

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Matot-Masei
June 10, 2021 *** Av 1, 5781

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We welcome all to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Matot-Masei in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2244/jewish/Matot-Masei-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Moses conveys the laws governing the annulment of vows to the heads of the tribes of Israel. War is waged against Midian for their role in plotting the moral destruction of Israel, and the Torah gives a detailed account of the war spoils and how they were allocated amongst the people, the warriors, the Levites and the high priest.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Manasseh) ask for the lands east of the Jordan as their portion in the Promised Land, these being prime pastureland for their cattle. Moses is initially angered by the request, but subsequently agrees on the condition that they first join, and lead, in Israel's conquest of the lands west of the Jordan.

The forty-two journeys and encampments of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the land of Canaan. The boundaries of the Promised Land are given, and cities of refuge are designated as havens and places of exile for inadvertent murderers. The daughters of Tzelafchad marry within their own tribe of Manasseh, so that the estate which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe.

Matot-Massei Haftorah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/895320/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftorah is the second of a series of three "haftarot of affliction." These three haftarot are read during the Three Weeks of mourning for Jerusalem, between the fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.

The prophet Jeremiah transmits G-d's message to the Jewish people, in strong tones chastising all the sectors of the people, including the leadership, for their abandonment of G-d. "What wrong did your forefathers find in Me, that they distanced themselves from Me, and they went after futility and themselves became futile?" He reminds them of the kindness G-d did for them, taking them out of Egypt and leading them through the desert and settling them in the Promised Land, yet they repaid kindness with disloyalty. "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, [and furthermore, this was in order] to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns

that do not hold water.”

G-d asks them to view the actions of their neighboring nations, the Kittites and Kedarites, “and see whether there was any such thing, whether a nation exchanged a god, although they are not gods. Yet My nation exchanged their glory for what does not avail.”

Jeremiah then goes on to foretell the suffering the Jewish people will suffer at the hands of their enemies, and also their erstwhile allies: “Your evil will chastise you, and you will be rebuked for your backslidings; and you shall know and see that your forsaking the L-rd your G-d is evil and bitter.”

The haftorah ends on an encouraging note, assuring the people that if they return to G-d with sincerity, they will be restored to their full glory.

Food For Thought

Conflict Resolution (Matot-Masei 5781) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l
<https://rabbisacks.org/matot-masei-5781/>

One of the hardest tasks of any leader – from Prime Ministers to parents – is conflict resolution. Yet it is also the most vital. Where there is leadership, there is long-term cohesiveness within the group, whatever the short-term problems. Where there is a lack of leadership – where leaders lack authority, grace, generosity of spirit and the ability to respect positions other than their own – then there is divisiveness, rancour, back-biting, resentment, internal politics and a lack of trust. True leaders are the people who put the interests of the group above those of any subsection of the group. They care for, and inspire others to care for, the common good.

That is why an episode in parshat Matot is of the highest consequence. It arose like this: The Israelites were on the last stage of their journey to the Promised Land. They were now situated on the east bank of the Jordan, within sight of their destination. Two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, who had large herds and flocks of cattle, felt that the land upon which they were now encamped was ideal for their purposes. It was good grazing country. So they approached Moses and asked for permission to stay there rather than take up their share in the land of Israel. They said: “If we have found favour in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan.” (Num. 32:5) Moses was instantly alert to the risks. These two tribes were putting their own interests above those of the nation as a whole. They would be seen as abandoning their people at the very time they were needed most. There was a war – in fact a series of wars – to be fought if the Israelites were to inherit the Promised Land. As Moses put it to the tribes: “Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over

into the land the Lord has given them?" (32:6-7). The proposal was potentially disastrous.

Moses reminded the men of Reuben and Gad what had happened in the incident of the spies. The spies demoralised the people, ten of them saying that they could not conquer the land. The inhabitants were too strong. The cities were impregnable. The result of that one moment was to condemn an entire generation to die in the wilderness and to delay the eventual conquest by forty years. "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the Lord even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following Him, He will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction." (Num. 32:14-15) Moses was blunt, honest and confrontational.

