

# NCYI Youth Groups Parshat Matot

[http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh\\_TorahSummary.htm](http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh_TorahSummary.htm)

## Parsha Outline

- Laws of vows
- The war against Midyan
- Reuven and Gad request Transjordan

## Parsha Summaries

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/390360/jewish/Matot-Roundup.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/390360/jewish/Matot-Roundup.htm)

### Matot Roundup

Have you ever promised to do something and not kept your promise? In this weeks' Parshah, the Torah tells us to be very careful about making promises so that we don't accidentally break them. Instead of making a promise, one should say "I hope I can . . ."

Last week, we read how Pinchas killed Zimri and the Midianite woman when they tried to marry against G-d's will. G-d now commands the Jewish people to wage war against the Midianites for trying to convince the Jews to act immorally and worship idols. Moshe chooses 1,000 men from each of the twelve tribes to serve as soldiers and appoints Pinchas as one of the leaders of the army. When the Midianites see the Jewish army coming to fight them, they laugh and say, "The Jewish army is so small, we will win over them for sure!" However, with G-d's help, the Jewish army is victorious over the Midianites without losing even one soldier.

After the war is over, two tribes, Reuven and Gad, approach Moshe to make a request. They ask him if they can settle with their families on the east side of the Jordan River instead of crossing the river and entering the Land of Israel.

"Why didn't they want to join the rest of the Jewish People and enter into land of Israel?" you might wonder. Well, these two tribes owned a lot of cattle. They noticed that the land on the east of the Jordan was very fertile, with rich, green grass for their cattle to graze. Also, they knew that Moshe would not be buried in the Land of Israel and so they wanted to remain near Moshe's burial place.

At first, Moshe is very angry by their request. “Will you stay here, safe and protected, while your brothers go to war to conquer the Land of Israel?” he asks them. When the tribes clarify their request stating that they will gladly join their brothers in battle, Moshe agrees to let them settle there. When Moshe agrees, half of the tribe of Menashe joins the tribes of Reuven and Gad in settling the land east of the Jordan River.

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/534760/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/534760/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm)

## Matot Aliya Summary

**General Overview:** This week's Torah reading, *Matot*, begins with the laws of oaths. The Israelites wage battle against Midian and the spoils are divided and tithed. The tribes of Reuben and Gad request and receive territory outside the mainland of Israel.

---

**First Aliyah:** This section discusses the laws of verbal vows. A person who obligates him or herself with a vow is required to fulfill the vow. Under certain circumstances, a husband or father can annul vows made by his wife and daughter.

---

**Second Aliyah:** The Israelites are commanded to exact revenge from the Midianites for their part in seducing Jewish men to sin (described in the end of the Torah reading of Balak, Numbers 25). A 12,000-strong army of Israelites, led by Phinehas, waged battle against Midian. All adult Midianite males were killed, along with Balaam and Midian's five kings. The women, children, and battle spoils are brought back to the Israelite encampment.

---

**Third Aliyah:** Moses is enraged that the Midianite females were spared. "They were the primary culprits; the ones who seduced the Israelites and brought about the plague which killed so many!" Moses exclaimed. All the males and all women who possibly could have been involved in the campaign of seduction were killed. The soldiers are then instructed how to purify themselves from the ritual impurity they contracted from contact with corpses in the course of battle. They are also told how to kosher the food utensils which were among the spoils.

---

**Fourth Aliyah:** The spoils of the war were evenly divided between the soldiers and the greater community. From the portion of the spoils given to the soldiers, a tithe of 1/500 was given to Elazar the High Priest.

---

**Fifth Aliyah:** From the other portion of the spoils, the half divided amongst the rest of the Israelites, 1/50 was given to the Levites. The army officers count the soldiers who returned from battle, and determine that not a single man was lost in the war. To show gratitude to G-d for this miracle, the officers donate to the Tabernacle all the gold jewelry which they personally plundered from the Midianites.

