

Parshas Matos-Masei

by Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim
Rosh Yeshiva

Bein HaMitzarim / Three Weeks – Making the Hours Count

I had a friend in yeshiva who really struggled learning Gemara. Following the flow of the Gemara, tracking the multiple steps of analysis, and understanding the logic was very challenging for him. However, when it came to *gematria* (numerical values of letters and words), he was able to make the complex calculations effortlessly, without a calculator! He applied to another yeshiva, and they suggested that he go for an evaluation. The results were very telling. On a scale of 1-10, his logic was just a 2, but his abstract creativity...was a 9!

We are in the middle of the Three Weeks – a period referred to as “Bein HaMitzarim”, the time between the fasts of the 17th of Tammuz and Tishah B’Av. Thirteen of the days are in Tammuz and nine days are in Av. There are tremendous ideas alluded to in the gematrias of these days. Let’s explore.

The Bnei Yissaschar¹ notes that the number of hours in the thirteen days of Tammuz is 312. This is the gematria of the Hebrew word *shevi*, which means “captive”. This alludes to the pasuk in Megillas Eichah where it says, “*Halechu shevi* - Bnei Yisrael were taken captive.”² However, if one takes the letter Yud from the end of “*shevi*” and places it in front of the word, it spells “*yashuv*” (return), which alludes to the pasuk in Michah³ where it says, “*Yashuv yerachmenu*” – if we return, Hashem will have mercy on us. In short, we get the message that we can transform these days from feeling captive to feeling close to Hashem.

The number of hours in the Nine Days is 216. This is the gematria of the word *gevurah*, strength. It is also the gematria of the word *yirah*, fear. This signifies that this is a time of overpowering judgement from Hashem. The word “*ari*” (lion) has a gematria of 312 as well, alluding to the pasuk in Eichah, “The bear waits in ambush, the lion in hiding.”⁴

The *mazal* (Zodiac sign) for the month of Av is a lion. The lion is often referred to as the King of the Jungle. However, the lion is not necessarily the most dangerous animal. A lion receives the title of King of the Jungle because he is the fiercest. All the animals in the jungle are afraid of the lion, since the lion is not intimidated by any other animal. The month of Av imposes awe in us because of its many possible harsh judgements.

The word “*ari*” in Eichah is written as “*aryeh*”, ending with the letter Heh. But take note: the letter Heh at the end is not pronounced; the word is read as “*ari*”. The gematria of the letter Heh is five. This alludes to the last five hours of Tishah B’Av when mourning is lessened, as the Gemara Yerushalmi⁵ says that is when Moshiach will be born.

The total number of hours in these 22 days is 528. This is the gematria of the word *maftei’ach*, key. These days are the key to redemption! How?

The Midrash⁶ says that the exile will be redeemed in the merit of learning Mishnayos – *Torah shebe’al peh*, the Oral Law. The Megaleh Amukos⁷ says that there are 528 *perakim* (chapters) of Mishnayos. These align with the 528 hours of the period of the Three Weeks. Learning *Torah shebe’al peh* during these 528 hours is the key to bringing our redemption!

May the quality and intent of our learning Torah in these days bring us to the long-awaited Redemption for which we constantly yearn!

1 Tammuz/Av, Maamar 2 (Bein HaMitzarim) #7

2 Eichah 1:5

3 Michah 7:19

4 Eichah 3:10

5 Berachos 2:4

6 Vayikra Rabbah 7:3

7 Parshas Shemos 3b

Halacha in the Parsha – Parshas Matos Masei

by **Rabbi Moshe Silverstein**
Maggid Shiur

This year, as most years, *Matos* and *Masei* are read together as a “double *parsha*”. In fact, all the potential “double *parshiyos*” are combined this year (at least in the diaspora). The following are some of the considerations in determining when *Matos* and *Masei* are read together and when they are read separately:

