

# תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

**Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion**

**Parshat Matot- Masa'ei**

**Issue 148, 21-22 July 2006, 26 Tammuz 5766**

We would like to urge all to **pray for the lives of the soldiers** abducted yesterday: **Ehud ben Malka (Goldwasser), Eldad ben Tova (Regev)**, in addition to **Gilad Ben Aviva (Shalit)**, and those injured in the attacks.

**Please download a special Tfila written by the Chief Rabbinate:**

[www.torahmitzion.org/pub/tfilaLashvuyim.pdf](http://www.torahmitzion.org/pub/tfilaLashvuyim.pdf)

**Please also continue praying for the safety of all those defending Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, where ever they may be.**

## **In this weeks issue:**

- 1) Parshat Matot Masa'ei: Vendetta? Rav Dror Brama
- 2) Family Leaning, Parshat Matot Masa'ei, Bluma Zalzman
- 3) 30 Years since The Entebbe Raid

## **Vendetta?**

**Rav Dror Brama, former Rosh Kollel, London**

Our *parsha* records how Moshe received his last mission on earth:

"Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people."

Several questions arise from these two verses:

1. What did the Midianites do that *nikamah* (vengeance) against them is so essential?
2. Why is Moshe commanded about *nikamah*? After all, the Torah forbids *nikamah* and *netirah* (bearing a grudge)?

In the next verse, Moshe communicates the commandment to the nation but changes the definition of the *nikamah*:

"Moshe spoke to the people, saying: Arm men from among yourselves for the legion that they may be against Midian to inflict Hashem's vengeance against Midian."

This verse leads to a third question:

3. Whose *nikamah* is it: *Bnei Yisrael's* or Hashem's?

The Torah itself answers the first question:

"Harass the Midianites and smite them; for they harassed you through their conspiracy that they conspired against you in the matter of Peor." (*Bamidbar* 25)

The Midianites' conspiracy to get *Bnei Yisrael* to worship Baal Peor is described at the end of *Parshat Balak*. They sent their most beautiful daughters to *Machaneh Yisrael* and organized a public pagan carnival. Many of *Bnei Yisrael* were drawn to this activity, and, as a punishment, Hashem wiped out 24,000 people in a plague.

However, even after this explanation, the question remains. The Midianites did not bomb or commit terror attacks against *Bnei Yisrael*. In fact, no male Midianites came at all. Instead, they sent their finest and loveliest daughters, who arranged the wildest party ever, there in the forsaken desert. What was so terrible about that? Why did the Midianites deserve such severe *nikamah*? Moreover, if they did deserve *nikamah*, it should be Hashem's *nikamah*. After all, Hashem was angry that the participants from *Bnei Yisrael* joined in willingly and even enjoyed themselves.

Chazal's responses to the second and third questions elucidate the first question, as well.

The Midrash places the second question in *Bnei Yisrael's* mouth:

"Yisrael said before Hashem: Master of the Universe! You wrote in the Torah: 'Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge.' (*Vayikra* 19:18)

And you 'are vengeful Hashem and a Master of anger, Hashem is vengeful to His adversaries and bears a grudge for His enemies.'" (*Nachum* 1:2)

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to them: I wrote 'Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge' in the Torah - for Israel, but with respect to the nations - 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel.' (*Bamidbar* 31:2)" (*Breishit Rabbah* 55)

The prohibition against *nikamah* and *netirah* is only internal to the nation. With respect to the *goyim*, there is no prohibition, and, at times, there is even a *mitzvah* of *nikamah*. Later on, we will briefly explain the reason for this distinction.

The Midrash provides an interesting answer to the third question:

"The Holy One Blessed Be He says 'the vengeance of the Children of Israel', while Moshe says 'the vengeance of Hashem against Midian'?

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to them: Only your *diko* [see note] caused Me to hurt you.

Moshe said: Master of the Universe, if we were uncircumcised or idol worshippers or *kofrei mitzvot*, they would not hate us. And they only pursue us because of the Torah and the *mitzvot* that You gave us. For this is Your vengeance - 'to inflict Hashem's vengeance against Midian.'"

[Note: "*Diko*" - I am uncertain about the meaning of this word, which is not Hebrew. Perhaps it is derived from the Latin "*duco*", which means "misleading".]

Hashem commands Moshe to inflict *nikamah* against Midian, and this *nikamah* is defined as *Bnei Yisrael's* vengeance. Moshe is saying that, by definition, *Bnei Yisrael* are *ovdei Hashem*. If they were like the other nations, they would not suffer from anti-Semitism. The fact that

they keep the Torah and the *mitzvot* and represent Hashem in the world is the reason why everyone fights against them specifically.

