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# DAF KESHER

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## DVAR TORAH WAR BELOW, WAR ABOVE

There is a discrepancy between the way God talks about the war against Midian and the way Moshe does. God refers to the Midianites in the plural, whereas Moshe calls them Midian, using the singular. God says, "נִקְמַת ה' בְּמִדְיָן" but Moshe refers to it as "נִקְמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת הַמִּדְיָנִים".

One of the Kli Yakar's explanations is that the war was fought on two separate planes: physical and metaphysical. It was a war against the actual Midianite people; but it was also a war against the spiritual core of Midian. God and Moshe were each referring to different aspects of the war. God, telling Moshe what the people of Israel were to do, referred to the physical war and used the plural to indicate that Israel was going to war against the many Midianite people. But Moshe wanted Israel to appreciate that they were also engaged in a spiritual struggle against the *Saro shel Midian*, the ministering angel of Midian, so he used the singular.

This is a recurring theme in midrashim, that accompanying a physical war is a parallel spiritual confrontation. On the verse (Shemot 14:10) saying that Egypt (in the singular) was travelling after the people of Israel, the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 1:22) comments that this refers to the ministering angel of Egypt. Another Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 73:3) identifies the angel that Yaakov struggled with as *Saro shel Eisav*, Eisav's ministering angel.

The Shem Mishmuel, in his discussion of Chanukah, shows how that particular spiritual battle was fought. The Greeks are likened to the leopard, in Daniel's vision. The leopard's prominent characteristic, in Chazal's eyes, was their brazenness, their *chutzpah*. When the Chashmonaim had the *chutzpah* to take on the Greeks, they, in effect, sapped the Greek's strength by using their spiritual power for goodness. The spiritual victory was followed by a physical one.

What was the spiritual power of Midian and how do we struggle against it? The Shem Mishmuel (Matot 5677) suggests that Midian's power was the ability to sow dissent, even among brothers. This negative force has been with the Jewish people from the sale of Yosef (the Midianites were involved in his descent to Egypt), through the first and second Temples, and continues to plague us to this day. Pinchas (grandson of Aharon, the one who loves and pursues peace) was a key player in that original war and it will take Eliahu (which a number of midrashim identify with Pinchas) in the end of days to finally triumph over them. It was also essential that Moshe be alive for that war – Moshe was told that his death would follow the war – for his soul was one that unified the entire people of Israel and therefore was able to triumph over Midian.

We pray for Hashem's assistance and salvation in the physical wars Israel is forced to fight, and that he give us the wisdom and inner power to engage in the parallel spiritual battles.

Also in this week's Daf Keshet: • Menasheh Joins Reuven and Gad • Rabbi Yitzchak Hirshfeld: Holy Mouth, Holy Word

## STUDY GUIDE MENASHEH JOINS REUVEN AND GAD

There's a surprising development near the end of our parshah: part of the tribe of Menasheh gets part of the land on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. Only the tribes of Reuven and Gad requested land holdings in the newly conquered eastern side of the Jordan River. They had *mikneh rav*, many cattle, and the land was prime grazing land. But when Moshe distributes the land, part of the tribe of Menasheh joins Reuven and Gad in receiving their portion there.

### Bamidbar 32:33

Moshe gave to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuven, and **to part of the tribe of Menasheh son of Yosef** the kingdom of Sichon king of the Emorites and the kingdom of Og kind of the Bashan – the land with all its cities within borders, the cities of the surrounding territory.

### במדבר לב:לג

וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה לְבְנֵי גָד וְלְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן  
וְלַחֲצֵי שֵׁבֶט מְנַשֶּׁה בֶּן יוֹסֵף אֶת  
מַמְלַכַת סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָעַמֹּרִי וְאֶת מַמְלַכַת  
עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן הָאָרֶץ לְעַרְיָהּ בְּגִבְלַת  
עַרְי הָאָרֶץ סָבִיב.

Why is that? Why, after thirty-two verses of very detailed and tense negotiations between Moshe Rabbeinu and representatives of Reuven and Gad – with no mention at all of Menasheh! – does Menasheh get land in the former kingdoms of Sichon and Og? This issue caught the eyes of the commentators, who offer (at least) three very different approaches.

**The Ramban has a simple explanation.**

### Ramban Bamidbar 32:33

And a portion of the tribe of Menasheh son of Yosef: At first the tribe of Menasheh didn't come before Moshe. But when he distributed land to the two tribes he saw that the land was larger than they needed. He asked who wants to get an inheritance along with them, and there were people from the tribe of Menasheh that wanted it, perhaps cattlemen, and he gave them their portion.