*Tosfos*¹ asks why it is that in a year that *Rosh Hashana* falls on Monday or Tuesday, such that there are two *Shabbosos* between *Rosh Hashana* and *Sukkos* on which we read from the regular *parsha* cycle, we combine the *parshiyos* of *Matos* and *Masei*² and then separate *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* to accommodate the extra week. Seemingly, it would be more efficient to put the two small *parshiyos* of *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* together and separate the longer *parshiyos* of *Matos* and *Masei*. Furthermore³, *GR”A*⁴ considers *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* to be one *parsha* and maintains that that there is a total of 53 *parshiyos* rather than 54 as is generally assumed. In fact, the *Tur*’s⁵ mnemonic to remember this *halacha* - ב”ג המלך פת, which *Abudraham*⁶ translates to mean when *Rosh Hashana* falls on Monday or Tuesday, we should break *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* as one breaks a single loaf of bread into pieces, implies that a whole is being split into two suggesting that *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* is one *parsha*. Accordingly, *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* should seemingly only be separated when absolutely necessary, such as in a year whose number of weeks requires that no *parshiyos* are doubled. If so, why do we split *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* and not *Matos* and *Masei* when only one needs to be split?

Tosfos quotes *Rabbeinu Nissim* who answers that just as the *Gemara*⁷ requires *Ki Savo*, which contains the קללות, the curses that befall us when we don’t follow the *Torah*, to be read prior to *Rosh Hashana*, symbolic of our hope that the year will end and so will its curses, so too the following *parsha*, *Nitzavim*, must be read before *Rosh Hashana* as well. *Rabbeinu Nissim* explains that *Nitzavim* also contains rebuke that must be finished before *Rosh Hashana*. Alternatively, *Tosfos* maintains that the rebuke in *Nitzavim* does not comprise curses, but *Nitzavim* must be read before *Rosh Hashana* to serve as a divider between the curses of the prior year and the new year that we hope will bring only blessing. Therefore, *Matos* and *Masei* must be read together to assure that *Nitzavim* will also be read before *Rosh Hashana* in accordance with the *Tur*’s mnemonic קומו ותקעו, stand up and blow, which dictates *Nitzavim*, which means standing, to be read before *Rosh Hashana*, on which we blow the *shofar*. Indeed, this is also the reason that *Bamidbar* is read between *Bechukosai*, the other *parsha* that contains קללות and therefore must be read prior to *Shavuot*, and *Shavuot* itself as per the *Tur*’s mnemonic מנו ועצור, count (a reference to *Parshas Bamidbar* in which the people are counted) and עצרת, the holiday of *Shavuot*.

*Levush*⁸ suggests another reason that we cannot separate *Matos* and *Masei* in such a year:

Included in the *Tur*’s mnemonics for the timing of certain *parshiyos* and their association with the holidays is the fact that *Tisha B’Av* must come before *Parshas Voeschanan* - צומו וצלו, fast (on *Tisha B’Av*) and daven (an allusion to *Voeschanan*, which means and I pleaded to Hashem). *Levush* explains that *Devarim* (the *parsha* that precedes *Voeschanan*), which

contains *Moshe*’s rebuke to the Nation, should be read before *Tisha B’Av* to remind us why the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed and to encourage us to mend our ways. *Mishnah Berurah*⁹ adds that *Devarim* precedes *Tisha B’Av* so the *Haftarah*¹⁰ of *Chazon*, which contains *Yeshayahu*’s rebuke regarding the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and is an appropriate counterpart to the *parsha*, can be read prior to *Tisha B’Av*. Perhaps we may also add that it is appropriate to read *Devarim*, which contains the *pasuk* of *Eicha*, immediately before *Tisha B’Av*, on which we read *Megillas Eicha*. Indeed, *Eishel Avraham*¹¹ writes that the *pasuk* of *Eicha* in *Devarim* should be sung to the tune of *Megillas Eicha*, and *Shaarei Rachamim*¹² quotes *Mikraei Kodesh*¹³ that this is done to make known that *Tisha B’Av* will fall in the upcoming week.

