

Matot-Mas'ei



	Matot	Mas'ei	M&M
of 54 sedras	42nd	43rd	—
of 10 in Bamidbar	9th	10th	—
lines in a Torah	190	189	379
rank	29th	30th	1st
Parshiyot	9	8	17
P'tuchot	4	6	10
S'tumot	5	2	7
P'sukim	112	132	244
rank (Torah/Bam.)	24/7	12/5	1/1
Words	1484	1461	2945
rank	29/6	32/7	1/1
Letters	5652	5773	11425
rank	30/7	28/6	1/1
Mitzvot	2	6	8
positive	1	2	3
prohibitions	1	4	5

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek: Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya 16+12=28 p'sukim - 30:2-31:12

[P> 30:2 (16)] "And Moshe spoke to the leaders of the Tribes of Israel..." The first principle of the topic of Nedarim (vows & oaths) is that a person must fulfill the terms of his vow and it is prohibited to "profane one's word" [407, L157 30:3].

On the other hand, built into the Torah's laws are procedures for release from vows. These procedures also constitute a mitzva, known as HAFARAT N'DARIM [406, A95 30:3]. A girl (12-12½ yrs. old - officially called a NAARA) who makes a vow can have her vows nullified by her father (only on the day he hears of them). Similarly (but with differences), a wife's vows can be nullified by her husband. (In this case, only some vows, those which affect the husband can be nullified by him.)

MitzvaWatch

In addition to HAFARAT N'DARIM, the nullification of a wife's or daughter's vow by husband or father, there is another aspect of this mitzva, known as HATARAT N'DARIM. This is the nullification of one's vows (those that halachically CAN be nullified) by a Rav-expert in the laws of N'darim or a panel of three dayanim (even laymen).

Hatarat N'darim is a rare (but not

unique) example of a mitzva that is considered Torah law, although there is no clear supporting text in the Written Word. The Mishna in Chagiga assures us that Hatarat N'darim is no less a Torah concept because of the lack of a written source-text. This is but another in a long series of demonstrations of the absolute necessity of defining Torah as BOTH the Written Word and the Oral Law and Tradition.

[P> 31:1 (12)] G-d next commands Moshe to do battle against Midyan, and then to prepare to take leave of this world. Moshe drafts 1000 men from each tribe for the task.

SDT Commentaries point out that the People were reluctant to comply because they knew that Moshe would die shortly after successful completion of the battle. Moshe, on the other hand, enthusiastically complies with G-d's command, his personal interests to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The Chatam Sofer notes that when G-d commands the battle against Midyan, He calls it NIKMAT B'NEI YISRAEL, a revenge for Israel's sake. When Moshe calls the people to battle, he refers to revenge for G-d's honor. If the people would be fighting for their own honor, they might forgo the battle and not hasten Moshe's end. But to avenge G-d's honor, they dare not refuse.

Pinchas is sent as "chaplain". The 12,000 strong army succeeded in killing all male Midyanites including five kings and Bil'am. The women, children, herds, flocks, and possessions

of Midyan were taken as booty. The cities and palaces were destroyed. The army returned to the Israelite camp at Arvot Moav.

SDT There is uncertainty among commentaries as to whether the tribe of Levi sent a contingent to fight this war or not. If they did, did Menashe and Efrayim combine as the tribe of Yosef, thereby keeping the total number at 12,000, or were there actually 13,000 who fought. Levi's probable involvement is due to the fact that the war was NOT for the purpose of conquest of territory; had it been, Levi would not be directly involved. If so, Menashe and Efrayim probably fought as the tribe of Yosef in this war against Midyan.

Levi - Second Aliya
12+17+13=42 p'sukim
- 31:13-54

[S> 31:13 (8)] Moshe, Elazar, and the tribal leaders went out to greet the returning army. Moshe was angry that the officers kept the women of Midyan alive since it was they who were instrumental in the downfall of Israel in the Pe'or affair and the consequent plague. The women and male children were killed; the girls remained captive. The soldiers were told to remain outside the camp for seven days because of their ritual impurity as a result of the war.