What then follows is a model illustration of positive negotiation and conflict resolution. The Reubenites and Gadites recognise the claims of the people as a whole and the justice of Moses' concerns. They propose a compromise: Let us make provisions for our cattle and our families, they say, and the men will then accompany the other tribes across the Jordan. They will fight alongside them. They will even go ahead of them. They will not return to their cattle and families until all the battles have been fought, the land has been conquered, and the other tribes have received their inheritance. Essentially they invoke what would later become a principle of Jewish law: *zeh neheneh vezeh lo chaser*, meaning, an act is permissible if "one side gains and the other side does not lose." [1] We will gain, say the two tribes, by having land which is good for our cattle, but the nation as a whole will not lose because we will still be a part of the people, a presence in the army, we will even be on the front line, and we will stay there until the war has been won.

Moses recognises the fact that they have met his objections. He restates their position to make sure he and they have understood the proposal and they are ready to stand by it. He extracts from them agreement to a *tenai kafil*, a double condition, both positive and negative: If we do this, these will be the consequences, but if we fail to do this, those will be the consequences. He asks that they affirm their commitment. The two tribes agree. Conflict has been averted. The Reubenites and Gadites achieve what they want but the interests of the other tribes and of the nation as a whole have been secured. It is a masterclass in negotiation.

The extent to which Moses' concerns were justified became apparent many years later. The Reubenites and Gadites did indeed fulfil their promise in the days of Joshua. The rest of the tribes conquered and settled Israel while they (together with half the tribe of Manasse) established their presence in Transjordan.

Despite this, within a brief space of time there was almost civil war.

Chapter 22 of the Book of Joshua describes how, after returning to their families and settling their land, the Reubenites and Gadites built "an altar to the Lord" on the east side of the Jordan. Seeing this as an act of secession, the rest of the Israelites prepared to do battle against them. Joshua, in a striking act of

diplomacy, sent Pinchas, the former zealot, now man of peace, to negotiate. He warned them of the terrible consequences of what they had done by, in effect, creating a religious centre outside the land of Israel. It would split the nation in two.

The Reubenites and Gadites made it clear that this was not their intention at all. To the contrary, they themselves were worried that in the future, the rest of the Israelites would see them living across the Jordan and conclude that they no longer wanted to be part of the nation. That is why they had built the altar, not to offer sacrifices, not as a rival to the nation's Sanctuary, but merely as a symbol and a sign to future generations that they too were Israelites. Pinchas and the rest of the delegation were satisfied with this answer, and once again civil war was averted.

The negotiation between Moses and the two tribes in our parsha follows closely the principles arrived at by the Harvard Negotiation Project, set out by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their classic text, *Getting to Yes*.^[2] Essentially, they came to the conclusion that a successful negotiation must involve four processes:

1. Separate the people from the problem. There are all sorts of personal tensions in any negotiation. It is essential that these be cleared away first so that the problem can be addressed objectively.
 2. Focus on interests, not positions. It is easy for any conflict to turn into a zero-sum game: if I win, you lose. If you win, I lose. That is what happens when you focus on positions and the question becomes, "Who wins?" By focusing not on positions but on interests, the question becomes, "Is there a way of achieving what each of us wants?"
 3. Invent options for mutual gain. This is the idea expressed halachically as *zeh neheneh vezeh neheneh*, "Both sides benefit." This comes about because the two sides usually have different objectives, neither of which excludes the other.
 4. Insist on objective criteria. Make sure that both sides agree in advance to the use of objective, impartial criteria to judge whether what has been agreed has been achieved. Otherwise, despite all apparent agreement, the dispute will continue, both sides insisting that the other has not done what was promised.
- Moses does all four. First he separates the people from the problem by making it clear to the Reubenites and Gadites that the issue has nothing to do with who they are, and everything to do with the Israelites' experience in the past, specifically the episode of the spies. Regardless of who the ten negative spies were and which tribes they came from, everyone suffered. No one gained. The problem is not about this tribe or that but about the nation as a whole. Second, he focused on interests, not positions. The two tribes have an interest in the fate of the nation as a whole. If they put their personal interests first, God will become angry and the entire people will be punished, the Reubenites and Gadites among them. It is striking how this negotiation contrasts so strongly to the dispute with Korach and his followers. There, the whole argument was about

positions, not interests – about who was entitled to be a leader. The result was collective tragedy.