---

**Sixth Aliyah:** The tribes of Reuben and Gad owned lots of cattle. Seeing that the eastern bank of the Jordan -- the lands of Sichon and Og which they had just conquered -- had abundant pasture, they asked Moses if they could remain and settle on the eastern bank. Moses angrily responds that they are following in the footsteps of the spies who were fearful of the Canaanites, did not want to enter the land of Israel, and discouraged the entire nation from doing so. The Reubenites and Gaddites respond that they will leave their cattle and families behind in fortified cities, and all their men will proceed into Israel with their brethren and lead them in the conquest of the land. Only after all the land has been conquered and settled would they return to the other side of the Jordan.

---

**Seventh Aliyah:** Moses accepts the offer of the Reubenites and Gaddites, and informs Joshua and Elazar the High Priest of the agreement. These two tribes, along with half of the tribe of Manasseh settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan, and conquer many of the areas wherein they encountered opposition.

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/3596>

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. *Bnei Yisrael* wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among *Bnei Yisrael*. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the *Ohel Mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the

Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of *Bnei Yisrael*, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

---

## Parsha Songs

[The lyrics are supplied here. For the tunes, please click on the link]

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/573769/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573769/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm)

### Lyrics

Moshe was told to command  
All the heads of the shevatim  
They should clearly understand  
The laws of promises of nedarim

If a promise you must say it should be kept right away  
Keep your word don't take too long don't take too long  
If a promise you must say it should be kept right away  
Keep your word don't take too long don't take too long

Although we may find it hard  
The lesson we learn is clear  
Our tongues we must guard  
And choose our words with care

Some of the shevatim had many sheep  
And needed land for their cattle  
Yet their promise they did keep  
To join Bnei Yisroel in their battle

If a promise you must say it should be kept right away  
Keep your word don't take too long don't take too long

If a promise you must say it should be kept right away  
Keep your word don't take too long don't take too long

## Parsha Questions & Answers

Selected from the following websites:

[http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_details.php?mid=7077](http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=7077)

[http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_details.php?mid=1678](http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=1678)

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1122>

The following are a selection of questions obtained from the above mentioned websites.

### K-2

#### Questions

1. What are the Rashei Matot of Bnei Yisrael?
2. What is a neder?
3. What type of soldiers did Moshe send to fight against Midian?
4. Why didn't the soldiers want to go to war?
5. What type of dish needs tevilat keilim (immersion in a mikveh)?
6. How do we kasher dishes used by the goyim?
7. Why were those who went to battle against Midian required to stay outside the machaneh?
8. Why did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe want to live on the other side of the Yarden?
9. What was Moshe's response and who did Moshe compare them to?
10. What did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe do for their brothers in order to merit receiving Gilad, the land they requested?

#### Answers

1. The heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael
2. A promise
3. tzadikim
4. Because they knew that Moshe was supposed to die afterwards
5. Glass or metal dishes that belonged to goyim
6. We have to make it as hot as they ever used it (i.e., boil it if they boiled with it [hagalah], and heat it up to the highest temperature that they baked with it [libun])
7. They were impure because they were in contact with dead bodies
8. Because they needed a lot of land for their many animals
9. Moshe asked why they should be allowed to stay back while their brothers go fight. Moshe compared them to the meraglim who tried to discourage the Bnei Yisrael from entering Eretz Yisrael
10. They went ahead of the rest of Bnei Yisrael to help them settle into their respective areas

## 3-4

### Questions

1. What are the Rashei Matot of Bnei Yisrael?
2. What is a neder?
3. Who may annul a vow?
4. What type of soldiers did Moshe send to fight against Midian?
5. Why didn't the soldiers want to go to war?
6. What did the soldiers do with all of the gold, silver, and jewels that they captured during the war?
7. To whom did Moshe give most of it?
8. What type of dish needs tevilat keilim (immersion in a mikveh)?
9. How do we kasher dishes used by the goyim?
10. Why were those who went to battle against Midian required to stay outside the machaneh?
11. Why were the Jewish people not commanded to attack Moav as they were to attack Midian?
12. Why did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe want to live on the other side of the Yarden?
13. What was Moshe's response and who did Moshe compare them to?
14. What did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe do to alleviate their concern for their families and cattle?
15. What did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe do for their brothers in order to merit receiving Gilad, the land they requested?

