

פ' במדבר

במדבר (1:1) The Parashah of Bamidbar is (almost) always read on the Shabbat before Shavuot. This is not by chance. On two occasions in the Torah there are "tochachot" (admonitions), namely in the Parashah of Bechukotai and in the Parashah of Ki Tavo. The Gemara in masechet (tractate) Megillah states that one reads these two Parashiot before Shavuot and before Rosh Hashanah, because these are occasions when the world is judged. One can easily understand Rosh Hashanah when everyone is judged for the following year. But the question is what has Shavuot got to do with judging? The Gemara explains that on Shavuot, the world is judged for produce of the trees. However, one can see that Parashat Bechukotai is read only on the *second* Shabbat before Shavuot, and likewise Ki Tavo is read on the second Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah. The reason for this is not to have curses read too close to these Festivals.

במדבר (1:2) A large amount of this Parashah is taken up by counting the number of people in each tribe. One might readily ask why does one need to do all this counting again. It was done when the Jews left Egypt. The counting of Jews shows that everyone is precious. Even a Jew who has been a sinner all his life, and however far he has strayed from Yiddishkeit, can always do repentance. After such repentance, one is forbidden to remind him of his past sins.

The numbering of Jews is also a hint that we must do our best to increase our numbers by performing the mitzvah of "pirya v'rivya" (being fruitful and multiplying). Sadly, during the course of the last century, so many Jews have been lost either physically under the Nazis, the Soviets and other anti-Semites, or spiritually by intermarriage and assimilation. In some countries the rate of intermarriage has reached about eighty per cent. With a few exceptions the number of Jews in the various countries in the world is decreasing, and in some cases rapidly, and the reasons for this decrease is sadly not because of Aliyah. These three, where the numbers are increasing, are Eretz Yisrael, and two Diaspora countries. Unfortunately, outside the Shomrei Mitzvot (Jews who are observant in keeping commandments) sector, the Jewish birthrate is very low. However, the religious sector in Eretz Yisrael is rapidly growing due to a high birthrate, and, as a result, the number of children receiving Torah education and the number of Yeshivot (Rabbinical Colleges) are continually on the increase. In Jerusalem the majority of the Jewish children attend religious schools. A mathematical calculation would soon show that a large birthrate can radically increase the Jewish population of Eretz Yisrael. This would also quieten those who worry about the demographic "problem" in Eretz Yisrael saying that the Arabs will soon outnumber the Jews!

One would have hoped that the Government, in order to increase the Jewish population of Eretz Yisrael would give financial inducements to increase family size. But sadly, with anti-religious parties in the Knesset, this is not the case!

במדבר (1:36) When one studies the numbers for each tribe, one can see that the tribe of Binyamin had 53,400 members. This is immediately followed, and possibly not by chance, by the tribe of Dan, who had 62,700 members. What is so striking about this is that Binyamin had *ten* sons and Dan only had *one*. Maybe one can offer the following explanation. When the Jews came from Egypt to bury Yaacov, Eisav was waiting outside the Cave of Machpelah to prevent the burial of Yaacov, claiming the plot in the Cave was reserved for him. Yaacov's children answered that it belonged to Yaacov, but the title deeds were in Egypt. They sent Naftali to run to Egypt to bring them. Everyone was prepared to wait, with one exception, namely, Chushim the son of Dan. He would not tolerate such a "bizayon" (disgrace) for his grandfather and he summarily killed Eisav. We say "Maasei avot siman labanim" (the actions of the forefathers are a symbol or sign for the children). Chushim had respect for the honour of the Torah and the Jewish people. When

eighty per cent of the Jews died during the plague of darkness because they did not wish to leave Egypt, it is very likely that the members of the tribe of Dan were not amongst these eighty per cent! Hence the large numbers in the tribe of Dan, who were all descended from Chushim.

מטה זבולן (2:7) One should note that the Torah does not say "u-mateh Zevulun." Zevulun would work in order to support Yissachar who was studying Torah. To stress the importance of people who financially support Torah institutions, the Torah does not say "u-mateh," since Zevulun was *not* "tafel" (secondary) to Yissachar. People who financially support Torah institutions are like those who spend their day in the Bet Hamidrash (House of Study). One can contrast this with the attitude of some of the leftists who demand that those who study in Torah institutions should go out and join the work force. The Government money given to Yeshivot is less than that given to Universities.

ואלה תולדות אהרן ומשה (3:1) However when studying the verses which follow, one sees that *only* the descendants of Aharon are given. The reason is that Moshe taught them Torah and anyone to whom one teaches Torah becomes like one's own child. When a great Rav who has taught thousands of pupils dies, they say at his hesped (funeral oration) that he had thousands of children.

וימת נדב ואביהוא (3:4) Whenever Nadav and Avihu are mentioned, the reason for their death is given. Even though they were the sons of the High Priest Aharon, their punishment for their sin is mentioned, and is in no way covered up. There are no protexiot (favouritism) in the Torah.

פקד את בני לוי (3:15) When studying the numbers of the various tribes, one notices the relatively low numbers for the tribe of Levi. At the beginning of Shemot when the Egyptians began to enslave the Jews, it is written "v'kaasher yaanu otam, kein yirbe vkein yifrotz" (the more the Jews were enslaved the more they increased in numbers). But the tribe of Levi was not enslaved and so their numbers increased far less than that of the other enslaved tribes.

One can also notice this phenomenon throughout the generations in the countries of the world. In countries where there was anti-Semitism, there was little or no intermarriage and assimilation. In countries with no anti-Semitism, the Jewish community disappeared. A classic example is China. There are over a billion non-Jewish Chinese but how many Jewish ones?! Apart from the now assimilated descendants of the Jews of Kaifeng, just a handful and they are probably recent immigrants. In the 1930s a Shul was built in Shanghai by an Iraqi Jew but it remained almost empty until the Mirrer Yeshiva fled there to escape from the Nazis during the Second World War; it was a case of "Hashgachah Pratit" (Divine Providence) that he built it in Shanghai where there were at the time no Jews were living there!

פקד כל בכר זכר (3:40) At first, special status was awarded to the firstborn. Later it was transferred to the Leviim. Every firstborn was to transfer his special status to one Levi. However, when it came to be done, it was found that there were 273 less Leviim. What therefore was the solution for these 273 firstborns? The solution was that they would be redeemed by each of them giving five shekalim. But who would choose which 273 would have to give this money? Protexiot or political connections was not the answer to excuse a particular firstborn from paying! It was done by a fair method, namely, by a lottery. No firstborn could therefore complain that he was deliberately picked out to pay the five shekels. One can learn a lesson from this in our everyday lives. Sometimes a person or persons have to be chosen for a pleasant or-unpleasant task. The fairest way is to do it by a lottery.

נשא את ראש בני גרשון (4:22) The previous Parashah ends by stating the responsibilities of the various Levite families. This Parashah now continues with this same theme. Just as the Kohanim (priests) have both responsibilities and rights, so do the Leviim. There are no rights without responsibilities. Unfortunately, there are people who would like to receive everything but not give. It was a former President of America who said on a related subject, "Don't ask what your country can give you; ask what you can give your country." The Leviim have fewer rights than the Kohanim, namely only the second Aliyah to the Torah, and receiving just Ma'aser Rishon (tithes); likewise, they have fewer responsibilities.

It can be seen in this Parashah that the Leviim were responsible for carrying the Mishkan (Tabernacle) from place to place. Let not one think it was like carrying a tent! The Mishkan was very heavy, so much so that it required carts and oxen to move it from place to place. The Leviim would retire at the age of fifty. Sometimes one envies a person who retires at an age earlier than other people. However, one has to look at what work he has been doing throughout his life before envying him!

וישלחו מן המחנה (5:2) Certain groups were commanded to be sent outside the camp area. Amongst these groups was a "tzarua," a person afflicted with leprosy. We have already seen that a person is afflicted with "tzara'at" as a punishment for speaking "motzi shem ra" (a form of forbidden speech). One can learn a deeper lesson from this sending of this person outside the camp area. One must break off all *verbal contact* with a person who does not observe the laws of "shemirat halashon" (permitted speech). Just by listening to such a person one is committing an aveirah (sin). Such forbidden talk "kills" three people, the speaker, the listener and the person being spoken about.

ויעשו כן בני ישראל (5:4) One should note that this verse begins with these words and then the very same verse ends with the words "ken asu benei Yisrael" (so did the children of Israel). One might well ask why the repetition? Nothing in the Torah is superfluous. From the beginning of the verse, one can learn that one must remove all verbal contact with a person who utilises forbidden speech. But indeed this is not sufficient; one wants him to stop speaking like this. One must therefore educate him in the ways of proper speech. There are many books and shiurim (lessons) on this subject today based to a large extent on the Chafetz Chaim's books on the subject, and they have been translated into many languages. There is even a specific sequence of learning a number of these laws each day.