[S> 31:21 (4)] Elazar HaKohen sets down the laws of purification of



vessels. Many of the details of "kashering" and "toveling" (which are not the same thing) of vessels are derived from here.

[S> 31:25 (30)] G-d tells Moshe to order a counting of the spoils of war. The booty is to be divided equally between the soldiers on the one hand and the People on the other. Taxes of 1/500 were imposed upon the soldiers. Detailed itemization takes up many p'sukim of this portion.

And then the half that went to the people is itemized. A tax of 1/50 (the standard amount for T'ruma) is imposed upon the people. These taxes were turned over to Elazar HaKohen. Detailed itemization takes up many more p'sukim.

The officers approach Moshe with more gifts of gold in thanks to G-d for not losing even one person in battle.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 19 p'sukim - 32:1-19

[P> 32:1 (4)] The Torah tells us that the tribes of Reuven and Gad were heavily laden with flocks of sheep and that they noticed that the lands of Ya'zeir and Gil'ad were particularly suited for raising livestock. They came before Moshe, Elazar, and the leaders of the People and they "mentioned" that the territory was good for animals and that they happened to have many animals.

Note the unusual pasuk, 32:3, in which each of its 9 words is the name of a city. Rashi just mentions that these were cities in the former territory of Sichon and Og. Targum Onkeles, interestingly, does not leave the city names as they are in the Torah - which is usually the case, but he renders the names into Aramaic.

[S> 32:5 (11)] They then requested permission to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe's initial reaction is intense anger, fearing that the request of the two tribes would discourage the People of Israel from wanting to proceed into the Land, repeating the experience of the "spies" of almost 40 years earlier.

[S> 32:16 (4)] The key objection on Moshe's part seems to be the potential negative effect on the rest of the People. To this, the tribes replied that they would be prepared to settle their animals and families "here" and they would surely accompany their brethren into Eretz Yisrael and not return to the east bank until all is settled in the Land.

SDT In addition to the main "dressing down" that Moshe gives Reuven and Gad, there is a more subtle rebuke on another issue. The tribes offer to build enclosures for their flocks and homes for their children. Later, when Moshe gives them permission to establish themselves on the East Bank, he tells them to build homes for their children and accommodations for their



animals. Your children go first. Then your property. It is important that we get our priorities straight in life.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 23+10+39=72 p'sukim - 32:20-33:49

The fourth Aliya is always the BRIDGE Aliya between two sedras when they are combined. This particular R'VI'I is THE longest Aliya in the Torah. There are seven whole sedras in the Torah each with fewer p'sukim than this Aliya.

[P> 32:20 (23)] Moshe's response is the administration of an oath (many details of the proper form of "conditions" are derived from this famous oath of the 2½ tribes) agreeing to the request to settle on the east side of the Jordan iff (that's not a typo; it's the abbreviated form of "if and only if" and is a valid word on its own) the 2½ tribes fight side by side with the other tribes of Israel.

The Torah describes the cities that the 2½ tribes established to settle their families and flocks prior to their crossing the Jordan.

Perhaps the seemingly unnecessary details give us the message that we are dealing with part of Eretz Yisrael, and not just something extra-territorial.

[P> 33:1 (39)] The sedra of Mas'ei begins with a summary listing of the 42 places of encampment during the years of wandering in the Wilderness. Most places are just listed; a few are

anecdoted. The present day identity of many of these places is in dispute or unknown. This portion covers the Exodus from Egypt (the city of Ra-m'ses), the passage through the Sea, and the 3-day journey that brought the People to Mara, with its "water problem" (and solution). From there it was back to Yam Suf, before continuing into the Wilderness.

THE Travelog

These are the places of encampment and some comments...

From (0) Ra-m'ses
to (1) Sukkot
to (2) Eitam
to (3) Pi HaCherot
to (4) Mara
to (5) Eilim
to (6) Yam Suf
to (7) Midbar Sin
to (8) Dafka
to (9) Alush
to (10) R'fidim
to (11) Midbar Sinai
to (12) Kivrot HaTaava
to (13) Chatzeirot
to (14) Ritma
to (15) Rimon Peretz
to (16) Livna
to (17) Risa
to (18) K'heilata
to (19) Har Shefer
to (20) Charada
to (21) Mak'heilot

to (22) Tachat
to (23) Terach
to (24) Mitka
to (25) Chashmona
to (26) Moseirot
to (27) Bnei Yaakan
to (28) Chor HaGidgad
to (29) Yotvata
to (30) Avrona
to (31) Etzion Gever
to (32) Midbar Tzin (a.k.a. Kadesh)
to (33) Hor HaHar...