### Answers

1. The heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael
2. A promise
3. Preferably, an expert in the laws of nedarim. Otherwise, three ordinary people
4. tzadikim
5. Because they knew that Moshe was supposed to die afterwards
6. They brought it all to Moshe
7. To the soldiers
8. Glass or metal dishes that belonged to goyim
9. We have to make it as hot as they ever used it (i.e., boil it if they boiled with it [hagalah], and heat it up to the highest temperature that they baked with it [libun])
10. They were impure because they were in contact with dead bodies
11. Because Moav acted out of fear against the Jewish people. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav
12. Because they needed a lot of land for their many animals

13. Moshe asked why they should be allowed to stay back while their brothers go fight. Moshe compared them to the meraglim who tried to discourage the Bnei Yisrael from entering Eretz Yisrael
14. They fortified cities for their families and built enclosures for their cattle, and then accompanied the rest of Am Yisrael to assist in conquering Eretz Yisrael
15. They went ahead of the rest of Bnei Yisrael to help them settle into their respective areas

## 5-6

### Questions

1. What are the Rashei Matot of Bnei Yisrael?
2. What is a neder?
3. Who may annul a vow?
4. What type of soldiers did Moshe send to fight against Midian?
5. Why didn't the soldiers want to go to war?
6. What magic did Bilam do during the war?
7. How did Pinchas bring them down?
8. What did the soldiers do with all of the gold, silver, and jewels that they captured during the war?
9. To whom did Moshe give most of it?
10. What type of dish needs tevilat keilim (immersion in a mikveh)?
11. How do we kasher dishes used by the goyim?
12. Why were those who went to battle against Midian required to stay outside the machaneh?
13. Why were the Jewish people not commanded to attack Moav as they were to attack Midian?
14. Why did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe want to live on the other side of the Yarden?
15. What was Moshe's response and who did Moshe compare them to?
16. What did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe do to alleviate their concern for their families and cattle?
17. What did the shevatim of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menashe do for their brothers in order to merit receiving Gilad, the land they requested?
18. Which two kings/kingdoms occupied the area of Gilad?
19. Who were the two people responsible for capturing this territory?
20. What does Uvo Tidbak mean?

### Answers

1. The heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael
2. A promise
3. Preferably, an expert in the laws of nedarim. Otherwise, three ordinary people
4. tzadikim

5. Because they knew that Moshe was supposed to die afterwards
6. He made the five kings of Midian and himself fly up into the air
7. By pointing the words of the kohen gadol's tzitz at them
8. They brought it all to Moshe
9. To the soldiers
10. Glass or metal dishes that belonged to goyim
11. We have to make it as hot as they ever used it (i.e., boil it if they boiled with it [hagalah], and heat it up to the highest temperature that they baked with it [libun])
12. They were impure because they were in contact with dead bodies
13. Because Moav acted out of fear against the Jewish people. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav
14. Because they needed a lot of land for their many animals
15. Moshe asked why they should be allowed to stay back while their brothers go fight. Moshe compared them to the meraglim who tried to discourage the Bnei Yisrael from entering Eretz Yisrael
16. They fortified cities for their families and built enclosures for their cattle, and then accompanied the rest of Am Yisrael to assist in conquering Eretz Yisrael
17. They went ahead of the rest of Bnei Yisrael to help them settle into their respective areas
18. Sichon king of the Emorites and Og king of the Bashan
19. Machir and Ya'ir, descendants of Shevat Menashe
20. To cling to HaShem. This means to be close to HaShem, learn His Torah, and do His mitzvoth

## Parsha Stories

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/706394/jewish/Responsible-Words.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/706394/jewish/Responsible-Words.htm)

### Responsible Words

"Lisa, can you post a letter for me?" Lisa's mother came into the living room where Lisa lay sprawled on the couch, reading a book.

Lisa looked up from her book, stretched and replied, "Yes, sure Mom, I will go and post it in a minute."

Her mother looked relieved, "Thank you, darling, I'll leave the letter here." She placed it on the coffee table. "It is a very important letter so please don't forget -- it needs to be in the post before 5:00 this afternoon."

"Okay," said Lisa, looking at her watch. It read 4 pm. "I've still got time," she thought to herself, and she turned back to her book.

*A few hours later, at the supper table:*

"Lisa, did you post that letter?" her mother asked, as Lisa ate a delicious piece of roast chicken.

