

RaYBaSH's The Weekly Way
Parashah #42-43: Mattot-Massei
Numbers 30:2-36:13
By: Yehudah ben Shomeyr

Numbers 31:1-12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

Sometimes, like salmon you have to swim upstream. Sometimes when you try and try at peace, war is the last resort and only alternative, as Ecclesiastes says there is a time for war and a time for peace.

In this Torah Portion we see Moses, by God's command, had to turn and wage war on his Father-in-law's people. Apparently when Yitro (Jethro) converted and went back to his people as a missionary of sorts, he had no luck in turning the leadership away from pagan gods unto YHWH. We know Yitro's efforts failed because a few chapters prior we see the elders of Midian paying Balaam to curse Israel, but to no avail. So as a result Midian became ripe for punishment from God by the hands of Israel.

Jeremiah points out in 1:1-2:3 and hints that if Israel would have broken Torah and become wicked like the nations around them, God would have allowed Midian to overcome Israel, Just as HE did when Judah and Israel fell into idolatry and HE caused them to go into Babylonian and Assyrian Captivity, respectively.

Yeshua tells us that when we tell others about Torah and Messiah, sometimes there comes a point when we need to just walk away.

Matt. 10:12-15 And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

In the next Portion in our reading we sit as if with a photo album or a scrapbook and look back on all the journeys and wanderings of Israel. Why? To recall all the lessons learned. Israel learned something at each encampment and stop on the way. Just like looking through a photo album or scrapbook reminds us of something that happened on a trip whether good or bad.

Jeremiah 2:4-8 calls us to question why we stray from God when we should remember all the good things God has done for us and what He has brought us through.

Yeshua's brother Ya'akov (James) tells us in 4:10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

How do we humble ourselves to obtain God's favor? When we remember all the good things God has done for us that we surely don't deserve.

It is traditional after completing a book of Torah, in this case the book of Numbers, one says: "Chazak Chazak V'nitchazek (Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened)!"

Shabbat Shalom and Shavuah Tov!
-- Yehudah ben Shomeyr