This is where Aharon died at the age of 123, on Rosh Chodesh Av.

Not only is this the only yahrzeit mentioned in the Torah, but it is interesting that the date is NOT mentioned in Chukat, where we read of Aharon's death. It appears here in the recounting of the episode - this year, the day following Rosh Chodesh.

[\[S> 33:40 \(10\)\]](#) The Torah then tells us again that our presence was noted by the K'naani king of Arad in the Negev of Eretz Yisrael. We know from earlier in the Chumash, that the K'naani attacked the people after Aharon's death, but that is not mentioned here. Rather, the list of places then continues...

to (34) Tzalmona
to (35) Punon
to (36) Ovot
to (37) I'yei HaAvarim
to (38) Divon Gad
to (39) Almon Divlataima
to (40) Harei HaAvarim
to (41) Arvot Moav.

Apparently, the counting of the encampments includes their first point of departure, which we marked as 0. So the number 42 holds. We numbered from 0 to 41 so that Chashmona would come out as the 25th place of encampment and serve as a REMEZ to Chanuka from the Torah (among others).

G'matriya of RA-M'SES = 430, the number of years from the original prophecy to Avraham Avinu in the BRIT BEIN HA'B'TARIM until the EXODUS (as in Sh'mot 12:40-41).

The first stop out of Raamses is SUKKOT, G'matriya = 480, the number of years from the Exodus until the building of the First Beit HaMikdash - the arrival of the People of Israel **EL HAMENUCHA V'EL HANACHALA** (D'varim 12:9). So just the first leg of the wandering represents (numerically) the major first (and second) leg of the journey of Jewish History.

SUKKOT, says the Baal HaTurim, got its name from the Heavenly Clouds that began "functioning" there.

MIDBAR SIN got an extra YUD (which is TEN) to be SINAI to mark the fact that the ASERET HADIBROT were given there. - Baal HaTurim

The Midrash says that it was at ALUSH that the People first received the Manna and where we spent our very first Shabbat. The Manna was given to the People of Israel in the merit of our mother Sarah, who was asked by Avraham to knead and bake cakes for



the angels/guests. Her enthusiastic providing of food for others was repaid by G-d, Who provided food for Sarah's children more than 400 years later. The name ALUSH is a play on the word "I will knead".

RITMA was the place from which the spies were sent, and therefore the place where the decree to wander the wilderness was pronounced. One can imagine a qualitative difference in the mental attitude of the people during the first 14 encampments contrasted to those following Ritma.

CHASHMONA was the 25th resting place of the People. Centuries later, there was a resting (from battle) on the 25th (of Kislev). The people through whom G-d wrought the miracles of Chanuka were the Chashmona'im. This is considered one of the Torah "hints" to Chanuka.

Rashi points out that with 14 places before the decree to wander, and with 8 places in the final year, there were only 20 places that the People moved to and from in 38 years or so. That is not really all that much. G-d was merciful with the People even as He was punishing them.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 22 p'sukim - 33:50-34:15

[S> 33:50 (7)] G-d speaks to Moshe in Arvot Moav and commands the People to enter, conquer, acquire, and settle the Land, according to the "Divine Lottery". This is one of the 613 mitzvot

according to Ramban - The mitzva of YISHUV ERETZ YISRAEL, the mitzva to live in Israel. Ramban says that this mitzva applies in all times, including our own.

Part of the mitzva, explains Ramban, is that the people of Israel may not shun G-d's gift and promise, and go conquer and settle elsewhere. Jews who live anywhere in the world outside of Israel should always remember their "stranger in a strange land" status. Adopting someplace else as your own and removing Israel from your personal agenda, contravene the spirit (and maybe the letter) of this mitzva.

[P> 34:1 (15)] The boundaries of the Land are detailed. These boundaries are now for the 9½ tribes, since Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe have claimed their allotments on the East Bank.