"Oh no!" said Lisa. "I meant to post it after reading the book, but I became so engrossed that I forgot all about it!"

"But Lisa, I told you it was important, how could you forget?"

Lisa looked upset, and stopped eating. "What should I do?" she asked.

"The best thing you can do now is go and post the letter at the main Post Office on Carfax Street. I know it's much further away, but they have an evening collection there. Do that as soon as you've finished eating," replied her mother. "You should learn to be more responsible in keeping your word," she added.

Lisa looked down at the table. "I'm sorry," she mumbled.

"I should have learned from this week's Torah reading," she said, speaking up.

"You should have?" asked her mother.

"She's right," said her father, "it talks all about promises."

"Yes," said Lisa, "If a person makes a promise to G-d, a vow, like to give 20 cents to charity every day, and they feel it is too difficult, like because their pocket money was cut down, they have to go to a rabbi to get it annulled -- it's not a simple matter."

"You are right, it is not simple," agreed her father. "This is why we are very careful about making promises. And if we do make a promise -- we make sure that we keep it!"

"That's exactly what I heard, Dad," said Lisa. "Anyway," she said, "I've finished eating now. I will quickly go and post the letter. See you later!"

"Thank you," her mother said as she left the room. Then her mother murmured under her breath: "Responsible words."

Her husband heard. "Yes," he said. "That's what it's all about. Responsible words. Like the Torah."

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/385641/jewish/Matot-Parshah-Lesson.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/385641/jewish/Matot-Parshah-Lesson.htm)

## Matot Parshah Lesson

By [Malka Touger](#)

"When are we going to finally get to go to Mount Rushmore?" Josh asked for the hundredth time.

"We have to drive up just one more mountain," his father answered patiently.

"But dad," said Naomi, "we just drove up a mountain."

"You're right, Naomi. We drove up one mountain, but there is still some more mountains to go."

"Dad, we keep doing that over and over again," Josh whined. "Every time we reach the top, we keep having to climb even higher."

"You don't know how right you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Levy.

"What do you mean, Mom?" asked Naomi.

"Well, let's think about what Josh just said. We read in the Torah about the travels of the Jewish people. The Torah tells us about the many destinations through which the Jewish people passed as they traveled in the desert. The Torah begins by stating, 'These are the journeys of the Jewish nation as they came out of the land of Egypt.'

"The verse says 'the journeys', but it only took one journey, the very first one -- from Ra'amses to Sukkot -- for the Jewish people to get out of Egypt. Sukkot is already out of the boundaries of Egypt. Then why does the Torah say 'journeys?'

"The Torah is not only telling us about the experiences of the Jewish people at that time. The Torah is teaching us about the life of a Jewish person at all times. A Jew is always on a journey away from Egypt. In Hebrew the word Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) means a place that is narrow and pressing. In our daily life, this means the situations that we find ourselves where we could do good or bad, situations are uncomfortable and pressing for us to the not-good. Our evil instinct in us is constantly on the alert, trying to convince and help us to take the wrong turns.

"Every time we overcome this and do what is right, it's like a climb up a mountain. We feel good about finally reaching the top, but then we remember that the Torah said 'journeys.' Once we reach a peak, we realize that even though we are now in a place that at one time seemed very high, there are new, even higher peaks that we can reach.

"So Josh was quite right. We are always climbing higher and higher on his many journeys to leave his personal 'Egypt.'

"There is another lesson that we can learn from the Torah. If a person is going through a hard time -- even if he feels stuck in one place in his own 'Egypt' -- he should not despair. After all, despite the many journeys that followed, it only took one journey for the Jewish people to get out of 'Egypt.'"