Alternatively, *Abudraham*¹⁴ explains that *Tisha B’Av* should occur during the week in which *Voeschanan* will be read as it contains the passage¹⁵ of כי תוליד בנים, which is also read on *Tisha B’Av*.¹⁶

This explanation more accurately corresponds with the actual wording of the *Tur*’s mnemonic צומו וצלו, which connects *Tisha B’Av* and *Voeschanan*, not *Tisha B’Av* and *Devarim*. Similarly, *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*¹⁷ write that *Tisha B’Av* should precede *Voeschanan* rather than writing that *Tisha B’Av* should follow *Devarim*.

Notwithstanding, if we would read *Matos* and *Masei* on separate weeks in such a year, *Tisha B’Av* would fall out before *Devarim* rather than between *Devarim* and *Voeschanan* as the צומו וצלו mnemonic instructs. Thus, *Levush* writes this as an additional reason that *Matos* and *Masei* are combined and *Nitzavim* and *Vayelech* are divided in such a year.

*Maharit*¹⁸ writes that when the eighth day of *Pesach* in the diaspora falls on *Shabbos* (in a leap year), necessitating a double *parsha* at some point before *Devarim* to assure that it precedes *Tisha B’Av* as per the צומו וצלו mnemonic, we read *Matos* and *Masei* together rather than doubling any of the earlier *parshiyos* between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* because if we were to do so, there would be an extra *Shabbos* between *Bamidbar* and *Shavuot*, and we would not be following the literal instruction of מנו ועצור. Although in *Eretz Yisrael*, where they are a *parsha* ahead in such a scenario and have no choice, they apply a liberal application of מנו ועצור by having *Shavuot* more than a week after *Bamidbar*, since in the diaspora the mnemonic can be followed literally, by delaying the double *parsha*, we do so. However, he asks why we don’t combine *Chukas* and *Balak* (as we do in a year like this when the second day of *Shavuot* falls on *Shabbos*) instead of waiting an additional three weeks before combining *Matos* and *Masei*. In fact, he writes that in Syria the practice is to combine *Chukas* and *Balak* in such a year but that it is not the practice in most places. He answers that since the issue could not be rectified by doubling any of the *parshiyos* before *Shavuot*, we wait until the last potential double *parsha* and combine *Matos* and *Masei* as we do in most years. He adds that by doubling *Matos* and *Masei*, which is immediately before *Devarim*, it is apparent that they are being combined so that *Tisha B’Av* will fall between *Devarim* and *Voeschanan* rather than doubling *Chukas* and *Balak*, the reason for which would not be self evident.

9	ביאור הלכה או"ח סי' תכ"ח ד"ה ט"ב	9	ביאור ההלכה או"ח סי' תכ"ח ד"ה ט"ב
10	ישעיהו פרק א	10	ישעיהו פרק א
11	אשל אברהם (בוטשאטש) או"ח סי' קל"ח ד"ה בדבר טוב	11	אשל אברהם (בוטשאטש) או"ח סי' קל"ח ד"ה בדבר טוב
12	שערי רחמים שער ג אות ג	12	שערי רחמים שער ג אות ג
13	ספר מקראי קודש שער ג אות ג	13	ספר מקראי קודש שער ג אות ג
14	ספר אבודרהם סימני הפרשיות	14	ספר אבודרהם סימני הפרשיות
15	דברים ד:כ"ה-מ	15	דברים ד:כ"ה-מ
16	עי' גיטין פ"ח ע"א ורש"י שם ד"ה עולא	16	עי' גיטין פ"ח ע"א ורש"י שם ד"ה עולא
17	שלח ערוך או"ח סי' תכ"ח סעי' ד	17	שלח ערוך או"ח סי' תכ"ח סעי' ד
18	שו"ת מהרי"ט ח"ב שאלה ד	18	שו"ת מהרי"ט ח"ב שאלה ד

To sponsor the next issue (\$180) or to subscribe email ptitorah@gmail.com with the words “subscribe tti”
Yeshiva Ner Boruch-PTI is a Yeshiva for the Working Man led by Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim with shiurim on all levels

May All of Klal Yisrael Have a Good Shabbos!

Yeshiva Ner Boruch-PTI • 441 Passaic Avenue, Passaic, NJ 07055 • ptitorah@gmail.com • pti.shulcloud.com • 973-594-4774