Third, the Reubenites and Gadites then invent an option for mutual gain. If you allow us to make temporary provisions for our cattle and children, they say, we will not only fight in the army. We will be its advance guard. We will benefit, knowing that our request has been granted. The nation will benefit by our willingness to take on the most demanding military task.

Fourth, there was an agreement on objective criteria. The Reubenites and Gadites would not return to the east bank of the Jordan until all the other tribes were safely settled in their territories. And so it happened, as narrated in the book of Joshua:

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manashe and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as He promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. (Joshua 22:1-4)

This was, in short, a model negotiation, a sign of hope after the many destructive conflicts in the book of Bamidbar, as well as a standing alternative to the many later conflicts in Jewish history that had such appalling outcomes. Note that Moses succeeds not because he is weak, not because he is willing to compromise on the integrity of the nation as a whole, not because he uses honeyed words and diplomatic evasions, but because *he is honest, principled, and focused on the common good. We all face conflicts in our lives. This is how to resolve them.* [1] Bava Kamma 20b. [2] Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Random House Business, 2011.

[Not the Vision, but the Journey – Mattot-Mas'ei 5781 by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatMattotMasei5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&hsmi=138793326&hsenc=p2ANqtz--fv_Zc7BwANJoXEWB_bmP7eg39eFO6R5GJAaebLjmUZeZoLIC2pbzQVrsZWizp-VAjdP58UcZsRvglY8_-GiKH1t-50Q&utm_content=138793326&utm_source=hs_email)

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The second of our two parashiyot includes a roll call of all the stops and starts of the Israelites through the desert (Numbers 33). This list appears to offer no new information—no unreported events or overlooked stops. Furthermore, the whole desert trek apparently was an abject failure: The purpose was for the freed slaves to settle in the Land of Canaan, but the Exodus generation could not muster enough courage and energy to conquer it. The end result was that an entire generation (but a handful) were denied admission to their homeland (14:28-35). What then is the purpose of reporting all the points along this journey to futility? Looking back at the high hopes of the Exodus generation¹—the

expectations of becoming a free people, joining a covenant of final redemption, and a final triumphant conquest of Canaan—were it not better to draw a curtain of silence and oblivion over all the stops along the way that ended with nothing?

The answer is that this account is needed to balance the Torah's exceptionally inspiring final vision. After all, the promise of the Jewish tradition is that the human project will end with a final total repair of the world, the earth turned into a paradise. Poverty, hunger, injustice, oppression, and discrimination will be overcome. War will be ended. Sickness—in every form that harms and hobbles humans—will be cured. Accomplishing this vision is a worthy cause for all nations and religions to join in and accomplish the goal.

At the same time, the Torah calls on us not to dismiss the present reality as a broken world which we must go through as an obstacle course—but to approach it as an experience to be lived deeply. Life is precious. The experiences of friendship, love, joy, celebration, growing up, overcoming setbacks, just plain living are the warp and woof of our lives. They should be pursued in depth and savored as daily pleasures. The journey through life—even with its present flaws and injustices—is what our lives are about.

Part of living on the side of life is this attitude to life experience. We do not delay gratification and live only for the final accomplishment. The daily experience of family, of loving relationships, of Shabbat celebration, of being—these give meaning to the everyday and make up a good part of the sum of our life. We learn to live in the moment and be grateful for a sunrise, or an imaginative experience, or a dream realized along the way.

We learn to live on multiple levels. Part of our life journey is the journey of humanity toward a final tikkun. In some generations, there are major breakthroughs. In others, there is just marching in place—or even setbacks. It is all the more important to treasure the personal experiences which are valid in their own right—even if the collective regresses or the society deteriorates. If I have lived covenantally, I have done my share by living on the side of life. The outcome of the global effort may go against me and against the Jewish dream. We leave some of that to God and to the leaders who may drive history for greater good (or for bad). The acts of loving kindness, the daily interactions, done right, the inspiring moments cannot be taken away. My life is not wasted, even if there is regression in the world or serious deterioration in climate or environment as in our time.

In listing all the stops on the desert journey, the Torah is telling us that the Exodus generation, with all its limitations, is worthy of note. When parents and families prepared three meals a day for 14,600 days, when they took care of each other and foraged for kindling to warm the nights, or collected the manna for

daily bread sharing, or kissed good night, or consoled a weeping child, then the world was filled with life and care. Never mind that this generation could not rise to its greatest challenges. Its steadfastness, its pursuit of the endless journey, its falling and rising again, was worth living. If it accomplished nothing else, it raised the generation which did find the strength and leadership to conquer a homeland and begin to build the model society which Judaism calls for.