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/Parshat-Matot.pdf?docid=3603&ie=1&showobject=1>

## LESSONS FROM THE PARSHA

### KASHER YOUR NESHAMA

"Oy vey! A glass of milk fell into the boiling pot of chicken." "Maybe we can save it, dear. Is the volume of food in the pot sixty times the amount of milk that fell?" "No." "Can the milk be removed, or has it spread all over the pot?" "It mixed into everything." "Then we have a problem. Both the mixture of meat and milk and the pot have both become *ossur* (forbidden). We will have to throw away the food, and *kasher* the pot." "Oh well. My dear husband, what can we do? It should be a *kapora* (atonement). How do we *kasher* the pot?" "That is a timely question, dear. We learn the laws of *kashering kelim* (vessels) from the war with Midian in this week's parasha. Elazar HaKohen spoke to the soldiers who had just returned from the war with *kelim*, captured from the non-Jews. He instructed them how to *kasher* those *kelim*. 'Everything that came through fire, pass it through the fire, and purify it' (Bamidbar 31:23)." "How do we translate that into practical halacha?" "First we must clean the *keli* thoroughly. In our case, we must wash and scrape off all remnants of the non-kosher food that was stuck to the pot, both inside and out. We must also remove any rust that has accumulated on the *keli*. The metal must be perfectly clean. Secondly, we must heat the *keli* in the same way that it was used to cook. Our chicken pot was used for cooking with water. The pot was heated until the water and food inside reached boiling temperature. Therefore, the pot must be placed into boiling water to remove all traces of the taste of the *ossur* food that had been absorbed into the metal." "As I said, my dear husband, it should be a *kapora*."

"My dear wife, you are thinking along the same lines as the Chofetz Chaim."

"Thank you for the compliment. What does Rav Yisrael Meir have to say about *kashering kelim*?" "He compares the purification of the *keli* to the purification of our

*neshamos* when we do *teshuva*. The first step is to remove the dirt and rust of the *aveyros* from our *neshamos*. We accomplish this by regretting our past mistakes and firmly resolving to never repeat them in the future. Secondly, we must be on our guard. We have to form a strategy to beat the yetzer hora, in the same way that he beat us. Hashem will put us into the same situation that led to our sin in the past, and the yetzer hora will do his utmost to convince us to commit the same sin. If he caused us to sin with the fire of *hislahavus* (getting overly excited and worked up), then we must beat him with *hislahavus* for the mitzvah of doing *teshuva*. Just as the *keli* that became treif through boiling must be *kashered* through boiling, so too the *aveyra* that came about from a boiling incitement, must be ‘burned out’ with a boiling fervor for *teshuva*.” “That is fascinating, dear. I am sure that the holy Chofetz Chaim spoke about the *aveyra* of Loshon Hora.” “Yes he did. That is a sin committed with improper speech. The *teshuva* is to speak properly. The main action required is toiling in Torah. Those holy words crossing his lips will atone for the impure ones that he had spoken. Rav Yisrael Meir goes a step farther and says that the main ‘*kashering*’ of a person’s soul is with Torah. Its holy purity renders a person’s soul clean and free of *aveyros*.” “May we all reach his *adrayga* (spiritual level).”

*Kinderlach* . . .

*The principle of kashering kelim is called “kabolo kach polto” – the issur was absorbed into the keli in a specific way, and must be removed in the same way. So too with our neshamos. The yetzer hora contaminates our souls with different strategies. We have to use his own strategy against him to purify ourselves from the tumah that he has wrought upon us. That way we will do teshuva, and become clean and pure to serve Hashem.*

## WINNING THE BATTLE

Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Calculate the total of the captured spoils...You shall take it from their (the soldier’s) half and give it to Elazar the Kohen...And from the spoils of the Bnei Yisrael...you shall give to the Leviim’” (Bamidbar 31:25-30). The soldiers had just returned from the war against Midian. The spoils of war must now be divided up. Before anyone takes anything for himself, he must first give to the Kohanim and Leviim. Why? he Malbim explains that soldiers who go to war are prone to make a fundamental mistake. They may think that their might and their swords win the battle against the enemy. Therefore, they must first give spoils to Elazar the Kohen Godol. In his *zechus* (merit) and the *zechus* of his son Pinchas who carried the holy vessels in his hand, they merited to conquer and inherit Eretz Yisrael. The Ha’amek Davar elaborates that one who goes to fight a battle asks the spiritual leader of the nation to pray for his safety and success. The Kohen Gadol is that leader who atones for Bnei Yisrael and leads the *Avodah* (Divine Service). Therefore, he deserves a bigger portion of the spoils. The Ha’amek Davar adds that the Leviim toiled in Torah. Their Torah learning guarded Klal Yisrael and protected them from all evil. Therefore, those who do not go to war, rather sit safely in their homes, must first give a portion of their spoils to the Leviim. In the *zechus* of the Torah learning of Shevet Levi the rest of the nation is protected.