איש או אשה כי יעשו (5:6) This verse begins in the singular "ish o isha" but it then continues "vehitvadu" in the plural (*they shall confess*). Why this change in language? An individual might sin, but who is the cause of his sinning? It could be a lot of people. These could well be his parents who did not educate him properly, his teachers at school who did not teach him Torah, his environment. Here is an example which happened in a small community in Eretz Yisrael. Two boys aged about 5 from the Mamlachti gan (State non-religious kindergarten) approached a person whilst he was at a Simchah (celebration) held outside and asked him for some food. He gave it to them and said they must make a berachah (blessing). They looked at him not understanding what he was talking about. He therefore began "Baruch" hoping they would then be able to continue with the berachah. All they could reply was "Baruch habo." Who is guilty in such a situation? The answer is not these boys but the community who has failed to give them even the most basic Torah education. It was reported that a Torah educator from the United States went into a Mamlachti (State non-religious) school in Eretz Yisrael and said he would give ten dollars to any boy who could say the Shema. Not one boy could! Or the case of a man from a Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz, who was invited by a Rabbi to a Seder. He brought as a present, a packet of chametz wafers; - he did not know they were forbidden on Pesach!

והתודו את חטאתם (5:7) The first stage in repentance is confession of one's sins. If one does not admit one's sins, how can one do repentance for them? On a national level, this is the problem with the Oslo Accords, the Road Map, and the such like. The

politicians involved will not admit that they were wrong, even though Jews are continually being murdered as a result of them.

אשתו (5:12) The fourth Aliyah of this Parashah contains both the section on the Sotah (unfaithful wife) and the Nazir (nazirite), and even though this Aliyah is extremely long, one may not split it up. What is the reason for linking these two apparently different subjects together? The Rabbis explain that anyone who sees a sotah will make a vow not to drink wine (i.e. become a nazir)! It is well known how drunkenness leads to all sorts of bad things, for example, terrible traffic accidents, sexual offences, and lightheadedness which could lead to intermarriage. Is there any wonder that the Rabbis instituted very strict laws regarding wine touched by non-Jews? Were it not for these laws, Jews and non-Jews would be getting drunk together, and one well knows what the consequences would be.

וכן (5:17) Even "afar" - dust from the ground - can have a very positive purpose, in this case making peace between a man and his wife. As can be seen from the Pirkei Avot, everything in this world has its place and is not superfluous. Usually one is prepared to pay a cleaner to get rid of the dust which one would prefer not to be in the house, but we can see from here that it also has a positive purpose. The lesson to be learned from this is never to despise any object, however insignificant it may appear, as being superfluous. Somewhere it has its use.

ומחה אל מי המרים (5:23) However, a question which immediately arises is since written on this paper was G-d's name which the Torah forbids one to erase, how can one here erase it?. However, in this case, for the sake of making family harmony, G-d allows his name to be rubbed out. One can learn from this how much more so, should a man be prepared to lower his dignity for the sake of making peace between two people.

זייר (6:3) A number of components of the grapes are mentioned in this verse. Surprisingly, each one of these components is listed as a separate one of the 613 Mitzvot. There is a slight analogy regarding the question of kashrut today, namely, that that each component listed on the wrapper in a non-supervised food product needs to be examined. With today's advanced food technology, non-kosher ingredients can be present in numerous ways in a particular food product. One must therefore take special care when buying unsupervised products from the Diaspora; *treife* (non-kosher) ingredients can be lurking there in countless ways. Reading the ingredients doesn't help. What is the origin of a flavouring ingredient, or an emulsifier or a colouring matter, and so on?

ולאמו (6:7) A nazir takes the restrictions *upon himself* just like a Kohen Gadol (high priest) and therefore the Torah imposes a lot of restrictions upon him, such as not burying his close relatives.

להם (6:23) Birchat Kohanim (the Priestly blessing) begins with the plural and then goes on with the singular, namely, a blessing is for an individual.

וישמרך (6:24) Yevarechacha is for money. v'yishmarecha is for guarding a person from bad things. One can learn from this that if one has money, one needs to be guarded from using it for the wrong purposes. Money can be used for good things, such as giving tzedakah (charity), supporting gemachim (free loan organisations), or alternatively bad things such as buying forbidden things or for gambling.

וקרבנו קערת כסף (7:13) One might well ask why repeat in detail twelve times the korbanot (sacrifices) of each of the nesi'im ("princes" - representatives of the Tribe). The reason is to show that each one brought the same present to the Mishkan. No nasi wanted to outdo the other. One can contrast this with some children's birthday parties when one child tries to outdo the other with a better present. This is compounded by the fact that the presents are often opened in front of all the children. This can cause public embarrassment to a child who has not much money to buy an expensive present, and this public opening should thus be discontinued.

פ' בהעלתך

בהעלתך את הנרת (8:2) This Parashah immediately follows the various gifts brought to the Mishkan (Tabernacle) by the nesi'im ("princes") from the different tribes. A question that could well be asked is why does this section dealing with the lighting of the Menorah (candelabra) in the Mishkan immediately follow these gifts. If one looks at the names of the tribes who brought their gifts, one sees that the tribe of Levi is absent. When Aharon saw that all the tribes except his, had brought these gifts, he felt left out of things. He was therefore told that the bringing of these gifts was a one-time thing, whereas his tribe would be lighting the Menorah daily. Even when there is no Temple, there is the Mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles each year, which commemorates the miracle of the oil of the Menorah which was found at the time of the Maccabees. From this one can learn, that even if one sometimes feels left out of something, one should not get angry or upset, but one should see if there is a reason for it.

A connected lesson could be that one should not think that learning Torah is a one-time a year occurrence connected with Shavuot. It must be an everyday thing. This is the reason that the Torah does not link Shavuot with the giving of the Torah; a Jew should receive the Torah *every day*.

העלה נרתיה (8:3) The Menorah was lit in a dark place in the Heichal (hall) -it gave light. Light is Torah, and in "dark" places one must "he'ela nairoseha," raise the light, or in other words do "kiruv" work and try and bring Torah to people who don't know about it. The reason that the vast majority of Jews who do not observe the Torah is not because they do not want to, it is because they have never been taught, they are in the category of "tinok shenishba" (a child who has been raised with no Jewish knowledge). Today there are many groups bringing people closer to Torah. Yad l'Achim has brought many tens of thousands of families to be shomrei (observers of) mitzvot in the last decades. One must not accept an answer from a person that he is "chiloni" (secular Jew). He is a Jew like every other Jew and therefore one must encourage him to observe the Mitzvot.

ושרת את אחיו (8:26) Even though the retirement age for the Leviim was fifty years old, due to the strenuous work they performed during their service in the Mishkan, this does not mean that they sat around doing nothing when they started to receive their "pensions." They assisted their fellow Leviim with their work. Likewise, one can learn from this that when one reaches pensionable age, one must not just waste the time. There are plenty of constructive things that one can do, such as- helping voluntary organisations, studying more Torah, research and writing. One can well find oneself busier during the "pensionable years" that one was beforehand!

למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב (9:7) On erev Pesach, there is the Mitzvah (commandment) to sacrifice the Korban Pesach (Paschal lamb). Certain people such as those who were ritually unclean or were far from Yerushalayim were exempt from this Mitzvah. They didn't say "jolly good, one less Mitzvah to keep!" They went to Moshe and begged to be able to keep it. G-d then gave them a further opportunity one month after Pesach to be able to observe it. Likewise, if for some reason, one might find oneself exempt from a Mitzvah, one should try and find a way to keep it. For example, only four cornered garments require Tzitzit. In today's style of garments, one does not have garments with four corners and thus would be exempt from keeping the Mitzvah of Tzitzit throughout one's life. One therefore makes an under garment with four comers in order to be able to be able to keep this Mitzvah.

כסה הענן (9:15) These were the clouds which gave Divine protection to the Jewish people in the wilderness. Today, in these hard times, one must always remember the Divine protection one has in Eretz Yisrael. When a non-Jewish expert on war studies was explaining the victories in various wars in the world, he was asked about the Six Day War. He answered that he could not explain Israel's victory logically and he concluded that there was something from above. During the "Scud War," thirty-nine Scud missiles fell on Eretz Yisrael and as a result there could easily have been thousands of casualties; in fact they were almost non-existent.

לא אלך כי אם אל ארצי ואל מולדתי (10:30) Moshe begged of his father-in-law Yitro, who

originally came from Midyan, to accompany them to Eretz Yisrael, but he answered him that he wanted to go to his country and his birth place. Unfortunately, throughout the generations this is not an isolated incident. One heard the cry, Spain is our moledet (homeland) - then came the Inquisition. At a later date, Germany is our moledet - then came the Holocaust.

