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A WARM MAZEL TOV TO TONY AND MARY STEWART ON THEIR
SIGNIFICANT WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

SHABBAT MATTOT-MAS'EI

Parashat Mattot-Mas'ei is one of seven designated Torah portions that, depending upon the number of Sabbaths in a year, is either read as two separate portions or combined to assure the reading of the entire Torah. The following is an interpretation on each of their most important themes.

Parashat Mattot reports the laws, given to the Israelites, for making vows. It also contains a description of the Israelites' war against the Midianites, including the distribution of the booty. The Torah portion concludes with Moses resolving a request by the Gadites and Reubenites for the lands of Jazer and Gilead.

Parashat Mas'ei recounts forty years of *mas'ei*, or "journeys", by the Israelites from Egypt to the Land of Israel. Moses provides instructions for conquering the land, defining its borders, and dividing it among the tribes. He also defines provisions for setting up six cities of refuge where those accused of manslaughter may go for safety and a fair trial. The Book of Numbers concludes with a counter protest regarding the daughters of Zelophehad and a further clarification of the Torah's laws of inheritance.

א ומקנה רב הלה לבני ראובן ולבני גד עצום מאד ויראו את ארץ יעזר ואת ארץ גלעד והנה המקום מקום מקנה: ב ויבאו בני גד ובני ראובן ויאמרו אל משה ואל אלעזר הכהן ואל נשיאי העדה לאמר: ג עטרות ודיבן ויעזר ונמרה וחשבון ואעלה ושכם ויבו ויבגו: ד הארץ אשר הנה יהיה לפני עדת ישראל ארץ מקנה הוא ולעבדיך מקנה: ה ויאמרו אסמציאנו חן בעיניך ויתן את הארץ הזאת לעבדיך לאחיה אליתעברנו את הידן: ו ויאמר משה לבני גד ולבני ראובן האחיכם יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבנו כה: ז ולמה תנואון את לב בני ישראל מעבר אל הארץ אשר נתן להם יהוה: ח זה עשו אבותיכם בשלחי אתם מקדש ברנע לראות את הארץ: ט ויעלו עד נחל אשכול ויראו את הארץ וליאו את לב בני ישראל לבלתיבא אל הארץ אשר נתן להם יהוה: י ויחראף יהוה ביום ההוא וישבע לאמר: יא אסיראו האנשים העלים ממצרים מבן עשרים שנה ומעלה את האדמה אשר נשבעתי לאבותם ליצחק וליעקב כי לאמלאו אתי: יב בלתי כלב בריבנה הקניז ויהושע ברונו כי מלאו אחרי יהוה: יג ויחראף יהוה בישראל וינעם במדבר ארבעים שנה עד תם כל הדור העולה הרע בעיני יהוה: יד והנה קמתם תחת אבותיכם תרבות אנשים חטאים לספות עוד על חרון אף יהוה אלי ישראל: טו כי תשובו מאחרי ויטף עוד להניחו במדבר ושחתם לכל העם הזה: טז ויגשו אלו ויאמרו גדרת צאן נבנה למקננו זה וערים לטפנו: יז ואנחנו נחלץ חשים לפני בני ישראל עד אשר אס הביאנם אל מקומם וישב טפנו בערי המבצר מפני השני הארץ: יח לא נשוב אל בתינו עד התנחל בני ישראל איש נחלתו: יט כי לא נחל אתם מעבר לירדן והלהא פי באה נחלתנו אלינו מעבר הירדן מזרחה:

ט וידבר יהוה אל משה לאמר: י דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם כי אתם עברים את הירדן ארצה פגעו: יא והקרייתם לכם ערים ערי מקלט תהיינה לכם ונס שמה רצח מכה נפש בשנגה: יב והיו לכם הערים למקלט מגאל ולא מות הרצח עד עמדו לפני העדה למשפט: יג והערים אשר תתנו שש ערי מקלט תהיינה לכם: יד את שלש הערים תתנו מעבר לירדן ואת שלש הערים תתנו בארץ פגעו ערי מקלט תהיינה: טו לבני ישראל ולגר ולתושב בתוכם תהיינה שש הערים האלה למקלט לנוס שמה כל מכה נפש בשנגה: טז ואם בכלי ברזל | הכהו ומות רצח הוא מות יומת הרצח: יז ואם באבן יד אשר ימות בה הכהו ומות רצח הוא מות יומת הרצח: יח או בכלי עץ יד אשר ימות בו הכהו ומות רצח הוא מות יומת הרצח: יט גאל הדם הוא ימית את הרצח בפגעו בו הוא ימתנו: כ ואם בשנאה יהדפנו או השליך עליו בצדיה ומות: כא או באיבה הכהו בידו ומות יומת הרצח המכה רצח הוא גאל הדם ימית את הרצח בפגעו בו: כב ואם בפתע בלא איבה הדפו או השליך עליו כל כלי בלא צדיה: כג או בכל אבן אשר ימות בה בלא ראות ויפל עליו ומות והוא לא יזיב לו ולא מבקש רעתו: כד ושפטו העדה בין המפה ובין גאל הדם על המשפטים האלה: כה והצילו העדה את הרצח מיד גאל הדם והשיבו אתו העדה אל עיר מקלטו אשר נס שמה וישב בה עד מות הכהן הגדל אשר משח אתו בשמן הקדש: כו ואם יצא ויצא הרצח את גבול עיר מקלטו אשר נוס שמה: כז ומצא אתו גאל הדם מחוץ לגבול עיר מקלטו ורצח גאל הדם את הרצח אין לו דם: כח כי בעיר מקלטו ישב עד מות הכהן הגדל ואחרי מות הכהן הגדל שוב הרצח אל ארץ אחזתו: כט והיו אלה לכם לחקת משפט לדורותיכם בכל מושבותיכם: ל כל מכה נפש לפי עדים ירצח את הרצח ועד אחד לא יענה בנפש למות: לא ולא תקחו כפר לנפש רצח אשר הוא רשע למות כי מות יומת: לב ולא תקחו כפר לנוס אל עיר מקלטו לשוב לשבת בארץ עד מות הכהן: לג ולא תחניפו את הארץ אשר אתם בה כי הדם הוא יחניף את הארץ ולארץ לא יכפר לדם אשר שפך בה כי אם בדם שפכו: לד ולא תטמא את הארץ אשר אתם יושבים בה אשר אני שכן בתוכה כי אני יהוה שכן בתוך בני ישראל:

NUMBERS 32:1-19/35:9-34

1 The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very great numbers. Noting that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were a region suitable for cattle, **2** the Gadite and the Reubenite men came to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the chieftains of the community, and said, **3** "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon— **4** the land that Adonai has conquered for the community of Israel—is cattle country, and your servants have cattle. **5** It would be a favour to us," they continued, "if this land were given to your servants as a holding; do not move us across the Jordan."**6** Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites, "Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here? **7** Why will you turn the minds of the Israelites from crossing into the land that Adonai has given them? **8** That is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to survey the land. **9** After going up to the wadi Eshcol and surveying the land, they turned the minds of the Israelites from invading the land that Adonai had given them. **10** Thereupon Adonai was incensed and swore, **11** 'None of the men from twenty years up who came out of Egypt shall see the land that I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they did not remain loyal to Me—**12** none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they remained loyal to Adonai.' **13** Adonai, incensed at Israel, made them wander in the wilderness, for forty years, until the whole generation that had provoked Adonai's displeasure was gone. **14** And now you, a breed of sinful men, have replaced your fathers, to add still further to Adonai's wrath against Israel. **15** If you turn away from [God] who then abandons them once more in the wilderness, you will bring calamity upon all this people."**16** Then they stepped up to him and said, "We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our children. **17** And we will hasten as shock-troops in the van of the Israelites until we have established them in their home, while our children stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land. **18** We will not return to our homes until the Israelites—every one of them—are in possession of their portion. **19** But we will not have a share with them in the territory beyond the Jordan, for we have received our share on the east side of the Jordan."