The list of stages then is a celebration of not losing our purpose and meaning in life despite the absence of decisive breakthroughs. The willingness to move again and again—the roundabout movement to evade conflict as was done with Edom (Numbers 20:14-21), the confrontation and decisive victory with Sihon and Og when that became necessary (21:21-35), the maintenance of family and covenant values through ups and downs, through crises and failures—these make the journey one of redemption, even while the fulfillment did not come until a generation later.

In short, Mas'ei is telling us that we do not live just for the final accomplishments. Nor do we judge our lives to be failures or successes by the immediate results in our lifetime. The journey of our lives is our calling and our fulfillment. If we keep our eyes on the path of life and solidarity and kindness, then we have lived a life well-lived. Our personal path also links up to the intergenerational Jewish way (really: humanity's way) to the final redemption in which the whole world will share. If we choose life along the way, if we maximize life for others in our lives, we have been true partners in the covenant. This gives us fulfillment now in the present—and the assurance that the final goal will also be achieved.

Shabbat Shalom.

¹ “The children of Israel went out [of Egypt] with a high hand” (Exodus 14:8). For more on the dashed hopes of the Exodus generation, see my essay on Parashat Bemidbar, “The Limits of Numbers,” available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/limits-numbers>.

[Diasporic Dispersal, Then and Now by Ilana Kurshan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/149aYiWl-m2epJImRmosuvvW8iqtgX_gm/view)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/149aYiWl-m2epJImRmosuvvW8iqtgX_gm/view

The first of the two parshiyot we read this week, Matot, concludes with the request of two of the twelve tribes to remain on the near side of the Jordan River and settle in the vast cattle country of Gilad rather than making their home in the land of Israel along with the rest of the Israelites. Moshe, not surprisingly, is outraged by their request. After all, he has been leading the people for nearly four decades toward the land that God has promised, a land that he himself fervently wishes to enter but has recently been told that he may not. How could the members of these two tribes, Reuven and Gad, so brazenly spurn the covenantal promise?

Ultimately, once he learns that these men will first support their fellow Israelites

by fighting alongside them, Moshe relents, thereby allowing for the creation of a Jewish diaspora. But his initial outrage sends shockwaves through the generations, particularly in the Talmudic era, where the rabbis offer a range of vehement opinions regarding the importance of settling in the land of Israel and the role of

diasporic dispersal -- offering us a way of thinking in our own day about how the Jewish people may stand united even when so many Jews make their homes on the other side of the Jordan, and beyond.

Throughout the Talmud, and particularly in early rabbinic sources from the first two centuries of the common era, a plethora of rabbinic voices champion the value of living in the land of Israel. In the Tosefta (Avodah Zarah 4:3) the rabbis state unequivocally that "a person should always live in the land of Israel," adding that it is preferable to live among gentiles in the land of Israel than to live among

Jews anywhere else. Moreover, the rabbis insist that one should not only live in Israel, but also die there: "Whoever is buried in the land of Israel is as if he is buried under the altar." In the Sifrei on Deuteronomy (80), an early midrashic composition dating back to the time of the Mishnah, we find a story of four rabbis who are traveling out of the land of Israel. At some point in their travels, they remember the land of Israel and are overcome by emotion: "They raised their eyes heavenward, letting their tears flow, and rent their garments." The travelers then quote a verse from Deuteronomy in which Moshe enjoins the Israelites "When you have occupied it and are settled in it, take care to observe all the laws and rules" (Deuteronomy 11:31). Based on this verse's juxtaposition of settling in the land and observing all the commandments, the source concludes with the assertion that living in the land of Israel is a mitzvah equivalent to all the other commandments in the Torah.

