



Mattot

Bamidbar (Numbers) 30:2 - 32:42

Parshat Mattot begins with laws concerning vows and oaths, especially those vows made by women, which could be annulled by their husbands or fathers. Vows made by widows or divorced women, however, were binding and could not be annulled.

We then read about the war against the Midianites, including the distribution of spoils. This war was waged to avenge the great apostasy at Baal Pe'or (25:17-19).

Following this event, the tribes of Reuben and Gad ask for the land east of the Jordan River (Transjordan), for they had much livestock, and the land there seemed suitable for such farming. Moses responds with tremendous anger, accusing them of behavior reminiscent of the spies who warned the people against trying to conquer the land, and abandoning their people. From Moses' point of view, it is reminiscent of the many other rebellions that have characterized the Book of Bamidbar, and indeed, the entire period in the wilderness. In response, the leaders of the tribes explain their true intentions, which are simply to build homes for their families, and barns for their cattle, and then actually lead the conquest of the land of Israel along with the other tribes. Moses agrees to their request. Then the Bible records that the land east of the Jordan River was to be divided into three cities of refuge as well as the land of Israel, from which tithes needed to be assessed.

This Shabbat we read the first of the three Haftarat of rebuke, which precede the observance of Tisha B'av.



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
E. 304 Midland Ave., Paramus NJ 07652
Phone: (201) 262-7691 Fax: (201) 262-6516
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