### רמב"ן על במדבר לב:לג

וַלַחֲצֵי שֵׁבֶט מְנַשֶּׁה בֶּן יוֹסֵף מֵתַחֲלָה לֹא  
בָאוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה מְנַשֶּׁה, אֲבָל כֹּאשֶׁר  
חֶלֶק הָאָרֶץ לְשְׁנֵי הַשִּׁבְטִים רָאָה שֶׁהִיא  
אֶרֶץ גְּדוּלָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַרְאוּי לָהֶם וּבִקֵּשׁ  
מִי שִׁירְצָה לְהִתְנַחֵל עִמָּהֶם, וְהָיוּ  
אֲנָשִׁים מִשֵּׁבֶט מְנַשֶּׁה שִׁירְצוּ בָהּ, אוֹלֵי  
אֲנָשֵׁי מִקְנֵה הַיּוֹ, וְנָתַן לָהֶם חֶלְקָם:

In short, Moshe looked for volunteers to settle the area, and a number of families from Menasheh came forward. And it is likely that they, like Reuven and Gad, also had a lot of cattle and grasped the opportunity. [See also Devarim 3:13 and 15.]

**According to the Chizkuni there are deep roots to Menasheh's unique inheritance.**

### Chizkuni Bamidbar 32:33

And to a portion of the tribe of Menasheh – The people of Menasheh did not request an inheritance in the land of Sichon and Og; only the people of Reuven and Gad did. But since their father (Menasheh) caused the tribes to rend their garments in the episode of [Yosef's] goblet, their inheritance was given to them in two parts on the two banks of the Jordan.

### חזקוני על במדבר לב:לג

וַלַחֲצֵי שֵׁבֶט מְנַשֶּׁה - בְּנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה לֹא  
שָׁאלוּ לָהֶם נַחֲלָה בְּאֶרֶץ סִיחֹן וְעוֹג רַק  
בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן וְגַם שָׁאלוּ אֶלֶּא שַׁע"י  
שֶׁאֲבִיָּהֶם גָּרַם לָהֶם לְשִׁבְטִים שִׁקְרָעוּ  
בְּגָדֵיהֶם כִּמְעַשֶׂה הַגְּבִיעַ נִתְּנָה לוֹ  
נַחֲלָתוֹ בְּשְׁנֵי חֶלְקִים בְּשְׁנֵי עַבְרֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן.

### Bereishit 44:12-13

And he (Menasheh, at Yosef's command) searched [the brothers' sacks of grain], beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the goblet was found in Binyamin's sack.

### בראשית מד:יב-יג

יב) וַיִּחַפֵּשׂ בְּגִדְוֹל הַחֵל וּבִקְטָן כָּלֵה  
וַיִּמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּאַמְתַּחַת בְּנִימִן:  
יג) וַיִּקְרָעוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם וַיַּעֲמִס אִישׁ עַל  
חֻמְרוֹ וַיִּשְׁבוּ הָעִירָה:

The source for the Chizkuni's comment is a midrash in Bereishit Rabbah:

<p><b>Bereishit Rabbah 84:2</b>  Yaakov tore his clothing – Rabbi Pinchas quoted Rabbi Hoshaya: The tribes caused their father to tear. Where were they paid back? In Egypt, for it says, “They tore their garments” (Bereishit 44:13). Yosef caused the tribes to tear; and his descendant was paid back, for it says, “Yehoshua tore his clothing” (Yehoshua 7). Binyamin caused the tribes to tear, and when was he paid back? In Shushan the capital city, for it says, “Mordechai tore his clothing” (Esther 4). Menasheh caused the tribes to tear; therefore his inheritance was torn in half, half in the land of the Jordan and half in the land of Canaan.</p>	<p><b>בראשית רבה פד:ב</b>  ויקרע יעקב שמלותיו – ר' פנחס בשם רבי הושעיא אמר שבטים גרמו לאביהם לקרוע והיכן נפרע להם במצרים שנאמר (בראשית מד) ויקרעו שמלותם וגו' יוסף גרם לשבטים לקרוע עמד בן בנו ונפרע לו שנאמר (יהושע ז) ויקרע יהושע שמלותיו בנימין גרם לשבטים לקרוע והיכן נפרע לו בשושן הבירה שנאמר (אסתר ד) ויקרע מרדכי את בגדיו מנשה גרם לשבטים לקרוע לפיכך נתקרעה נחלתו חציה בארץ הירדן וחציה בארץ כנען:</p>
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Note the difference between what happened to Menasheh and what happened to the tribes, Yosef, and to Binyamin. All the others ended up with either they or their descendants tearing their clothing, whereas Menasheh's tribal inheritance was torn in two. **Why the difference?**

**The Netziv has a radically different view.**

<p><b>Haamek Davar Bamidbar 32:33</b>  They didn't request this, as it is explained in the first chapter of Yerushalmi Bikurim. Rather, Moshe requested this of them, as is explained in [our commentary on] Devarim 3:16.</p>	<p><b>העמק דבר על במדבר לב:לג</b>  ולחצי שבט מנשה וגו'. המה לא ביקשו כמבואר בירו' ביכורים פ"א. אלא משה ביקש מהם כמבואר הטעם בס' דברים ג' ט"ז:</p>
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The Yerushalmi he refers to is in Bikurim 1:8, where the Gemara states that Menasheh did not take the land by themselves (as opposed to Reuven and Gad who did), and, according to one Tannaitic approach, it is therefore obligated in bikurim. His comments in Devarim follow:

<p><b>Haamek Davar Devarim 3:16</b>  It seems that since Moshe Rabbeinu saw that on the other bank of the Jordan the power of Torah is weak – as we said earlier based on the Avot Derabbi Natan – he therefore tried to plant within them greats of Torah who would illuminate the darkness of the earth through their power of light. It says, “From Machir (son of Menasheh) there are <i>mechokelim</i>, givers of the law” (Shoftim ), that is, greats of Torah, heads of yeshivot ... From here we learn for all generations to try to live specifically in a place of Torah, for all of Jewish life is dependent on this. Thus it says in Ketubot 111a that just like it is prohibited to leave Israel for Bavel, so it is prohibited to leave Bavel to other countries. Rashi explains that this is because the yeshivot that always taught Torah were there. Even for burial, our sages said that being buried in a place of Torah is somewhat similar to the level of being buried in the land of Israel. All this Moshe taught for the generations through what he did in his time.</p>	<p><b>העמק דבר על דברים ג: טז</b>  ונראה דבשביל שראה משה רבינו דבעה"י כח התורה מעט כמש"כ לעיל בשם אדר"נ. ע"כ השתדל להשתיל בקרבם גדולי תורה שיאירו מחשכי הארץ באור כח שלהם. וכתוב מני מכיר ירדו מחוקיים. היינו גדולי תורה ראשי ישיבות ... ומזה ילמדו לדורות להשתדל לדור במקום תורה דוקא כי בזה תלוי חיי ישראל וכדאי' בכתובות דקי"א א' כשם שאסור לצאת מא"י לבבל כך אסור לתא מבבל לחו"ל ופרש"י לפי שיש שם ישיבות המרביצות תורה תמיד. ואפי' לענין קבורה אמרו חז"ל שם שטוב להקבר במקום תורה כמו במעלת א"י. כ"ז הראה משה רבינו לדורות מה שעשה בזמנו</p>
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The Tzror Hamor (Rabbi Avraham Saba': 1440-1508) goes in a similar direction, except he focuses on Reuven and Gad being able, through Menasheh, to benefit from the merit of Yosef.

## FACULTY HOLY MOUTH, HOLY WORD, BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

At the beginning of Parashat Matot, the Torah teaches the laws of vows – “Where one takes a vow or oath to forbid an object to himself. He shall not profane his words; he shall do exactly according to that which issued forth from his mouth” (Bamidbar 30:2-3).

But the remarkable fact that any person can create prohibitions and obligations by just uttering a few words in the form of a formal vow is only the tip of the iceberg.

To what extent do mere words which we may speak or, even casually think, obligate us?

Rav Safra was saying the Shema, we are told (Rashi on Makot 24a cites the Sheiltot, Sheilta 36 as the source of this anecdote) and was offered a certain price for the commodity he was selling. Since he was in the middle of reading the Shema, he did not respond. The potential buyer, thinking that his offers were being rejected, went on to offer more and more money, but all his offers were met with the same silence. In the end Rav Safra refused to take more than the original offer. He explained that from the outset, in his heart, he had already given his word to accept it. The Gemara describes him as one who is **דובר אמת בלבו**, who speaks truth in his heart. He treated his words as binding even though they were uttered in silence.

The Gemara (Ketubot 62b) tells of Rabbi Yannai, who mistakenly spoke negatively of his son-in-law, thinking that he had done something extremely wrong, and the son-in-law thereupon died. Rav Elchonon Wasserman, **הייד**, the great Rosh Yeshiva of Baranovich (between the two World Wars) and a very close talmid of the Chafetz Chaim, asks how this was possible. Hashem carries out the blessings and curses of tzadikim because, as the verse (Tehillim 145:19) says, He does the will of tzaddikim – **רצון יראיו יעשה** – But why should this apply to Rabbi Yannai, who certainly didn't want his mistaken curse to be implemented?

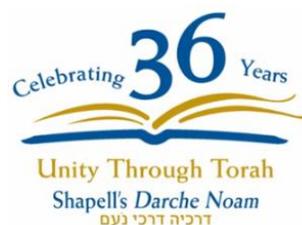
Says Rav Elchanan, we see from this Gemara that the mouth of a tzaddik can become like a sharp saw which cuts even without intention. Man, created in the image of God, is given the power of the Word to create and destroy. But most people lose this power. Through forbidden speech, lashon hara, profanity, and falsehoods the saw becomes dull and rusty. But the tzaddik who is careful never to defile his speech – **לא יחל דברו** - merits that there is active power to “all that issues from his mouth” – **ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה**.

When the sanctity of the mouth is preserved, then even the casual commitments and the unintentional curses and blessings (*kal vechomer*, all the more so) of the tzaddik become absolutely binding.

From holy mouths come holy words. Let us keep our mouths holy.

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This issue is dedicated in memory of:  
**Ariela Rut bat Avraham, z”l**  
**Rav Yonah ben Rav Gershon, z”l**  
**Naomi bat Menachem Mendel, z”l**