Usually, natural, social ethics are based on reciprocation. "What is hateful for you, do not do to your friend." This principle explains why it is worthwhile for everyone to build a society where each person restrains himself, in order to avoid harming others. However, there is an opposing natural principle, namely Darwinism, or survival of the fittest. In the natural world, including the world of humans who are enslaved to nature, there are some situations where the strong are led to believe that it pays to harm others and that there will be no price to pay. History is replete with examples where natural ethics were ruthlessly tossed aside by tyrants and oppressors. These evil ones were convinced that they had the power to violate the equation of reciprocation in their own favor, by brutalizing others.

The Torah's uniqueness is that ethical obligations are not based on a social contract. Rather, man is obligated to behave ethically, because of his obligation to Hashem, Who created man.

In this light, we can understand the prohibition against *nikamah* and *netirah*. Each individual from *Bnei Yisrael* represents a unique portion of *avodat Hashem* and carries a divine message to the world. If someone fails and harms his friend, he not only hurts that individual but deflects from *avodat Hashem*. The Torah expanded *Am Yisrael's* system of social relationships from the principles of natural ethics to the principle of religious obedience. I am not forbidden from harming a friend because it does not pay. Rather, I am forbidden because Hashem forbade me. In other words, Hashem decreed that it is evil, and that is why it is forbidden.

Now, we can also comprehend the severity of the Midianites' actions. In accordance with Bilaam's advice, the Midianites gathered that some things are more harmful to *Bnei Yisrael* than weapons. First, they attempted to spiritually and verbally harm them with curses. When this plan failed, Bilaam suggested that they attack *Am Yisrael's* unique attribute, namely, their holiness. Chazal explain that Peor was worshipped through sexual perversion, which reflected the complete antithesis to the Jewish requirement of holiness. Thus, the Midianites used their attractive, alien culture to successfully harm *Am Yisrael's* spiritual stature and to lower them to the surrounding Canaanite culture.

In these types of cases, where *Am Yisrael's tzelem Elokim* is harmed, the Torah teaches us that Hashem's *nikamah* and *Bnei Yisrael's nikamah* are one and the same.

In Christianity, vengeance is considered a bad word. The Torah says "an eye for an eye", and Matthew comes along and says: "You have it said. love your friend, hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." This distorted approach warps the world's compensation system and blurs the line between good and evil, between the righteous and the wicked, and between the guilty and their victims.

These words are being written as the enemies of Israel are once again conspiring against us, and parts of the Christian world are once again demanding that we lower our heads and turn the other cheek.

On Wednesday, at the end of *Shacharit*, I said the regular chapter of the *shir shel yom*, *Tehillim* 94:

"Lord of vengeance is Hashem, Lord of vengeance appeared.  
Arise, Judge of the earth, repay in kind to the arrogant.  
Until when will the wicked, Hashem, until when will the wicked rejoice.

They express, they speak insolence; all the workers of iniquity pride themselves.  
Your nation, Hashem, they crush, and Your inheritance they afflict.  
The will kill a widow and a stranger, and they will murder orphans.  
And they will say: Hashem does not see, and the G-d of Yaakov does not understand."

I thought that it would be easier to relate to the conflict, if the enemies would formulate it in this way. But in truth, they are just kidnappers and murders, who make these, and other, demands.

When I returned home, I discovered that our Yishuv's website had been vandalized by hackers, who left the following message: "Al-Quds is for us and it'll still for us till the end, Plastine is our Land.. do whatever you want,, your weapons do not scare us nor your military airplanes and bombs... Do not try anything, your fate is close to the End.. ~~~~ ALLAH Curse has been on you. [Sic]"

Thus, Master of the Universe, Your enemies are our enemies who are flamboyantly fulfilling the words of *Sefer Tehillim*. We beseech You to help us, to allow *Am Yisrael* to understand our uniqueness, to distance themselves from Canaanite abominations, to sanctify our Source of Grace, and "to inflict Hashem's vengeance against Midian".

### **Family Leaning, Parshat Matot Masa'ei Bluma Zalcman**

---

1. Why was Moshe angry at the commanders after the battle against Midyan?
2. What was the request of Reuven and Gad? What was the condition given by Moshe?
3. What are Arei Miklat?
4. What is the minimum number of witnesses needed to testify against a person regarding death?

*Answers follow below*

### **30 Years since the Entebbe Raid**

---

Operation Entebbe was a rescue mission performed by Israel's elite Sayeret Matkal to free hostages at the Entebbe Airport in Uganda. It took place on the night of July 3 and early morning of July 4, 1976. It was actually called Operation Thunderbolt by the Israeli military operatives who planned it and carried it out, and it was retroactively renamed Operation Yonatan after the raid commander, Col. Yonatan "Yoni" Netanyahu, the only Israeli soldier to die in the raid.

On June 27, 1976 Air France Flight 139, an Airbus A300, originating in Tel Aviv, Israel and carrying 248 passengers and a crew of 12 took off from Athens, Greece, heading for Paris, France. Soon after the 12:30 p.m. takeoff, the flight was hijacked by four terrorists. The hijackers, commandeered the flight, diverting it to Benghazi, Libya and then to Entebbe International Airport in Uganda.