9 Adonai spoke further to Moses: **10** Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **11** you shall provide yourselves with places to serve you as cities of refuge to which a [male] killer who has slain a person unintentionally may flee. **12** The cities shall serve you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the killer may not die unless he has stood trial before the assembly. **13** The towns that you thus assign shall be six cities of refuge in all. **14** Three cities shall be designated beyond the Jordan, and the other three shall be designated in the land of Canaan: they shall serve as cities of refuge. **15** These six cities shall serve the Israelites and the resident aliens among them for refuge, so that any man who slays a person unintentionally may flee there. **16** Anyone, however, who strikes another with an iron object so that death results is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. **17** If one struck another with a stone tool that could cause death, and death resulted, that person is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. **18** Similarly, if one struck another with a wooden tool that could cause death, and death resulted, that person is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death. **19** The blood-avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; it is he who shall put that person to death upon encounter. **20** So, too, if one pushed another in hate or hurled something at [the victim] on purpose and death resulted, **21** or if one struck another with the hand in enmity and death resulted, the assailant shall be put to death; that person is a murderer. The blood-avenger shall put the murderer to death upon encounter. **22** But if [a man] pushed without malice aforethought or hurled any object at [the victim] unintentionally, **23** or inadvertently dropped upon [the victim] any deadly object of stone, and death resulted—though not being an enemy and not seeking to harm— **24** in such cases the assembly shall decide between the slayer and the blood-avenger. **25** The assembly shall protect the killer from the blood-avenger, and the assembly shall restore him to the city of refuge to which he fled, and there he shall remain until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the sacred oil. **26** But if the killer ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which he has fled, **27** and the blood-avenger comes upon him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the blood-avenger kills the killer, there is no bloodguilt on his account. **28** For he must remain inside his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; after the death of the high priest, the killer may return to his land holding. **29** Such shall be your law of procedure throughout the ages in all your settlements. **30** If anyone slays a person, the killer may be executed only on the evidence of witnesses; the testimony of a single witness against a person shall not suffice for a sentence of death. **31** You may not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of a capital crime; [a murderer] must be put to death. **32** Nor may you accept ransom in lieu of flight to a city of refuge, enabling a man to return to live on his land before the death of the priest. **33** You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and the land can have no expiation for blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. **34** You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I Myself abide, for I Adonai abide among the Israelite people.

JEREMIAH 2:4-28/3:4/4:1-2

Hear the word of Adonai, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel; Thus said Adonai: What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and have become themselves worthless? And they did not say: Where is Adonai who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness; but when you entered, you defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination. The priests did not say: Where is Adonai? And they who handle the Torah knew Me not; the rulers also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Therefore I will yet plead with you, says Adonai, and with your children's children will I plead. For cross over to the islands of Kittim, and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, even though they are no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be greatly appalled, said Adonai. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and dug cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Is Israel a servant? A homeborn slave? Why has Israel become a prey? The young lions roared against Israel, they roared loudly, and they made It's land a waste; It's cities are burned, without inhabitant. Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of your head. Have you not done this to yourself, in that you have forsaken Adonai your God, when God led you on the way? And now what do you gain by going to Egypt? To drink the waters of Sihor? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria? To drink the waters of the river? Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken Adonai your God, and that My fear is not in you, says Adonai God of hosts. For long ago I have broken your yoke, and burst your bonds; and you said, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down playing the harlot. And I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then have you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to Me? For though you wash you with lye, and use much soap, yet the stain of your iniquity is before Me, said Adonai God.

How can you say: I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley, know what you have done; you are a restive young camel doubling back on its tracks; A wild ass used to the wilderness, sniffing the wind in its desire; in its lust who can turn it away? All those who seek it need not weary themselves; in its month they shall find it. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst; but you said: There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. As the thief is ashamed when found, so is the House of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Who say to a piece of wood: You are my father; and to a stone: You have brought me forth; for they have turned their back to Me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say: Arise, and save us. But where are your gods that you have made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.

Jeremiah 3: 4

Will you not from this time cry to Me: My God, you are the guide of my youth?

Jeremiah 4: 1-2

If you will return, O Israel, says Adonai, return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, and do not waver, And if you swear, Adonai lives, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves by you, and by you shall they glory.