

Torah Portion: Matot/ Masei (Tribes/ journeys of) Dealing With Unfinished Business

This double portion brings us to the end of the Book of Numbers and deals with unfinished business before the giving of the Book of Deuteronomy. The Torah portion goes from the end of Chapter 30 to the end of the book, in chapter 36. The Haftarah portion, on this the first Sabbath of Affliction concerns with the passage in Jeremiah which outlines the reasons for the captivity – rampant idolatry and immorality. The New Testament portion deals with James pleas to backsliding believers to abandon their folly and return to the L-rd.

I will give a brief summary of its amazing content, so that through the ups and downs of our lives, our focus remains on the L-rd through His Word.

Chapter 31 deals with the police action against Moab and 31:49 indicates that not a single man was lost during the campaign.

Chapter 32 deals with the request of Steuben and Gad to settle in the land which was taken from Sihon and Og just across the Jordan from the Promised Land.

Chapter 33 lists the 41 campsites of the House of Jacob from the exodus from Egypt until their final camp on the plains of Moab so the people would remember not to wander.

Chapter 34 deals with the eventual division of the Holy land among the tribes.

Chapter 35 discusses the 48 Levitical towns scattered among the people and the 6 cities of refuge, where a man who accidentally killed someone, could have his case heard.

Chapter 36 outlines how tribal inheritance was to be protected.

The people had to deal with unfinished business before they were ready to listen to the second giving of the Law. Do you have any unfinished business which is keeping you from plunging into His Word? **Chazak, Chazak, V'Nitchazek**

Sermon: The Shema, our call to Undistracted Devotion

This passage in Deuteronomy is a succinct summary of the kind of response the people are to have to G-d and His Word. Anything less than undistracted devotion, is an unacceptable reaction to our G-d through His Word.

Everything that the Bible teaches is based on the Ten Words, which alone were written in stone; the rest is extensions, applications and explanations. This call for undistracted devotion is divided into seven sections.

1. The **Great Admonition** for Israel to listen until we hear the amazing truth about G-d and His Word. Have you heard and are you listening?
2. The **Great Declaration** is that YHVH, our G-d, is YHVH Echad. There is only one G-d who

is a plural singularity (three in one). Any other understanding of this reality is deficient or false.

Polytheists (a belief in many gods) and pantheists (a belief that everything is god) and agnostics (not sure about G-d) and atheists (deny the existence of G-d) and monotheists who deny the trinity of G-d are wrong. The unchanging, almighty and eternal G-d is Echad (a plural singularity) and not Yichad (a simple singularity).

Do you know what our G-d says about Himself? From the get go, He is the only G-d and has always been a plural singularity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. **Three exhortations** to serve G-d, first, with all your **being** (heart, soul and strength), then with all your **speech** (sitting, walking, lying down, rising up), and finally with all your **devotion** (on your hands, as frontlets for your eyes, on your gates and on your doorposts). He needs to be the central, singular focus of our lives, even as we go about the business of living. Is He the single, central focus of your life? What are you inundating your life with?

4. Finally **One Obligation**. We are to teach the Commandments diligently to our children and model the kind of devotion we want to pass on to them. The word in Hebrew goes beyond simply teaching our children. It stipulates that His Word is to be passed on to them and received by them, so that they possess it and apply it to their lives with nothing less than undistracted devotion. You cannot pass on what you do not possess. Is your devotion to G-d undistracted?

As we celebrate our fifteenth year as a congregation, let us make the seven sections of this call, the foundation upon which we build our lives, generationally.

We have to listen to the L-rd through His Word, until we actually hear what it is saying.

We have to declare that there is only One G-d and He is and always has been Echad (a plural singularity).

We have to serve this plural singularity with all of our being, and with all of our speech and with a devotion that makes Him, through His Word, the central and singular focus of our lives. Nothing less is an adequate or acceptable response. Are you making an adequate response?

We have to pass the baton onto our children so that not just our genes and our DNA are passed on to our children, but also our devotion to the L-rd through His Word.

Our children have to be the next generation, if we are not just going to be the last generation.

Let us rejoice, relax and renew ourselves this summer, because how we live our lives is either our greatest witness or our greatest weakness. Which one is it for you?

Let's pray.