At Entebbe, the four hijackers were joined by three additional terrorists. They were led by Wilfried Böse (and not by "Carlos the Jackal"). They demanded the release of 40

Palestinians held in Israel and 13 other detainees in prisons in Kenya, France, Switzerland, and Germany, or they would begin killing hostages on July 1.

The passengers were held hostage in the transit hall of Entebbe International Airport's old terminal. The hijackers, who demanded that Israel release Palestinian prisoners, released a large number of hostages, keeping only Israelis and Jews, whom they threatened to kill if Israel did not comply with their demand.

Upon the announcement by the hijackers that the airline crew and non-Israeli/non-Jewish passengers would be released, Flight 139's Captain Michel Bacos announced to the hijackers that all passengers, including the remaining ones, were his responsibility, and that he would not leave them behind. Bacos' entire crew, down to the most junior flight attendant, followed suit.

On the July 1 deadline, with no rescue mission in motion, the government of Israel offered to negotiate with the hijackers in order to extend the deadline to July 4. On July 3, the Israeli cabinet approved Operation Entebbe. After days of collecting intelligence and careful planning masterminded by Mossad officer Mookie Betzer, four Israeli Air Force C-130 Hercules transport aircraft flew secretly from Israel and landed at night at Entebbe Airport without the aid of ground control. They were followed by an air force jet with medical facilities, which landed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Israeli forces landed an hour before midnight, with cargo bay doors already open. A black Mercedes with accompanying Land Rovers were brought along to avoid suspicion while the Israeli troops drove from the landed plane to the terminal building: this would look like a company of Idi Amin or another high official with escort. The Mercedes car was owned by an Israeli civilian, and was apparently spray painted black for the raid, on the understanding that it would be returned to the owner in its original color.

The hostages were sitting in the main hall of the building, directly adjacent to the runway. The Israelis sprang from their vehicles and burst into the terminal yelling, "Get down! Get down!" in Hebrew and English. The advantage to most of the hostages was not just that they spoke Hebrew and understood the orders being given to them by their rescuers, but that most of the Israelis had already experienced four wars and received military training. However, one hostage ran towards the commandos and was shot down. Three hijackers in the building aimed their weapons toward the Israeli troops and were shot down. Another soldier called out in Hebrew, "Where are the rest of them?" apparently meaning the terrorists. The hostages pointed to a connecting door, upon which the Israeli soldiers pulled the pins on some hand grenades, kicked in the door and threw the grenades in. After the resulting explosions, the troops entered the room and shot three hijackers sitting at a table, stunned by the explosions. The Israelis returned back to their airplane and began loading the hostages on board. Several Ugandan soldiers began to fire at them from the cover of the airport, killing two hostages. The Israelis returned fire without sustaining any casualties of their own and finished the loading. Yoni was about to enter the Old Terminal when he was shot in the chest by a burst from an AK-47. No one stopped to help him until later, as he had given the order that hostages were to be rescued before help was given to their own casualties. Yoni died as he was being evacuated to the C-130 just before the hostages were.

The assault lasted less than thirty minutes and six hijackers were killed. Of the 103 hostages, 3 died. Colonel Netanyahu was the only Israeli military casualty during the operation. A total of 45 Ugandan soldiers were killed during the raid, and about 11 Ugandan Army Air Force fighter planes sitting on the ramp were deliberately destroyed.

One of the reasons that the raid was able to be so well planned was that the building in which the hostages were being held was built by an Israeli construction firm. Israeli firms were often involved in building projects in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. The firm

which built the airport terminal still had the blueprints, and supplied them to the government of Israel.

According to a July 4th 2006 Associated Press interview with raid organizer Mookie Betzer, Mossad operatives extensively interviewed the hostages who had been released. As a result, another source of information was a French-Jewish passenger who had been mistakenly released with the non-Jewish hostages. Betzer reports that the man had military training and "a phenomenal memory", allowing him to give information about the number and arms of the hostage-takers, among other useful details.

**Torah MiTzion** establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses.

**The Head Office in Jerusalem:**

**Beit Meir**, 54 King George Street  
PO Box 71109  
Jerusalem, 91710  
Israel

**Tel: +972-2-620-9020**

**Email:** [office@torahmitzion.org](mailto:office@torahmitzion.org)

**Look for us on the web:** [www.TorahMiTzion.org](http://www.TorahMiTzion.org)

**For support and sponsoring options, please visit our website.**

---

**Answers:Family Learning**

1. Because they left the women of Midyan alive, and they caused the men of Yisrael to sin.
2. To live in Eretz Gilad, not in the actual land of Israel. Moshe said ok, on the condition that they help the rest of the Shvatim get rid of the Cana'anim who lived in Israel proper
3. They are cities that are designated to protect a person who accidentally killed another man from the killed man's family seeking revenge.
4. at least 2, since it says "one man will not testify"