ויהי העם כמתאננים (11:1) Often when a person comes on Aliyah, problems such as Israeli bureaucracy arises, and this causes one to say "let us go back to Chutz La'aretz" (Diaspora). The answer is that one has to be patient and find ways to overcome these problems.

והאספסוף אשר בקרבנו (11:4) It only needs a small group of people to stir up trouble with a nation. It was only a few thousand who were responsible for the golden calf. Likewise there are unfortunately today in Eretz Yisrael certain groups, although usually very small in number, who make plenty of trouble with their pronouncements and who photograph every house built in Yehudah and Shomron and publicise these facts and photographs to the whole world. At the beginning of the 21st century, there was a small group of people who brought out what they called the "Geneva Accord." Its contents included throwing out 100,000 Jews from their houses in Eretz Yisrael (which in itself is a war crime), but in contrast, not a single Arab was to be transferred!

זכרנו את הדגה אשר נאכל במצרים חנם (11:5) The Jews who came out of Egypt suddenly remembered, or more accurately imagined, the "gefillte fish" which they ate in Egypt. All the "black" of Egypt was forgotten, just as one finds during the "birth pains" in the Aliyah process. One only remembers the good things of Chutz La'aretz. One forgets all the anti-Semitism, the problems in getting kosher food, in Shabbat observance when the day of the country's rest is Sunday, finding Jewish schools for the children and so on.

אספה לי שבעים איש (11:16) But one might easily ask that there were far more than seventy suitable people for the first Sanhedrin; the answer is that there were Yeshivot (Rabbinical Colleges) in Egypt, established by Yehudah, whom Yaacov had sent down to Egypt especially for that purpose. These seventy were not chosen by protexia (favouritism), or by which political party they belonged to, or by a fictitious michraz (tender), but by a lottery.

לא יום אחד (11:19) Meat is nice one day, two days, but not every day. The enormous buffet meals served at hotels are nice for a few days, but after that one wants to return to just toast and cheese for breakfast!

ותדבר מרים (12:1) She spoke "motzi shem ra" (a form of forbidden speech) about Moshe and was punished by "tzara'at" (leprosy). The Chafetz Chaim illustrates the dangers of forbidden speech by the parable of a man who left home to earn money. By hard work he earned a lot of money which he put in a sack. On his way home, a hole developed in the sack and the money fell out one coin after another. Likewise, we work hard to accumulate Mitzvot but we can easily lose them one by one every time we use forbidden speech.

קל נא רפא נא לה (12:13) This was a very short prayer offered up by Moshe but it was with great kavanah (positive concentration). It's not the length of the prayer but how it is said. The strength of prayer is tremendous. Rav Yerucham Levovitz, the Mashgiach (spiritual guide) of Mirrer Yeshivah, related how the Communists searched for bachurei Yeshiva (Rabbinical College students) who avoided the Russian army. These bachurim went to the Shul and started praying with great kavanah. The authorities who were searching everywhere for them passed by the Shul they were praying in without even going in it.

והעם לא נסע עד האסף מרים (12:16) The whole nation waited seven days for Miryam. The reason was that eighty years earlier she risked her life by guarding Moshe when he was hidden in the river. One can learn from this that good deeds must never be forgotten irrespective of how much time (in this case eighty years!) has passed. Good must repaid by good, and certainly not forgotten.

פ' שלח-לך

שלח לך אנשים (13:2) The Parashah begins when the Jews had already reached the borders of Eretz Yisrael. Had the "meraglim" (spies) acted properly, the Jews could have immediately entered Eretz Yisrael and conquered it. This Parashah would possibly have then been the last Parashah of the Torah! But sadly this was not the case.

One might well ask why the Parashah of the "meraglim" follows immediately after the incident of Miryam speaking "motzi shem ra" (a form of forbidden speech) about Moshe? From that incident, all the people saw what can happen when one speaks "motzi shem ra," and accordingly they could have learned a lesson from it. From everything in life, one can learn a lesson, and as a result one should try and do self-improvement. Likewise, it should also have been in this case, but it was not! Just as "Am Yisrael" (the Jewish people) is holy and has Shabbat each week, Eretz Yisrael is holy and has "Shabbat Ha'aretz" (Sabbatical year) every seventh year. Just as one must not speak "motzi shem ra" about a fellow Jew, one must not speak "motzi shem ra" about Eretz Yisrael.

איש אחד למטה אבתיו (13:2) Every tribe sent a spy. Eretz Yisrael belongs to every Jew, (and it is not the private possession of the leftists to do as they like with!!) and they should therefore take part in the conquering of the land, unless (under certain circumstances) they are involved in Torah study, as the tribe of Levi was, and this is then their contribution to conquering the land. Without Torah, Eretz Yisrael would be like the countries of the non-Jews.

כלם אנשים ראשי בני ישראל המה (13:3) The people chosen to be spies were not nonentities, but they were important people. They should therefore have known better than to give a bad report. The more important a person, the greater is his responsibility.

הטובה הוא אם רעה (13:19) Even in things which may seem bad, one needs to look for the good points. Likewise, with a person, one must look for his good points, and even the minutest amount of good in a bad person is never nullified amongst all his "aveirot" (sins). Rav Chaim Sonnenfeld learned from the verse "ure'ai betuv Yerushalayim" that one should look for all the good things in Yerushalayim. Of course there are bad things in Eretz Yisrael. In fact what the meraglim said was the truth. But they acted without "imun" (faith). It has been suggested that perhaps Moshe was also partly to blame, since he used the word "ra'ah" (bad), namely, he put the idea in the spies' mind that there could be bad in Eretz Yisrael. One can learn from this that one must be careful in every word of one's speech.

ויבא עד חברון (13:22) One should notice here the use of the singular; Calev went alone to Hevron. He could already see from the conversations of the meraglim that they were going to give a bad report of Eretz Yisrael. They did not care about Hevron, since they felt that it did not belong to the Jews, but instead it belonged to the giants, or in today's language to the Hamas. Calev therefore went to pray at "Kivrei Avot" (the tombs of the Patriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah) so that he should not be influenced by the other meraglim. One can unfortunately see today that even highly respectable people are influenced by those who are against "Eretz Yisrael I'Am Yisrael." (for the Jewish people).

אפס כי עז העם (13:28) One might try and argue that this report was a majority report, namely 10 against 2. Is not this enough to act on? Is it not democracy?!! We must remember that our rights to Eretz Yisrael are not from the historical portions of the Tanach (Bible), not from the United Nations and not from our conquest of the land, but *only and solely* from the promise of G-d to give Eretz Yisrael *only and solely* to the Jewish people. Thus even if the Knesset, the Supreme Court, and the popular votes decide to give portions of Eretz Yisrael away to the non-Jews, it is of no effect. One cannot vote against G-d.

עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב והחתי והיבוסי (13:29) Or in today's language there's PLO, Fatah, Hamas, Tanzin, and so on, in Yehudah and Shomron. What will America say? What will the UN say? What will Europe say if we settle land which in their estimation is not ours? "Get out immediately, there is a "Road Map!!"

עלה נעלה וירשנו (13:30) But despite all these difficulties Calev said that we can conquer the land and we can beat all our enemies. This is likewise today. In the War of Independence, we could have conquered all of Yehudah and Shomron. Ben-Gurion

wanted to, but the Cabinet rejected it by just one vote, to which Ben-Gurion answered that it would be "bechi ledorot" (weeping for generations) not to conquer these areas. In the Six Day War we did conquer all of Yehudah and Shomron and today there could be two million Jews there. But instead we have to fight to build every house there, and there are those in the left who go around photographing every house being built and publicising it to the world. If it were not for those Jews who advocated "returning" Yehudah and Shomron, and classing it as occupied territory, it is possible that the non-Jews would have accepted them as part of the State of Israel, in the same way as they accepted the areas captured in the War of Independence which were beyond the 1947 partition lines. If Jews talk about "returning" these areas, what can one expect from the non-Jews?! Sadly, some of the left are the ten meraglim of today.

ונהי בעינינו כהגבים (13:33) We must not consider ourselves small in the eyes of others; we must not consider ourselves to be an insignificant nation and be frightened of the world. We can learn from Micronesia; it is a very tiny country which in the past was alone in voting for Israel. It did not worry about the reactions of the Arabs or the Moslems.

ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא (14:1) One can see from the Gemara that this was the night of Tisha b'Av. G-d said that the Jewish nation cried that night for nothing, and he will therefore give them something to cry for throughout the generations. It has indeed become a day of misfortune for the Jewish people. But one should note that the *first* bad thing which occurred on Tisha b'Av was caused by *ourselves*. It was the Jews who picked this date!

אך בה' אל תמרדו (14:9) Even in time of difficulties one must keep one's faith in G-d. One can contrast this with the left that as soon as there are problems, they want to give away parts of Eretz Yisrael. Instead of calling this week's Parashah "ShelAch Lecha", they seem to call it "ShalEch Lecha" – namely, get out of Eretz Yisrael!!