*Kinderlach . . .*

*During these Three Weeks, we mourn the losses of many battles and wars, resulting in death and destruction to many Jewish communities. The Tanach and our sages point out that each churban (destruction) was preceded by a weakening in some aspect of Avodas Hashem (Service to Hashem). Who fights our wars? "Hashem is Master of war" (Shemos 15:3). We are still in golus (exile). We are surrounded by many enemies. What will protect us from them? Torah Learning and Divine Service, just as the Torah learned by the Leviim protected the nation back in the days of the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. Nowadays, Divine service consists of prayers. Kinderlach, learn Torah, pray to Hashem, protect our nation, and with His Help bring an end to this golus.*

<http://www.aish.com/torahportion/pArchive.asp?eventType=42&eventName=Matot>

There are other stories available as well at the above website.

[http://www.aish.com/torahportion/family/Too\\_much\\_is\\_not\\_Good.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/family/Too_much_is_not_Good.asp)

**Matot** (Numbers 30:2-32:42)

**Too Much is No Good**

## From this week's Torah Portion

Sometimes what we think is being kind is really being cruel. In this week's Torah portion (31:14) we learn of some officers who disobeyed Moses by doing something they thought was being kind, but ended up causing a cruel tragedy to happen. We can learn from here to think twice about whether the 'kindness' we are doing is really kind.

---

## Story

*In our story, a kid discovers that sometimes what we think is being nice is really being mean.*

### NICE TRY

"Chuckie...Amy, be sure to behave and do what Laura tells you, and I'll be home soon, okay?" smiled Mrs. Jacobs, slinging her carry bag over her shoulder.

"Thanks, Laura, I really appreciate you coming over and babysitting on such short notice. The kids just had lunch, but if they get hungry later, you can give them a brownie from that tray over there-but only one or two. Oh and, of course, help yourself to whatever you'd like.

The woman hadn't been out the door more than ten seconds when Laura felt four little hands tugging on her shirt.

"We wanna treat! We wanna treat!" She looked down at the brightly smiling faces.

"Oh come on, guys. Your mom just left. Why don't you play a while, or if you want I'll read you a story."

The smiles quickly melted into frowns.

"Why not? Why you being mean?"

"Yeah, meanie, meanie babysitter!"

Laura really liked little kids and the last thing she wanted to be was mean. So she walked over to the tray of fresh brownies and handed them each one. The smiles returned brighter than ever.

"Thank you, you, you!"

"Nicey, nicey babysitter!"

She then sat the kids down to read them a story, but when she finished the first chapter, they began the now familiar chant:

"We wanna treat!"

"We wanna 'nother treat!"

She tried to ignore it and read the next chapter, but they only sang louder.

"Be nice not mean!"

"Nice not mean!"

Laura didn't know what to do. The kids, despite their slightly obnoxious behavior, were really very cute. She knew their mom had said not to give them a lot, but it wasn't such a big deal, so why *shouldn't* she be nice to the kids and give them another one?

"Nice, nice babysitter!"

"Nicest in the world!"

Laura smiled and thought that would be the end of it-but it was only the beginning. After each chapter of the book, the kids begged her for brownies, making sure to say how nice she was for giving them-and how mean she would be not to. Each time, Laura tried to put them off, but their big, pleading eyes melted her heart and made her want to be nice to them and let them have another treat.

Everything went fine until chapter seven. Laura was in the middle of reading, when she heard a groan. She looked from the storybook up and saw Chuckie lying on the floor.

"Oh...don't feel good." he moaned, rocking back and forth.

"Me neither!" whimpered Amy, slumped back on her little chair.

*Oh, no!* Laura panicked. The kids had been fine just a moment ago and now they both seemed so sick. Not knowing what to do, she dialed the cell-phone number their mother had left with her in case of an emergency.

A few minutes later a car pulled up fast into the driveway and Mrs. Jacobs flung open front door. She saw both kids now lying on the couch, looking pale.

"Laura, what happened?" the woman asked, worriedly.