In later Talmudic sources, too, we find several stories about rabbis who were devoted to settling in Israel and passionate about the land. Rabbi Zeyra, a third-century rabbi who forsook his own rabbinic mentor in Babylonia so as to make his home in Israel, had a dramatic Aliyah story that reflects the extent of his commitment (Ketubot 112a). Unlike the members of the tribes of Reuven and Gad, who

preferred to settle outside the land of Israel, Rabbi Zeyra couldn't wait to get there. The Talmud relates that he grew tired of waiting for a ferry to cross the Jordan, so he grasped onto a rope and crossed. Another man, who was watching from the sidelines, sneered at him for his impetuosity. But Rabbi Zeyra was not taking any chances, as he informed that onlooker: "The place that Moshe and Aaron did not merit to enter, who is to say that I will be worthy of entering?" He was determined to do all in his power to ensure that unlike Moshe and Aaron, he would merit to make his home in the land.

And yet like the members of the two tribes who wished to stay back, not all the voices in the Talmud are so unequivocal in their support for living in Israel. Rav Yehuda, who was Rabbi Zeyra's rabbinic mentor in Babylonia, argued that

“Anyone who ascends from Babylonia to the land of Israel transgresses a positive mitzvah” (Ketubot 111a), arguing that Jews are supposed to wait until God tells them the time to return has come – an ideology that finds its echo in anti-Zionist Haredi groups of the past century. And in what may be read as a celebration of diasporic dispersal, the midrash in Shir Hashirim Rabbah (1:3) compares Abraham to a vial of perfume that was sitting in a corner and not emitting any scent, until God told the patriarch to “move around in the world so that your name be great in My world.” In a related passage in tractate Pesachim (87a), Rabbi Elazar argues that God exiled the people of Israel not merely as a punishment, but so people around the world would be exposed to Jews and to their way of life and be inspired to convert. Rabbi Oshaya adds that God performed an act of charity in scattering the Jewish people among the nations, implying that had they all been living in one place, they could have all been destroyed in one fell genocidal swoop. In the Jewish world today the rift between the Jews of the land of Israel and the Jews of the diaspora seems only to grow wider. But as Moshe ultimately realizes in our parashah, the Israelites—like the Jews of later generations—can champion common causes even if not all living together in the same place. Our world needs both the Jews so passionate about living in Israel that they cannot wait even for the ferry to take them across the Jordan, and the Jews who prefer the vast holdings of the cattle country in Gilad and around the globe. May we learn to appreciate one another’s unique contributions and to find ways of standing together as a people even as we live apart. (*Ilana teaches Talmud at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem.*)

[Who Gets the Last Word \(Mattot Masei\) by Judith Hauptman](https://www.jtsa.edu/who-gets-the-last-word)
<https://www.jtsa.edu/who-gets-the-last-word>

Mattot and Masei, the last two portions of the book of Numbers (30:2–36:18), are usually read one after the other on the same Sabbath. Are these portions linked by something other than the quirks of the Jewish calendar? Mattot opens with a chapter on the subject of vows. A vow is a person’s promise to God to behave in a certain way so that God, in response, will grant one’s requests. When Jacob was fleeing from Esau, he took a vow that if God protected him on his journey and returned him home safely, he would give back to God a tenth of whatever God gave him (Gen. 28:22). A vow thus gives a person a sense of control over his or her own life. Surprisingly, fourteen of the seventeen verses in Numbers 30 address the topic of *women* and vows. The Torah makes the point that a father or a husband may cancel the vows of a daughter or wife. It follows that men have to keep the promises they make, while women are often prevented from doing so. But one verse of this chapter leaps out at today’s reader. Numbers 30:10 says that if a widow or divorcee makes a vow, she has to fulfill its terms. No longer

subordinate to a father or husband, she must keep her promise. Her word is as binding as a man's. Quite an impressive rule for a patriarchally configured society!

Just as the double Mattot-Masei portion begins with women, it ends with women. Earlier in the book of Numbers (Chapter 27), the daughters of Zelophehad petitioned Moses to assign to them the parcel of land he would have assigned to their father, had he lived to enter the Promised Land. Moses was stumped by their request and goes off to consult with God. The famous answer from on high is—*ken b'not Tzelofehad dovrot* (the plea of the daughters of Zelophehad is just) (Num. 27:7), i.e., these women have a valid claim. They will receive their father's parcel and his name will not be blotted out.