ארבעים שנה (14:33) The punishment for not wanting Eretz Yisrael was wandering in the desert for 40 years. G-d said to the Jewish nation that since *you* didn't want Eretz Yisrael, *you* will not get it, and you will die in the wilderness. One might ask why the fourth Aliyah in this Parashah does not end with the end of the incident of the "meraglim"? It's a logical break. Instead the first verses of the next section are part of this very same Aliyah. Significantly this new paragraph begins "ki tavo el ha'aretz" (when you come to the land of Israel). One can learn from this that although that generation rejected Eretz Yisrael, it still belongs to the Jewish people and their children will go in and conquer it. This is stressed by it being a part of this same Aliyah. Furthermore, a few verses further on, is the Mitzvah of Terumah, one of the Mitzvot Hateluim Ba'aretz (a commandment applicable specifically to the Land of Israel), and the use of the expression "bevoachem el ha'aretz" (when you come to the Land of Israel). One should therefore today not despair when one hears "decisions" of the Government to give away parts of Eretz Yisrael. Our children will certainly have the entire Eretz Yisrael.

וכי תשגו (15:22) The Torah then explains what to do when one breaks one of the Mitzvot in the Torah. We are not "malachei hasharet" (angels) and we can easily do things "beshogeg" (by accident). The Torah therefore gives us the remedy for atonement. We must always remember that we can, and indeed must, do atonement every day throughout the year and not wait for Yom Kippur.

מקשש עצים ביום השבת (15:32) Once again the Torah writes about the importance of Shabbat. The man concerned was first warned. He could not therefore say that he did not know that he was breaking Shabbat, but he took no notice of the warning. *Only then* was he punished. The lesson is that there is no punishment without warning.

ועשו להם ציצת (15:38) One wears a garment with Tzitzit all day long and when one undresses at night one sees the garment and it is a reminder to observe all the Mitzvot of the Torah.

אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים (15:41) The Parashah ends with the command to remember every day and night "Yetziat Mizraim" (going out of Egypt). This shows how G-d proved with all his nisim (miracles), makot (plagues) and kri'at yam suf (splitting of the Red Sea), his greatness before all the Jewish people. It is easy to say something and not give any proof, but G-d proved himself before the Jewish people and we must accordingly have "imun" (faith) in the Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

פ' קרח

ויקה קרח (16:1) The first half of this Parashah shows what can occur when there is a "machloket" (dispute) in a community. The first word of the Parashah "vayikach" seems a little difficult to understand. One might well ask, what did Korach *take*? However, Onkelus translates it "veitpaleg", namely, Korach caused a machloket in the community. There is also a connection with the last Parashah; there the ten "meraglim" (spies) stirred up machloket in their community with their bad report.

There is a joke, although in truth it is not such a joke, about a Shul which was full of "amei ha'aretz" (ignoramuses), and it occurred when the first person was called up to the Torah. When the Ba'al Koreh (person reading the Torah) began reading, he called out "the Sefer Torah is Possul (unfit) - you don't spell Korach, kuf reish chet" and he took out a Haggadah and showed them the word "korech"!! Ironically, Korach is synonymous with division, whereas "korech" is precisely the opposite, a joining together of the Matzah. Maror and the Korban Pesach (Pascal lamb).

Korach was a person who would twist Halachah (Jewish law) to make it seem grotesque. If one wants to use "laitzanut" (clownery), one can prove almost anything in Halachah. Someone once "proved!!" using Halachah that one is forbidden to drink water on Purim!! We all know how concerned the Torah is to protect the widow, and there are numerous Mitzvot in the Torah on this subject. Yet despite all this, Korach related the "story" of a widow "proving" how cruel the Torah was to this widow! Sadly, sometimes one sees secular Court decisions which arrive at the most grotesque conclusions against the Halachah such as "proving" that one may not advertise on the radio that people should read Tehillim (Psalms), or the forbidding of the construction of a "Yad l'Achim" building in Rehovot, even though the Local Council (including the votes of the Meretz party) had approved the building plans!

ודתן ואבירם (16:1) One can always find a few trouble makers to join in stirring up trouble. In a number of Parashiot such a group is mentioned, namely, the "eirev rav" (group who create problems) who left Egypt, the group who clamoured for the golden calf, the "asafsuf" (mixed multitude), and so on. It was only a small group who began by stirring up people to transfer the Jews out of Yehudah and Shomron, whilst at the same time the very same people publicly declared the transfer of Arabs to be a "war-crime" and a "crime against humanity"!

ואון בן פלת (16:1) He was another potential ally of Korach, but as can be seen, he soon dropped out. The Gemara explains that he could thank his wife for this. She explained to him that whatever happens, he would lose by it. If Moshe wins, you will be out of power, and if Korach wins, he will no longer be interested in you. One can compare this today with people who support a particular candidate for Prime Minister. If he succeeds in the election, he is very likely afterwards to turn his back on those who voted him into power, and moreover sometimes does not even listen to the members of his own Party on this matter.

ומדוע תתנשא על קהל ה' (16:3) Korach argued that there is such a thing as democracy. However, one must realise that although democracy is important, the Torah is above it. If there is a conflict today between the Knesset and the Courts on the one hand, and the Torah on the other, it is the Torah which needs to take precedence.

קרח וכל עדתו (16:6) It is written in the Pirkei Avot, that the arguments between Hillel and Shammai will endure for ever since they were made for a praiseworthy purpose, but those between Korach and his supporters will not endure. One immediately asks that surely it should say Korach and Moshe, and not Korach and his supporters. The answer is that with a wicked group, they also argue just as much among themselves!

The Pirkei Avot praises the arguments between Hillel and Shammai. Yet there is a custom to fast on 9 Adar because of the arguments between Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai. One might well ask how to explain this apparent contradiction. In answer,

one should note that in the latter case one says *Bet Hillel* and *Bet Shamrnai*. Whereas Hillel and Shamrnai argued "leshem Shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven), this was not the case with their respective pupils, where the arguments became personal. One can learn from this the important lesson that one must be careful that ideological arguments do not become personal. When Rav Kook was asked to give a letter of recommendation to a doctor to assist a member of the Neturai Karta, he immediately agreed, saying that his arguments with him were limited to ideology. A person who held a very high position in the Israeli army, would sometimes have different opinions with others at their regular meetings. He would say that even though we have different opinions we remain friends.

ואהרן מה הוא כי תלונו עליו (16:11) Moshe did not worry about his *own* honour; he did not say that you complain "aleinu" (against us - Moshe and Aharon), but "alav" (against Aharon). Moshe was only concerned for the feelings of others. This is the sign of a good leader.

וישלה משה (16:12) From this we can learn that one should always try and resolve an argument, and it goes without say that one must not try and inflame even more the arguments. It is related that the Vilna Gaon once passed by one of his students and did not greet him as he usually did. The student felt upset and as soon as the Gaon heard about this, he stopped his learning and searched the whole Yeshivah (Rabbinical College) for the student and on finding him, explained that he had not noticed him, and he then blessed him for a long life. The avoiding of arguments is so important that one may even talk untruths for this purpose. This can be seen from a number of incidents in the Torah.

לא המור אחד מהם נשאתי (16:15) Moshe, even though he was the leader, took nothing for himself, no perks whatsoever. Possibly he made this statement because some of his detractors were accusing him of taking public property for his own use. One can contrast Moshe's conduct with some members of the Knesset and Government Ministers who take perks after perks. There is always money in the public kitty for this, but for the poor people, the public purse is empty! Even past Members of the Knesset receive for the rest of their lives the payment of their telephone bills.

הבדלו מתוך העדה הזאת (16:21) Only after *everything else* had failed, did Moshe have to take action against Korach's group. One can learn from this that one should not be quick in taking action against someone. One should first do everything to try and resolve the matter.

ואת כל הרכוש (16:32) Korach was one of the few people who took his possessions with him when he died! The story is told of a rich miser who refused to give any charity during his lifetime. His Rabbi explained to him that he would thus end up with Korach when he died. However, everyone else knows that one cannot take any of one's physical possession with them when they die, however high one's bank balance might have been! One should therefore do good deeds with one's money during one's lifetime, namely one should give tzedakah (charity), support Yeshivot (Rabbinical Colleges), widows and orphans. One will then be credited with these Mitzvot in the Next World.

ושמרתם את משמרת הקדש (18:5) There is the Mitzvah to have guard duty in the Mishkan. The purpose of this guard duty was not to guard against thieves, but for the sake of the holiness of the site. One can learn from this how one must do "guard duty" over holy places. The Shul and the Bet Hamidrash (study hall) must be treated with proper respect. It should be left clean and tidy. The chairs should be arranged orderly. The Chumashim (Pentateuchs) and Siddurim (Prayer Books) should not be left all over the tables, but be returned to the bookshelves. If there is a library there, the users of books must return them after they have finished with them, and not expect the Shul officials to be the users' servants.