Read the description of the boundaries of the land that is being given by G-d to the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To the Jewish People. To us. Unlike the identity of many of the encampments, we know where these boundaries are. Eretz Yisrael for the Jewish People goes at least (see next paragraph) from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. The Torah does not seem to indicate that parts of the Promised Land should become a foreign state - regular or demilitarized - or be given to enemies of the State of Israel or the Jewish People.

(Perhaps - no, no perhaps - it's a definite!) Do you believe that G-d



created the world? Do you believe that G-d commanded us to keep the Shabbat? Do you believe that G-d gave Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish People, in perpetuity? Do you believe that it is His Will that we, His People, live in Eretz Yisrael? These questions are not 'pick and choose' for us. They are The Package Deal that G-d made with us and the reason He took us out of Egypt and made us a nation - His nation.

In G-d's original promise to Avraham Avinu, the land to be given to his descendants was to be "from the Egyptian River until the great river, P'rat". The boundaries described in this week's sedra contain a territory significantly smaller than that which was promised. Our Sages tell us that the original promise includes territory to be added to Eretz Yisrael in the future, in the times of the Moshiach.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya

14+8=22 p'sukim
- 34:16-35:8

[P> 34:16 (14)] Next the Torah lists the new leaders of the tribes who will be in charge of the "Divine lottery" by which the Land will be apportioned.

Elazar and Yehoshua are the overall leaders of the Nation.

Kalev b. Yefuneh is the leader of Yehuda.

Shimon: Shmuel b. Amihud.

Binyamin: Elidad b. Kison.

Dan: Buki b. Yogli.

Menashe: Chaniel b. Eifod.

Efrayim: K'mu'el b. Shiftan.

Zevulun: Elitzafan b. Parnach.

Yissachar: Paltiel b. Azan.

Asher: Achihud b. Shlomi.

Naftali: P'dah'el b. Amihud.

[P> 35:1 (8)] Following the general plans for dividing the Land, the People are instructed to provide cities for the Leviyim [408, A183 35:2], since they, the Leviyim, do not receive Land as inheritance. The cities and their surrounding areas, number 48, including the 6 cities of refuge.

✓ Note that the measure of 2000 amot as "city limit" was subsequently borrowed by the Sages in fixing the distance outside one's dwelling place that a person may walk on Shabbat, known as T'CHUM SHABBAT (even though the Torah's T'chum is much greater).

✓ Rashi points out that there were three cities of refuge on each side of the Jordan River, even though in the western case, they would serve 9½ tribes and in the eastern case, they would serve 2½ tribes. An inference is drawn that there would be more careless homicides on the eastern side of the river.

These cities, to be given by the tribes to the Leviyim, were given proportional to the populations of the tribes.

Sh'VIII Seventh Aliya 26+13=39 p'sukim - 35:9-36:13

[P> 35:9 (26)] The cities of refuge (and the other 42 Levite cities, with some differences) serve to protect the inadvertent killer. Even a murderer flees to a protecting city pending trial.

It is forbidden to kill a murderer until he stands trial and is found guilty [409, L292 35:12].

The inadvertent killer is sent - or he flees - to a city of refuge [410, A225 35:25]. The Torah presents guidelines for defining murder and inadvertent killing and sets down some of the court procedures, such as the prohibition of a witness also acting as judge in a criminal case [411, L291 35:30]. We are also warned not to attempt substitute punishments for a murderer [412, L296 35:31] and the inadvertent killer [413, L295 35:32]. Strict adherence to all rules of justice assure us continued "quality living" in Eretz Yisrael, accompanied by the Divine Presence.

MitzvaWatch

Mitzvot 412 and 413 basically command us to follow other mitzvot in the Torah that require a convicted murder to be executed and a convicted SHOGEG-killer to be sent to a City of Refuge.

How unusual for the Torah to do that. The small Sanhedrins of 23 judges,

whose jurisdiction it is to carry out the commands of the Torah in matters of "sentencing" for certain crimes/sins are duty-bound to comply with halacha. Why these extra commands to follow procedures that are already required?