"Well, they were fine. We were having a great time, I was reading them a story and then they just got sick..."

"Just like that?"

Laura lowered her head and added, "Well, I think maybe I gave them too many brownies..."

Mrs. Jacobs turned to see the half emptied tray.

"What? You mean you gave them *all* of those?"

"Um, well, yeah. They kept asking and I just wanted to be...you know...nice to them." she mumbled.

Now that she realized that except for their tummy aches, the kids were going to be all right, Mrs. Jacobs calmed down, and turned to look at Laura, who obviously felt really bad.

"Laura, you're a nice kid and I know you just wanted to be nice to Chuckie and Amy, but giving them all those brownies made them sick."

"Yeah, I know that now and I'm really sorry. I guess to really be nice to people sometime you have to do things that seem mean."

---

## Discussion Questions

### Ages 3-5

Q. How did Laura feel at first when she was giving the kids all those brownies?

A. She thought that by doing it she was being nice.

Q. How did she feel in the end?

A. She realized that it would have really been nicer to have said 'no' so they wouldn't have gotten sick.

### Ages 6-9

Q. What life-lesson do you think Laura learned that day?

A. She'd felt that being nice to people meant giving them what they wanted, but she discovered that sometime it's being nicer to people, not to.

Q. How is it possible to know when being what we think is kind, is really being cruel?

A. We should try to look down the road at the results-if by giving someone something or doing what they ask, we would be harming them, ourselves, or others, it's quite likely that kind thing to do would be to say 'no.'

### Ages 10 and Up

Q. Our sages teach that 'being kind to the cruel will lead to being cruel to the kind.' How do you understand this idea?

A. A person has to look at the big picture. For instance, on the surface it might seem kind and merciful to pardon a violent criminal or terrorist and free him from jail. However a deeper look will show us that such a person is likely to hurt innocent people if we let him go-therefore freeing him would in fact be an act of cruelty. Additionally, on a spiritual level, once a person skews true values and a clear outlook by being inappropriately kind, his lack of ethical clarity will likely cause him to eventually act inappropriately cruel.

Q. What if being kind to someone would mean being unkind toward ourselves-what takes priority?

A. It takes balance. If doing something for someone else causes us a minor inconvenience, most likely we should nevertheless help. If however what someone asks of us involves serious harm or compromise of our values, we should know that it is no act of kindness to do it and we come first.

## Parsha Games

<http://www.aje.org.uk/harayon/>

### K-2

The parashah mentions the laws concerning making vows

#### **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Doing what we say we'll do**

#### **Activity**

The concept of a 'promise' is hard for this age group, but we can emphasize the importance of doing what we say we will do. Talk about some examples from their own experiences such as:  
"I'll clear up the toys when I've finished playing".  
"I'll let my sister have a turn on the bike soon".

#### **Sing this song.**

##### **Tune: London Bridge is Falling Down**

Always do what we say, what we say, what we say,  
Always do what we say, what we say.

Clear the toys when we say etc  
Take our turn when we say etc

### 3-4

The Tribes of Reuven, Gad and half the Tribe of Menasheh asked Moshe if they could stay on the east side of the River Jordan, as it was good grazing land for their animals. Moshe agreed only after the leaders of these tribes promised to first help the rest of the Bnei Yisrael to settle in Eretz Yisrael

#### **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Thinking of others**

#### **Activity**

Sometimes we can only see a situation from our own point of view. We should always try and think what impact our actions have on others. Using scenarios from everyday life, have groups of willing children prepare and act out scenes to illustrate the above.

Examples of situations:

- Having friends come round to play,
- School break-time

## 5-6

The parashah tells us that when a person makes a promise they must keep it

### **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Being careful with our words**

### **Activity**

Although the parashah focuses on keeping promises, which can be made thoughtlessly and then not kept, we must be careful with all the 'words' we say in our daily lives. Carelessly spoken words can often humiliate or offend people. Below are some examples of situations that could be handled in a sensitive or insensitive manner. Pairs of children examine these scenarios, with each showing either a good or bad way of the verbal handling the situation.

1. Choosing a team for sport
2. Giving directions to a tourist who doesn't speak good English
3. Meeting a new pupil to your class