



KINDER TORAH[®]



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Matos-Masei

Many Thoughts . . .

"**A**nd here's today's weather report. Today will be another hot one. A predicted high temperature of 95°."

"Imma, I'm so hot."

"I have great news for you kids. Abba and I decided last night to get air conditioning. I'm going to call the man today and we will have cool air quicker than you can say, 'Pass the lemonade.'"

"Great!"

That evening . . .

"I'm home dear. How did it go with the air conditioning today? When is the installer coming?"

"Sit down my dear husband. Things are not as simple as they seem. With this last heat wave, all of the installers are so busy that they do not even answer their cell phones. It looks like we will have to wait at least a few weeks."

"Many thoughts are in a man's heart, but Hashem's advice will prevail (Mishlei 19:21). We thought that we would be cool right away, but Hashem had a different plan."

In this week's parsha, Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu, "Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against Midian. Afterward you will be gathered to your people (pass away)" (Bamidbar 31:2). Rashi explains that although his death would follow this war, Moshe Rabbeinu followed Hashem's instructions happily and did not delay. The Medrash Rabba (22:6) compares Yehoshua's reaction to news of his upcoming death to that of Moshe Rabbeinu. Yehoshua was told that he would live 120 years, like Moshe Rabbeinu. However, his life was shortened 10 years. Why? When he was commanded to wage war with the 31 kings, he thought to himself, "After I kill them, I will die, just as Moshe did after his war with Midian." He began to push off the war, in order to extend his life. Hashem said to him, "That is how you conduct yourself? I will shorten your life by ten years." Yehoshua thought that he could outsmart Hashem and prolong his life but "many thoughts are in a man's heart, but Hashem's advice will prevail."

Kinderlach . . .

We have many ideas about how things should be. "My neighbor should have more consideration for me." "My friend should help me with my homework." "The teacher should call on me in class." "My mother should not have said that to me." These are all valid claims. We should try to speak to the people about them. They may listen and be sympathetic. Or, they may not. If not, then we may have to accept it as something that we cannot change. We wanted things to be a certain way with this person. But, Hashem has a different plan. He wants us to work on ourselves to accept people the way they are.

It Is Fair

"**N**aftoli dear, why are you crying?"

"It's not fair, Imma."

"What is not fair?"

"He got away with cheating and did not get punished."

"What happened?"

"He looked at my test paper and copied down some answers. The teacher did not see him."

"Calm down Naftoli. Don't cry. You don't have to worry. Hashem is running the world. He rewards everyone for their good deeds, and punishes them for their sins. Just look in this week's parsha."

"I don't recall anything about cheating on a test."

"Correct, Naftoli dear, but the Torah does speak about *orei miklat* (refuge cities), set aside to protect those people who accidentally killed someone. The killer had to flee from his home to the *ir miklat*. This exile, although it protected him from being killed by the victim's relatives, was also a punishment. Leaving your home, family, friends, and livelihood was very difficult in those days."

"**I**mma, is that fair? Why did the victim have to die? What did he do wrong? And why did the killer have to flee? After all, it was only an accident. Where is Hashem's justice that you were speaking about?"

"Naftoli, the gemora (Makkos 10b) explains what happened. One man killed another intentionally, but

there were no witnesses to convict him. He escaped punishment. Another man killed someone accidentally, and there were no witnesses to convict him either. He also escaped the punishment of exile, or so it seemed. Hashem guided the events in such a way that these two men found themselves at the same inn one day. The murder was sitting under a ladder and the one who killed accidentally was climbing down the ladder. Suddenly, he fell on the other man and killed him. Witnesses saw the whole event."

"That was no coincidence."

"That is what the gemora says. The murder got the death penalty that he deserved. And the accidental killer got the exile that he deserved."

"So it is fair after all."

"Exactly."

Kinderlach . . .

"I'm going to teach him a lesson. He can't get away with that." Stop and think for a minute. In teaching him a lesson, are you going to do something that the Torah forbids? Are you going to take revenge? Are you going to speak loshon hora? Are you going to hit him? Are you going to embarrass him? These things are all forbidden. "But he can't get away with that. He has to know that he did something wrong." That is correct. You should try to tell him in a way that is permissible. However, you should not try to punish him. That is not your job. Hashem is running the world. If he deserves a punishment, he will get it. Hashem has many messengers. You do your job, and leave Hashem to do His job. That's the fair way.

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