Koach Hatov/Koach Kedushah vs. Koach Hara. There is a part of a person that enjoys the Bad; a person does get Han'ah from Lashon Hara. But then there is also joy from doing good. The way in which we strengthen the Tov and lessen the Rah is through Torah. Torah strengthens the Koach Hatov within a person. At a person's Bar/Bat Mitzvah the battle starts and as they start off, the Koach Hara seems to be so big a foe in comparison with the newly received Koach Hatov that at times it might seem impossible. The only way to fight the battle is to bring in reinforcements. Make the Yetzer Hatov grow; little by little water the tree with Torah and eventually our old enemy will not seem as mighty as he once was.

Interestingly, within the Chidah's and R' Yisroel Salanter's explanations we have Torah being compared to both fire and water. The Knesset Yechezkel writes that one who sins with a fiery passion can only be purified by transforming that fiery passion to a holy one. If one sins due to lack of enthusiasm for what is right, he can purify himself by submerging himself in the refreshing waters of Torah. Just as we can use fire and water to purify our vessels, we can also use the fire and water of Torah to purify ourselves.

### Riddle for the Week

A mother gives birth to two healthy twin boys on the same morning. Yet, the proper time for Brit Milah for one of the boys is on the 8th day whilst the proper time for the other is on the 9th. How can this be?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer To Last Week's Riddle:

**Q:** Who cares about invitations?

**A:** We all do for the temple was destroyed after Bar Kamsa was invited by mistake.