פ' חוקת

זאת חקת התורה (19:2) There are many Mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah where one can easily be able to understand the reason for such Mitzvot. There are Mitzvot, where with some difficulty, one can understand the reason. However, there is one Mitzvah in the Torah, the Mitzvah of the "para adumah" (red heifer) where one cannot even begin to understand the reason. This Mitzvah is given at the beginning of this Parashah. It is thus called a "Chok" (statute) and it is an enigma! The ashes of the para adumah spiritually clean a person who has been in contact with the dead, but during its preparation, those involved become spiritually unclean temporarily! There are numerous difficult details involved in the preparation of the ashes of the para adumah, (there is a whole masechet (tractate) called Parah containing these details), yet, despite not at all understanding this Mitzvah, all these details were meticulously carried out. One can learn an important lesson from this. Although one cannot understand the reasoning of G-d, yet we must accept with love everything G-d does or commands us to do. Can we understand the Holocaust in which six million Jews were brutally murdered? Maybe in five hundred years' time, in the light of subsequent history, we may begin to understand it.

The Gemara relates the incident with Dana ben Netina, a non-Jew from Ashkelon. In observing the commandment of honour to his father, he lost a lot of money. He was rewarded with a para adumah being born in his herd, and the Rabbis were prepared to pay an enormous sum for it. One might well ask why he wasn't rewarded with his finding buried treasure? The answer is to show that whereas a non-Jew was prepared to lose money for a Mitzvah which one can easily understand, namely honour to parents, the Rabbis were prepared to give an enormous sum of money for a Mitzvah one could not understand at all, namely the para adumah.

אפר הפרה (19:9) Normally no-one wants ashes in their house since they dirty the house! One is therefore prepared to pay a cleaner to remove all such ashes from one's house. However, in this case these ashes, spiritually cleanse a person. Everything in this world has its place. G-d did not put anything in this world without a purpose.

One might mention that the non-Jews are today frightened that we might find a para adumah; this might mean that we would use the entire Temple Mount to rebuild the Temple. One can contrast this, that *immediately* after the Six Day War, the non-Jews were quite prepared for us to rebuild the Temple; there was even a rumour that we had ordered "Portland Stone" for this purpose. Who is guilty for the change in the attitude of the non-Jews in this matter? We are guilty by denying Jews our rights to this Holy site. A few years ago, when it was reported that some non-red hairs were found on a suspected para adumah, thus disqualifying it, the non-Jews breathed a sigh of relief!!

ותמת שם מרים (20:1) Immediately after the death of Miryam, it was reported that there was no water. One might well ask what is the connection between these two incidents? Whilst Miryam was alive, there was a well which provided water for the Jewish people. The reason was that when Moshe was a baby and had to be hidden in the river, Miryam stood by, at risk to her life, to keep watch over him. There is a principle "mida k'neged mida" (measure for measure). Because Miryam stood by the *water* to guard Moshe, the Jewish people were rewarded with a *water* supply all the time Miryam was alive. This is another example of "hakarot hatov" (recognition of good), never forgetting a good deed which a person has done, however much time as passed since this good deed was performed. Occasionally even a complete "rasha" (wicked person) remembers this. There was a case of a Nazi who was about to kill a Jew, when he suddenly remembered that that Jew's father had once done him a good deed and therefore he did not kill him.

ולו גוענו (20:3) When there was a shortage of water, the people asked "v'lu gavanu" (would that we had perished). When a situation is difficult, one must not despair, but must look for solutions. Life must go on even after tragedies. There is no pretending that it is not hard, but one must still make the effort.

ויך את הסלע במטהו (20:11) This act of Moshe's was just a momentary loss of self-control. Even Moshe was human and one can readily see how much he had to put up with, with the Jewish people. One might therefore reasonably ask why then did he have such a severe punishment as not being able to enter Eretz Yisrael? Surely one could overlook a single lapse like this? The answer is NO! A leader must have a higher standard of behaviour than the ordinary man in the street. If he does not live up to this standard, he must be punished more severely. He must be an example to his people. What is more, G-d continually reminded Moshe of this lapse in his conduct. One can contrast this with all the corruption which goes on all the time with leaders and high officials; grossly inflated salaries whilst numerous families are living below the poverty line. It is the Knesset members themselves who vote themselves higher salaries, and not some independent body. Even their "extras" are more than many families have to live on. A number of years ago there had to be the installation of a new electronic voting system in the Knesset because of double voting by at least one Knesset member. Surely this should have been paid for by the members of the Knesset out of their own pockets, since it was their fault that such a system of voting was necessary, but it would seem that it was the tax payers who paid for it

ותשת העדה ובעירם (20:11) One should note the order. First give drink to the people and *then* to the animals. With food however it is the other way round, “v'natati aisev b'sadcha livhemtecha v'achalta” (and I will give grass in your field for your cattle, and you shall eat). Possibly a reason for this difference is that one can easily die by not drinking and saving human life comes before saving an animal. With food, however, one can wait a few more minutes and so prevent "tzar" (pain) to one's animals. According to the halachah, one is even forbidden to eat until one has fed one's animals.

לא תביאו את הקהל הזה אל הארץ (20:12) One might well ask why specifically was the punishment which Moshe received, not to enter Eretz Yisrael? Let us recall his instructions to the meraglim (spies). “Is the land good or bad?” Moshe put inappropriate words into the mouth of the meraglim by suggesting that something could be bad with Eretz Yisrael, and thus he was accordingly punished by not being allowed to enter this "bad" country. Bad ideas can spread like a plague, such as giving autonomy to a hostile element. Furthermore, this could well result in Jews not being allowed to live in certain parts of Eretz Yisrael.

נעברה נא בארץ (20:17) Moshe made a request to Edom to allow the Jewish people to pass through their territory. Likewise, towards the end of the Parashah, a similar request was made to Sichon. Both refused the request. One can easily understand their refusal. Despite promises not to take food or fruit from the fields, how can one control millions of people including numerous children and cattle?! They would surely take such food from the fields and then the owners of the fields would rightly complain to their king for allowing them to pass through the country. It seems that the problem is the way they answered the request. Instead of explaining the difficulties in a polite way, they answered the request with threats. One can learn an important lesson from this. Sometimes one has to say "no" to a request. One must then know how to say "no" in a way that the other side will understand.

וימת אהרן שם (20:28) Even the High Priest cannot live forever. We must always remember that this world is just a corridor to Olam Haba (World to Come), and we must use the opportunity whilst on earth to earn our place in the World to Come.

ויבכו את אהרן ... כל בית ישראל (20:29) *Everyone* cried when Aharon died. He was a man who would always go out and make peace between arguing people; he would run from one to the other until he succeeded in making peace. His death was therefore a serious loss to the people. One can learn an important lesson from this, namely, what the death of an important man can have on the general population.

פ' בלק

וירא בלק (22:2) The name of the Parashah is "Balak" and one might well immediately ask why one should name a Parashah after such an anti-Semite as Balak?! To every man, there can be attributed some praise and Balak is no exception. To Balak's "credit!" we can say that he *openly* claimed to be anti-Semitic. This fact is especially understandable in the world we are living in today. How often does one hear the cry, "some of my best friends are Jews!"

After the Holocaust, it was not respectable to be openly anti-Semitic. It had to be done in a roundabout way. Along came along the establishment of the State of Israel and the anti-Semites of the world (and sadly they are- numerous) have their answer that they are not anti-Semitic, but just anti-Zionist or anti-Israel. They just publicise the "persecution(!)" of the Arabs by Israel (conveniently forgetting the real persecution of the Jews in Arab States) and you then have a method to be anti-Semitic in a "respectable" manner! One has to just look how this has been done in practice. There are more resolutions of condemnation of the State of Israel by the United Nations than of any other of the nearly two hundred members. Very few countries indeed, will vote against such a resolution; the most they will do is to abstain and even this is done by a limited number of members. How many resolutions of condemnation have been made against the Arab repressive dictatorships?! The United Nations' Court has even judged the "security fence," conveniently forgetting why it is being built!

Another form of disguised anti-Semitism is to attack the "cruel, barbaric(!)" method of killing animals, namely Shechitah (ritual slaughter). This was one of the first decrees by the Nazis when they came to power. Was the reason the love of animals or the hate of Jews?! There are number of democratic countries in Europe who have outlawed Shechitah. This question is also periodically being debated in Britain. There is a mass of medical and other scientific evidence showing that Shechitah is the most humane method of killing an animal, but his is ignored for obvious reasons.