But in the last chapter of Mattot-Masei, we read a story that is a mirror image of the one above. The men of Menasseh, Zelophehad's tribe, approach Moses and say that his decision regarding the five women could redound to the men's detriment. If the women who inherit land in Menasseh's tract marry a man from a different tribe, they will take their land with them. It will thereby diminish Menasseh's holdings, and that would be unfair. To my mind, this is an audacious claim since the inheritance rules of the Torah so strongly favor men in every other circumstance. Land passes from father to sons, one generation to the next. Women are not part of the inheritance equation. Even so, these men did not hesitate to complain about the one inheritance advantage afforded women. Given this background, how are we supposed to read the last chapter of Numbers? Should we take it at face value, that the men of Menasseh are right, even praiseworthy, for defending their tribal inheritance? Or should we see it as satire, by which I mean that the chapter actually mocks these men for being so small-minded, trying to deny women the one gain they were given? I favor the second option. We cannot avoid noticing that exactly the same phrase that appears in Numbers 27:7 about the women, appears again in 36:6 about the men—*ken matteh v'nei Yosef dovrin* (the plea of the Josephite tribe is just). This time these words are uttered by Moses at God's bidding, not directly by God. Moses tells all of Israel that the five daughters of Zelophehad will have to choose a husband from the tribe of Menasseh (36:5–6). That way the land will not leave the tribe. On a superficial level, the message of the chapter is that Moses had to clip the wings of the daughters of Zelophehad. They won their case of inheriting their father's land but were then informed of the strings attached. I suspect, however, that on a deeper level, the chapter disparages the men who could not tolerate even one small favorable decision for women. This skeptical reading is buttressed by a mishnah. Tractate Ketubot 13:7 presents one detail of the laws of inheritance. It discusses the case of a man who dies leaving both sons and daughters: if his estate is large, says the mishnah, the sons inherit all of it, but they have to maintain their sisters from it until they marry; if the estate is small, it all goes to support the daughters and the sons have no choice but to go begging at the door. Admon, an early sage, comments, "*bishvil she-ani zakhar hifsadeti*" (just because I am a male, should I lose out)? He is

referring to this one set of circumstances in which a daughter's share of her father's estate would exceed that of a son. The irony, of course, is that sons are given a huge advantage over daughters in all other matters of inheritance. It is rare for daughters to benefit at the expense of their brothers. Even so, Admon begrudges women this one small victory, because, in the zero-sum game of inheritance, men are being treated, in this one instance, as less than equal. I suspect that the mishnah is poking fun at Admon. The obvious similarity of his distress to that of the men of Menasseh leads me to conclude that the sage's comment is actually a riff on the story told in Numbers 36. Just as in that case men resented the fact that women gained the upper hand in one case of male disenfranchisement, here too a man expresses a very similar sentiment regarding one case of male disenfranchisement. In this instance it's easy to see that Admon is behaving in a petty manner. By including Admon's words, the mishnah connects him to the men of Menasseh. By implication, the mishnah thinks that they, too, are behaving in a petty manner.

What is the overall message today of the double portion of Mattot-Masei? Numbers 30, the opening chapter of the double portion, takes single women seriously and treats them as fully equal to men. Numbers 36, the closing chapter, says that there will always be men who will try to deny women equality. But such men will not be able to roll back women's gains, even if they succeed in obtaining, on occasion, a small concession. This is the high note on which the fourth book of the Torah concludes. (*Judith Hauptman is the E. Billi Ivry Professor Emerita of Talmud and Rabbinic Culture at JTS*)

Yahrtzeits

Lisa Paley remembers her father Leon Lindenbaum on Thursday July 15th (Av 6).
Shari Mevorah remembers her mother Helen Kirstein on Friday July 16th (Av 7).

Coming up at Kol Rina

In-person Shabbat morning service, Saturday, July 10, 2021, beginning at 9:45 am
Shabbat morning services will take place in the Kol Rina parking lot unless there is rain or the temperature is above 85 degrees, in which case services will be indoors. Attendance is restricted to fully vaccinated (plus two weeks) individuals. Masks optional if the services are outdoors, mandatory if indoors.

We are recompiling our Mi'she-Beirach list

If you know of people who are ill whom you would like to be included on the congregational Mi'she-Beirach list, please send the names to Nikki at moranehama54@verizon.net. These names will be read when the Hebrew Gabbai recites the prayer for the ill during the Torah service. Please send in your names even if the person was previously on the list, as we are recompiling the list from scratch.