It is quite possible for us to rationalize an alternative punishment or treatment of the convicted murderer - intentional or inadvertent. And sometimes, the alternative suggestion will be more appealing, more logical, more beneficial than the Torah-required procedure. Very tempting. So the Torah comes to reinforce its insistence that its procedures be carried out. Ir Miklat is punishment, protective custody, and atonement rolled into one. And it is the command of G-d. We can't change it.

[P> 36:1 (13)] Leaders of the family of Menashe to which the daughters of Tz'lofchad belong, approach Moshe and raise the problem of potential erosion of their tribal allotment if Tz'lofchad's daughters marry outside their tribe, taking their land with them. Moshe issues a ruling restricting them from marrying outside their tribe. This is not a law in perpetuity (and therefore, it is not counted as a mitzva among Taryag); it applies only in this case. In compliance, Machla, Tirza, Chogla, Milka, and No'a marry Menashe-ites.

The Book of Bamidbar ends with the statement, "These are the Mitzvot and the Laws that G-d commanded Moshe to (transmit to) Bnei Yisrael, in Arvot Mo'av on the Jordan (Jericho) River."

Haftara 28 p'sukim **Yirmiyahu 2:4-28, 3:4**

This is the 2nd of the 3 Tragic Haftarot read during the Three Weeks. It is the continuation of last week's haftara. G-d, speaking through the prophet, chastises the People of Israel for the terrible double sin of forsaking Him AND turning to gods who are nothingness. Repeatedly, we are asked how it was possible that we turned away from G-d so. Terrible punishment for this betrayal of G-d is prophesied. The haftara ends on the hopeful note that if we return to G-d, then He will return to us and restore His special relationship with us.

PROBING the PROPHETS

The haftara we read this week, a selection chosen from the second perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu, is a direct continuation of last week's haftara, taken from the first chapter of that book. In this selection, however, Yirmiyahu is no longer conversing with Hashem but is delivering a harsh message to the people as he begins the mission upon which G-d had sent him. Picking up on the theme he opened in the last perek, Yirmiyahu condemns the nation for their ingratitude. In order to accentuate the extent of Israel's sin, the navi reviews the kindnesses Hashem had done for them over the many years. In doing so, Yirmiyahu mentions the Exodus from Egypt, the wonders wrought for them during their sojourn in the desert and

G-d's gift of His bountiful and fruitful land.

The prophet then contrasts G-d's faithfulness to Israel with the faithlessness of Israel to G-d. The nation's sins were not limited to simply ignoring Hashem's will but, even worse, their abandonment of His worship. In their turning to other powers, Israel proved that what G-d had done for them was not enough for them and, by seeking alternatives to G-d, they indicated that the Al-mighty was not All Mighty. By doing so, Yirmiyahu adds, the behavior of His chosen nation was far worse than other nations who remain faithful to their false gods.

Significantly, the navi tempers his harsh words by suggesting that Israel's infidelity to Hashem was less a result of rebelliousness and more one of confusion and error. He especially points to the leadership of the nation as being guilty of leading the people astray. The navi criticizes the kohanim who did not search for G-d, the Torah scholars who did not seek to understand Hashem's ways, the leaders who openly rebelled against G-d and the (false) prophets who prophesied in the name Ba'al.

Given the behavior of these role models, G-d understands that the nation should not shoulder the entire guilt for their sins. For this reason, He tells Israel: "Od ariv it'chem", "I will yet contend with you" - the implication being that G-d would not yet punish the people but would "contend", argue, debate with the hope of convincing the nation to return and avoid punishment. And this, indeed,

was the very mission of Yirmiyahu. He was not only the "prophet of doom" that we often think him to be, but also the "prophet of hope". This would illuminate G-d's words to Yirmiyahu in the last perek where the prophet is told that his job would be "to uproot and smash" but also "to build and to plant".

G-d sends prophets to try and bring His children back to Him. Declaring a message of hope to a sinful nation, (as Yirmiyahu did when the enemy had already built ramparts up to the wall of Yerushalayim!) is an essential part of the prophet's mission. Hashem desires return and not ruin.

And it was that message of hope that helped us survive the centuries of ruin until we could finally return home.

Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)