During the last decades, Brit Mila (ritual circumcision) has come under attack. It is mutilating an indefensible young child! The fact that many non-Jews have their sons circumcised, including the British Royal Family who had a Mohel (Jewish man who does ritual circumcisions) to do it and not a doctor, is of course conveniently not mentioned.

Jews have been excluded from membership of golf clubs in Britain, under the pretense that membership is by invitation and "it happens" that no Jews have been invited to be members. All this resulted in Jews opening their own golf clubs, where needless to add, non-Jews were not excluded.

From all this one can see that there are numerous forms of disguised anti-Semitism in the world. Have the Rabbis not said that "Eisav hates Yaacov"? Unlike all these disguised forms which are far more reprehensible than open anti-Semitism, Balak openly admitted that he was an anti-Semite and maybe this is the reason that he was rewarded by having a Parashah named after him.

ויאמר מואב אל זקני מדין (22:4) Moav and Midyan were traditional enemies of each other. One might therefore ask why then the partnership here? They joined forces to act against the Jews. One just has to look at the countries in the United Nations who hate each other but when a resolution comes up to condemn the State of Israel, there is suddenly unity between them. Sadly, we see the unity of certain parties in the Knesset who usually do not agree with each other, voting together on anti-religious matters.

וישלח מלאכים אל בלעם (22:5) Bilam was a non-Jewish prophet. One might well ask why G-d made non-Jewish prophets. The reason is that the non-Jews will not be able to say that the reason that they did not act differently was, that unlike the Jews who were given prophets, they were not afforded these facilities.

There were three advisors to Pharaoh - Yitro, Iyov and Bilam. When Pharaoh planned to kill the Jewish baby boys, he asked these three advisors on this matter.

Yitro ran away, lyov said nothing and as a result was punished with afflictions. From this one can learn, that when something is wrong one must not remain silent. How many members of the Knesset who disagree with something fundamental proposed by a Prime Minister, are not opening their mouths; their Volvo's are more important! However, Bilam said to Pharaoh that he agreed and Pharaoh accepted his advice.

ויחבש את אתנו (22:21) Bilam got up early in the morning and saddled his own ass. He did not even ask one of his servants to do so as was the norm, because he was so keen to act. We see a similar act performed by Avraham when he went to offer up Yitzchak. But the comparison stops at this. Avraham was going to do a positive act, but Bilam was going to do the opposite. One can see from this that one can do the *same actions* but for completely different motives. There is no such a thing as a neutral action. Even, for example, eating of food; one can eat in order to live and to perform Mitzvot, or alternatively for purely gluttonous purposes.

ויאמר בלעם לאתון (22:29) There are some people who spend their time talking to people who act like asses! It goes without say that if by talking to them, one is able to bring them closer to observing Torah and Mitzvot (commandments), or to help them in some way, one must of course do so. However, just a meaningless conversation to pass the time of day - no! Talking to such people can give them respectability which they do not deserve. All the conversations between Israeli leaders and Arab terrorist leaders, just gives the latter world respectability, and worse still, how many Jewish graves are there as a result of this. There is no shortage of Talmidei Chachomim (Rabbinical scholars) to whom one can speak and hence learn from their knowledge or way of life.

ולא קסם בישראל (23:23) All forms of magic, sorcery and the suchlike are just forms of avodah zarah (idol worship). There are in fact Halachic (religious law) discussions whether it is permitted to have a conjurer at a children's party. On all accounts, the conjurer must before his show, tell the audience that he is not doing magic, but is acting by a sleight of hand.

מה טבו אהליך יעקב (24:5) One may readily ask what made Bilam., who came to curse the Jewish people, suddenly do an about turn and give them this great blessing, which opens the morning service on entering the Shul. He saw that every Jew was in his *own* tent and that no door opened into the tent of another Jewish family. Every family had its own privacy. Many countries have on their statute books laws regarding the right to privacy. But are they in practice observed? The answer is sadly, NO! One is constantly reading about the tapping of telephones, photographing of people with hidden cameras and so on. Several decades ago, intelligence agents would get themselves invited on a regular basis to families for Shabbat, would listen in on the conversations and later come and arrest these people as members of a "machteret" (underground). There is also the case of a woman who came to a Shiva, with a hidden tape recorder strapped on her body. Had Bilam known of these cases, he probably would not have been so eager to utter these famous words!

Another explanation of these words was that Bilam saw that the Jews were sitting in their tents learning Torah and not wasting their time with all sorts of "tiflut" (stupidities). One must remember that time is valuable and once lost, can never be replaced. One Yom Kippur, the Vilna Gaon cried bitterly because he had wasted 6 minutes throughout the course of the year! How many minutes, or even hours do we waste *every* day throughout the year?! Even when one has to travel on a bus, one should take a book or an electronic device and use the time profitably.

וידע דעת עליון (24:16) The Gemara explains how Bilam had the ability to know when G-d was angry with the Jewish people, and he therefore planned that at that instant he would curse the Jewish people. Therefore G-d did not get angry whilst Bilam was a prophet. From this we can see that however bad a situation may appear, we have the Divine protection and we for our part must act according to the Torah.

פ' פינחס

פינחס בן אלעזר (25:11) There are unfortunately many people in this world who can stand by idly when evil is being done all around them. There are however, the few who know that they have to act, and Pinchas was one of them. He could not just stand by and watch a Chilul HaShem (desecration of G-d's name) and a "bizayon" (disgrace), and he accordingly acted. He was greatly rewarded by G-d for this by the "kehunah" (priesthood) being awarded to him and his descendants. Even though he was born *before* Elazar was made a Kohen (priest) and therefore, under normal circumstances, he did not qualify for the kehunah, but because of his actions was made a kohen.

Had Pinchas asked a "sha'ailah," (question) whether according to the letter of the law he should act as he did, he would have been given a negative answer. Although law and order must be respected, otherwise there would be anarchy, there are *rare* occasions when one may have to take the law into one's own hands. Examples of this which have occurred in our recent history in the State of Israel are, the capture of Eichmann from Argentina, the kidnapping of Vanunu from Italy, the sending of agents after the Munich massacres to various locations in Europe to kill the terrorists. All these are examples of the infringement of the sovereignty of another country, and hence taking the law into one's own hands, but they are exceptional.

את בריתי שלום (25:12) If one looks carefully at the letter "vav," of the word "shalom", one will see that there is a break in this letter. One can learn from this how "shalom" (peace) can be defective. It is usually easy for a country to sign a "peace agreement" with a country when they want to get something from that country. But once they have got what they wanted, they can conveniently forget their commitments to the agreement; namely, the "peace" is defective. Hence the break in the letter "vav." Egypt signed such an agreement with Israel and received Sinai, got the transfer of Jews from the Yamit area, and so on. But does she keep her part of the agreement. How often, for example, has the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel been "withdrawn," or how much anti-Israel incitement goes on in Egypt. Likewise have the Arabs adhered to the Oslo agreement?

צרור את המדינים (25:17) According to the Midrash, this is the source of the principle "habo l'horgecha, hashkem l'horgo." If a person comes to kill you, don't wait; do a preventive strike and kill him first.

חנוך משפחת החנכי (26:5) The second Aliyah of this Parashah goes through all the tribes, and lists which families came from the grandsons of Yaacov. *The first* name mentioned is "Chanoch." This could be a hint to the fact that "Chinuch" (education) must precede everything. Before Yaacov and his family went down to Egypt, Yaacov sent Yehudah to set up a Torah framework, which obviously included opening institutes for Chinuch. One of the first sets of laws brought by the Rambam in his Mishneh Torah are the laws of "Talmud Torah" (Study of Torah). The Gemara gives severe penalties on cities which do not set up places for Chinuch for the children.

ובני קרח לא מתו (26:11) Although Korach was wicked, his sons did not follow in his path and so they were not punished together with Korach and his followers. Sometimes wicked people have righteous sons (and sadly, sometimes the opposite). There are even some Tehillim (Psalms) which were written by the sons of Korach - "lamnatzeach livnei Korach mizmor" (for the chief musician, a Psalm of the sons of Korach). Even the sons of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Barak. Children from non-observant families should not say that their families are not religious and so they are not!

לאזני משפחת האזני (26:16) In another place in the Torah, the same person is called

"etzbon." Here we have a hint to the laws of "Shemirat halashon" (laws of permitted speech); "ozen" is an ear and "etzba" a finger. When one hears a person using forbidden speech, one must put one's fingers to block up one's ears and thus not hear the forbidden speech.

לאלה תחלק הארץ (26:53) The Torah here gives the criteria for the division of Eretz Yisrael between the various tribes. The area to be received was to be done according to the numerical size of each tribe. The location of their land in Eretz Yisrael was to be determined by lottery. There were no protexiot (favoritism). It was done in the fairest way possible, namely by lottery.

ויקרב משה את משפטן לפני ה' (27:5) The five daughters of Tzovchod, (who had no brother) came to Moshe to ask about the inheritance of their father who had died. Moshe, even though he had learned the entire Torah, namely both the Written and the Oral Law, did not know the answer and was not ashamed to go and ask G-d to teach him the laws of inheritance, How much more so should an ordinary person admit his lack of knowledge and ask a person more knowledgeable than him to teach him. How often have we heard comments, such as, "I know enough Torah." "I am an expert in Torah." "I can teach the Rabbis things." "I know Siddur (prayer book) backwards" - that is probably how he does know it!

ואל בני ישראל תדבר לאמר (27:8) In Jewish law, (in contrast to many non-Jewish countries), a person cannot disinherit his family and leave his money elsewhere. One has responsibilities towards one's family, even after one dies.

עלה אל ה' העברים (27:12) Once again G-d reminds Moshe of his punishment, thus stressing the need for a leader to have a higher standard of behaviour than an ordinary citizen. One can immediately see here that Moshe accepted his punishment. He did not say that his successor did not interest him. On the contrary, he did the maximum to ensure a smooth transition. One can contrast this with people who have been dismissed from their jobs (even though they have done nothing wrong themselves) but then go out to make many problems for their former employers.

את קרבני לחמי (28:2) The last part of this Parashah deals with the public daily, Shabbat and Festival sacrifices offered in the Mishkan (Tabernacle), and at a later date in the Temple. This Parashah of Pinchas is *always* read either on the Shabbat before or after the fast of shiva asar b'Tammuz (17 Tammuz), which commemorates amongst other things, the day that the daily sacrifices in the Temple were discontinued. It also begins the period of the "Three Weeks" culminating with Tisha b'Av, the date of the destruction of both Temples. We are so used to not having a Temple, that we often do not realise the lack of being able to carry out the Temple service. By reading and studying these sacrifices which were offered throughout the year, one can begin to see what is lacking in our lives.

פרים בני בקר שלשה עשר (29:13) Each day of the Festival of Succot (unlike each day of Pesach), has its own distinctive sacrifices. Each day during Succot the number of "parim" (bullocks) offered up decreases by one, and on the seventh day of Succot, the number has decreased to seven. One would thus expect that on the eighth day, the number of "parim" would be six. But in fact it is just *one*. During the first seven days, the total number of "parim" offered up is seventy and the Rabbis said that this corresponds to the seventy nations of the world, the nations who throughout all the generations, persecute and display their anti-Semitism towards the Jewish people, who are represented by the one solitary "par" offered on the eighth day. Despite all this persecution, it is the seventy nations who have disappeared, and only the Jewish people have remained. We were the only ones who were prepared to accept the Torah, and the lesson is that we endure forever, irrespective of what the nations of the world want to do to us.

’ מטות

העשה (30:3) ככל היצא מפיו יעשה This Parashah begins with the question of making vows and oaths. It is a subject which occupies a number of masechtot (tractates) in the Talmud which are scattered around the different sederim (orders) of the Talmud. In seder Nashim there is Nedarim and Nazir, in the seder Nezikin there is Shevuot and in the seder Kodoshim, there is Arachin. This subject thus occupies a relatively large area in the Talmud and also in the Rambam, the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), and so on. Some people think that "what comes out of your mouth" is not important. But one can see that in Judaism this is not the case. Even if one just orally says something, one must keep one's word. To avoid this problem which can very easily accidentally occur, one should get into the habit of saying "bli neder" (not a vow). Even doing a certain act three time can sometimes be regarded as a vow.

However, in practice it is almost impossible to avoid in one's speech something which could be regarded as a vow. There is a procedure to annul a vow. To do this one has to go before a "Bet Din" (Rabbinical Court) of three. Here the definition of "Bet Din" is not one of three Rabbis but any three adult male Jews. One relates one's vow to them, expressing regret and had one known the complications would not have made it. The "Bet Din" then says three times "mutar loch" (it is permitted for you), and the vow is thus annulled.

It is customary on erev Rosh Hashanah after the shacharit (morning) service to do a ceremony known as "Hatarat Nedarim" (cancelling of vows). A Bet Din of three is set up and each person (or if this is difficult, even a group of people together) reads a long legally worded "document." It begins by calling the members of this Bet Din "experienced Judges!" although often they don't even know any of the halachot (laws) regarding vows! The Bet Din then reads a statement cancelling all vows the person may have made in the past. One then reads a statement cancelling almost any vows that one may make in the future, although some dispute the validity of this statement.

Although one associates Kol Nidrei with its unique stirring tune, it is in fact "hatarat nedarim." Since one as a rule does not do hatarat nedarim on Shabbat and Yom Tov, one should take care that the first time reading of Kol Nidrei is before sunset. For reasons of tzniyut (modesty) women do not usually go in front of the Bet Din on erev Rosh Hashanah, and therefore one of the methods of them doing hatarat nedarim is to bear this in mind when they hear Kol Nidrei.

It is related that one Friday afternoon close to Shabbat, a man accepted upon himself early Shabbat, and this was like a vow. He then realised that for some reason he had forgotten to put on tephillin that morning. He related this to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, who then set up a Bet Din of three who nullified his vow; thus it became erev Shabbat for him again, and he was thus able to put on tephillin!

Even promising to do something could be regarded as a vow and there are many people who talk and promise all sorts of things, but in fact do nothing. One should therefore be careful of what comes out of one's mouth! It is much better not to promise but to do, rather than promise and not do. If a person wants something from you, but you know that there are limitations, you should tell him immediately the limitations, rather than promise and not deliver. We especially see this with politicians, who before the elections promise everything, but after the elections, it's a different story! As someone once remarked, before the elections, the wall talks to the people, namely, all the election propaganda pasted on every wall, but after the election one has talk to the wall! There is the story of a man who made excuses that he could not help a gemach (free-loan organisation) because he had no strength. However, he then became ill and then *really* had no strength. The moral is to be careful of what one says!

כל דבר אשר יבא באש (31:23) In the war against Midyan, the Jews captured all their eating vessels and the Torah then gave instructions on how they were to be treated to make them usable for use by Jews. Not only must the food a Jew eats be kosher, so must the vessels one uses for food. It is the non-orthodox groups who call the dietary laws "stomach Judaism" and so it doesn't matter what one eats. In fact, the food one eats becomes part of a person and it is thus of crucial importance of what goes into the person.

The Torah then gives instructions on how to kosher a non-kosher vessel – "hachsharat kelim" (koshering of vessels). Some materials can be koshered whilst others cannot. Those which can be koshered include anything made of metal. The hotter that a vessel has come in contact with non-kosher food, the more intense is the method of

koshering it. The Torah rules that vessels which have had hot non-kosher food together with liquids in them (for example, non-kosher meat in hot water) are koshered by a process known as “hagalah” which is the immersing of them in boiling water. If however, the non-kosher food has no water content, for example a spit on which one roasts meat, it must be koshered by a process known as “libun” which is heating the utensil over a flame until sparks fly out of it. Although not specifically mentioned by the Torah, vessels which have come into contact with non-kosher cold things, just need thoroughly washing off.

אך במי נדה יתחטא (31:23) In addition to a physical koshering of a vessel, there is also a spiritual koshering of a vessel which was made or purchased from a non-Jew. This is known as “tevilat kelim” (immersion of vessels). It is performed by immersing the vessel in a kosher mikva (ritual bath). The vessels which the Torah requires to immerse are those made from the list of six metals which were then in use. Today one also has numerous vessels made of aluminium, although the custom is also to immerse these. The Rabbis have added the need to immerse vessels made of glass. In the case where there is no available mikva and there has been a heavy snowfall, some allow one to immerse glass vessels, (but not metal vessels), in the snow! With regards to other materials, there are various opinions regarding “tevilat kelim.”

One can learn from this (and from many other sources in the Torah) that a Jew must be clean not just physically but also spiritually.

ויבאו בני גד ובני ראובן (32:2) The Jews arrived on the east side of the River Jordan and the tribes of Gad and Reuven decided that this is where they wanted to settle. However, the west side of the River Jordan required conquering, and as it was pointed out to them that although they would make their territory on the east side, they would still have to help conquer the west side.

One can learn from this incident that one must not expect someone else to do all the work, whilst one stands by and does nothing. Thus the Torah says "azov ta'azov imo" (surely help with him) For example, if a friend does a job as a favour in someone's house, because one is incapable of doing it oneself, for example, an electrical job, one should at least help him, such as by holding his tools, and moving the ladder.

In this particular case, the intention from *the outset* of the tribes of Gad and Reuven was to cross the River Jordan and fight with the other tribes, but they wanted to hear "divrei musar" (words of moral instruction) from Moshe. There is the story of a person known as the “Sefat Emet” who when he was a boy, because he studied all night, got up late the following morning for davening. His grandfather, who did not know that he had studied all night, told him off for getting up late. The “Sefat Emet” remained silent and when asked by someone why he didn't tell his grandfather the reason, he answered that he wanted to hear words of musar from his grandfather.

והייתם נקיים (32:22) One learns from this that in addition to not doing things which are forbidden, one must also not do things which appear to be wrong. Examples of this are, the hanging out washing on Shabbat which was done on Friday, or eating something which looks not kosher. This is known as "marit ayin" (what appears to the eye to be forbidden). Such actions might lead unlearned people to believe that what one is doing is in fact right, or it could lead to people talking "lashan hara" (forbidden speech) about the doer.

There was a shop which included a small restaurant, whose food was not under any Rabbinical supervision, and was possibly even treife (not kosher). It was also open on Shabbat. One weekday, one of the local Rabbis was seen in this shop, certainly not to eat there. It was likely that he went there to ask them to close on Shabbat. People who saw him there may well have come to the wrong conclusions!

A non-Jew who was ill asked their Jewish neighbour to buy meat for them at the treife butcher. What conclusion would someone who saw the Jew in this shop come to?

A man who wanted the national daily paper which was published on Yom-Tov went to a shop on erev Yom Tov and paid for it saying he would come in on Yom Tov to collect it. (Being Yom Tov there were no carrying problems and it was published within the techum). He did this. Anyone seeing him going into the shop and leaving with the newspaper would very reasonably assume he had paid for it on Yom Tov!

All the above are scenarios which could easily lead to marit ayin have to be avoided.

פ' מסעי

אלה מסעי בני ישראל (33:1) This Parashah begins by giving a list of the 42 stages of the wanderings of Bnei Yisrael (Children of Israel). They began leaving Rameses on the day after Pesach, and for almost the next 40 years went from place to place until all those from the age of twenty at the time of the meraglim (spies) had died. The Tosafot on masechet (tractate) Ta'anit states that the deaths occurred yearly on Tisha b'Av. Before each Tisha b'Av the Jews dug a grave to sleep in. On the following morning those who were still alive arose from their graves and lived until at least the following year. After about 40 years had passed, no-one died in the grave that Tisha b'Av. They therefore thought that they had made a miscalculation and repeated the process night after night until the fifteenth of the month when saw the full moon, and thus knew that the punishment of dying had finished. This was one of the reasons for the celebration of 15 Av as a Yom Tov.

One can compare these wanderings with the various stages in one's life. After each stage, one should look back and do a "cheshbon nefesh" (an accounting of the soul) and see how one can improve oneself for the next stage.

בחדש החמישי באחד לחדש (33:38) The Torah specifically gives the date that Aharon died, something which it does not do for Moshe. Many people can give the date that Moshe died even though it is not given directly in the Torah and it has to be calculated via the book of Yehoshua, but how many can give the date that Aharon died?! One can learn from this example, how one must carefully study *every word* of the Torah.

There are a few other dates of death in the Torah period that one can find indirectly. One of them is for the death of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, who traditionally died on the day of Chanukat hamizbeach (consecration of the Tabernacle), namely the first of Nisan. Another example is the death of Metushelach, the grandfather of Noach. The flood was delayed by 7 days due to his death, and the Torah states the flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month, and so his death would have been on the tenth of that month.

ואם לא תורישו (33:55) After having conquered the land, the Torah commands the Jews to transfer the non-Jewish inhabitants out of Eretz Yisrael, and then warns them what will happen if they do not do so, namely, the non-Jews will be thorns in one's eyes and pricks in one's side. The Torah goes on to say that if the Jewish people do not do this to the non-Jewish inhabitants, the non-Jews will do it to the Jews! The Torah already saw the problems of non-Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

One can see from highly respected non-Jews, the need sometimes for population transfer. It is not pleasant but sometimes a necessity. It was a former director of the Pan-European Union who wrote on population transfer, "To can the cancer from a sick body is not cruel it is necessary." There are many examples of transfer not connected with Eretz Yisrael. An example is Fritjof Nansen, a Nobel Peace prizewinner, who proposed the compulsory Greek-Turkish population transfer which was implemented by the League of Nations. If one looks at the history of the last hundred years, history which is often suppressed today, one can see how many Zionist leaders, including Herzl and Ben-Gurion, and also leading non-Jews and even some Arabs realised the necessity for transfer of non-Jews from Eretz Yisrael.

Immediately after this section of the Torah, in the *very same Aliyah*, the Torah goes on to give the detailed borders of Eretz Yisrael One could do a better dividing up of the Aliyot in this Parashah, by reading all the "masaot" (wanderings) as part of the first Aliyah, and making a break instead, before the paragraph dealing with the borders of Eretz Yisrael. Maybe the reason for having transfer *and also* the borders in the *same* Aliyah is to stress that Eretz Yisrael belongs *only* to the Jewish people and they are the *only* ones who have the *right* to live there.

זאת הארץ אשר תפל לכם בנחלה (34:2) The borders of Eretz Yisrael are meticulously given in the Torah, just as in a legal document. According to *all* opinions, it includes the *entire* area of Yehudah, Shomron and Aza. Needless to say, there is no mention in the Torah of the division of Yehudah and Shomron into different categories with relation to the Arabs!! The borders of Eretz Yisrael also include at least part of the Sinai Peninsula. There are different opinion as to the eastern border, the minimum being Wadi-al-Arish

and the maximum the Nile delta.

These borders are not the same as those which were given to Avraham in the "Brit bein Habetarim" ("Covenant of the Pieces"); there the borders go as far as the Euphrates. These are the borders of the future in the days of the Mashiach (Messiah). The Arabs claim that painted on the walls of the Knesset are these borders. We answer correctly that this is completely untrue, but why should we be ashamed to publicly proclaim these borders which are given in the Torah?!

ומגרשי הערים (35:4) The Torah is concerned with ecology and gives details of town planning. It goes without say that it is not pleasant to live in a place where there are just buildings. One must have open spaces with greenery.

Ecology is not just a Jewish idea. The idea of a "green belt" is to be found in other places in the world. There is a "European Green Belt" which is an area which follows the route of the former Iron Curtain and connects National Parks, Nature Parks and Biosphere Reserves. In England there is a "Metropolitan Green Belt" around London and there are also numerous Green Belts around other areas of England. Just before the Second World War there were plans to extend a branch of the Underground trains northward. However, this War stopped the construction and after the War the plan was abandoned due to new legislation which limited expansion of urban areas into the countryside.

אלפים באמה (35:5) There are musical notes for reading the Torah and also for other books of the Tenach (Bible). Sometimes a mistake in singing a note can cause a serious change in the meaning of a verse, although it is rare for anyone to correct a Ba'al Koreh (man reading the Torah) when he makes such an error! Most of the notes are common, but there are some rare ones. Two extremely rare ones which occur just once (but always together) in the Torah (and also once in Megillat Esther) are on these two words. Both here and in Megillat Esther they occur in a phrase connected with measurements.

ערי מקלט תהיינה (35:11) Towards the end of the Parashah, the Torah brings the laws concerning "Cities of Refuge." These cities are totally unlike churches, which (at least in the past) gave sanctuary to all sorts of criminals, who committed the worst of crimes, and could run to there and have sanctuary. In the year 2002, sanctuary was given to Arab terrorists who fled to the Church of the Nativity in Bet-Lechem. In Jewish law a criminal could be apprehended anywhere, even in the Temple. A person taking refuge in a City of Refuge would be put on trial there, and if found guilty of murder would be put to death. There were three cities of refuge on the east side of the River Jordan and three on the west side, the latter included Hevron and Shechem.

The Torah gives examples of a person being killed accidentally, or maybe carelessly, by another person, and the City of Refuge would decide whether or not he was guilty. Today people are sometimes killed in such a way, but since today there are no cities of refuge, a secular court would decide whether or not he is guilty. Such cases in the past occurred at the Arad Festival, the collapsing bridge at the Maccabiah games and the Versailles Hall where the floor collapsed. People who were even indirectly involved were put on trial and received prison sentences. In contrast, members of the Israeli government who regularly release terrorists who then return to their terrorist ways and murder innocent people, are never put on trial! If one were to release a poisonous snake (and this is what a terrorist is!) in a public place, and as a result it would then kill somebody, the person involved in releasing it would be put on trial and would soon find himself in jail!

לפי עדים (35:30) In Jewish law, guilt has to be proved by a court. It is not for politicians or the media to decide that a person is guilty. How many times have they screamed out on the "guilt" of a person, and later on, after all the suffering and unpleasantness the person has gone through, a court finds that he was completely innocent?!

ויקרבו ראשי האבות (36:1) The Parashah ends with a problem that arose regarding the daughters of Tzlovhod, as a result of their inheriting from their father. Here there were two conflicting claims, both which were completely just and a solution had to be found. This sometimes happens in cases coming before the courts and they accordingly have to decide on such matters.