

Parsha Paths:

Matot Masai: Band of Brothers

Will Your Brothers Go to War and You Will Stay Here?

The amount of booty, other than the spoil that the troops had plundered, came to 675,000 sheep (Bamidbar 31:32)

The Reubenites and the Gadites owned cattle in very great numbers. (Bamidbar 32:1)

Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites, “Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here? Why will you turn the minds of the Israelites from crossing into the land that GOD has given them? That is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to survey the land . (Bamidbar 32:6-8)

Then they stepped up to him and said, “We will build here sheepfolds for our flocks and towns for our dependents (Bamidbar 32:16)

Build towns for your children and sheepfolds for your flocks, but do what you have promised (Bamidbar 32:24)

Rashi: נבנה למקננו פה WE WILL BUILD [SHEEP FOLDS] FOR OUR CATTLE HERE — They paid more regard to their property than to their sons and daughters, because they mentioned their cattle before their children. Moses said to them, “Not so! Make the chief thing the chief thing and what is subordinate subordinate. First build cities for your little ones and afterwards enclosures for your flocks”

The Mystery of Menashe (and Ephraim)

The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, dispossessing the Amorites who were there; so Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. (Bamidbar 32:39-40)

The tribe of Manasseh. Chieftain of the Manassites: Gamaliel son of Pedahzur. His troop, as enrolled: **32,200**. (Bamidbar 2:20)

Those are the clans of Manasseh; men enrolled: **52,700** (Bamidbar 26:34)

His [Ephraim's] daughter was Sheerah, who built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzen-sheerah. (Chronicles 1 7:20)s numbers

How Many Yairs?

Yair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, which he renamed Havvot-Yair. (Bamidbar 32:41)

Yair son of Manasseh received the whole Argob district (that is, Bashan) as far as the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and named it after himself: Havvot-Yair—as is still the case. (Devarim 3:14)

And Seguv begot Yair, who had twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead (I Chronicles 2:22).

After him arose Yair the Gileadite, and he led Israel for twenty-two years. He had thirty sons, who rode on thirty burros and owned thirty boroughs in the region of Gilead; these are called Havvot-Yair to this day. (Judges 10:3)

and all of Havvot-Yair in Bashan, sixty towns; (Joshua 13:30)

Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead—he governed the Havvot-Yair son of Manasseh that are in Gilead, and he also governed the district of Argob that is in Bashan, sixty large towns with walls and bronze bars; (Melachim I 4:13)

Two Banks to the Jordan

MISHNA: There are three lands with regard to presumptive ownership: Judea, and Transjordan, and the Galilee. [If the prior owner of the field] was in Judea and [another] took possession of his field in the Galilee, or if he was in the Galilee and another took possession of his field in Judea, [the possessor does not establish] presumptive ownership until [the one possessing the field] will be with the prior owner in one province. (Bava Batra 38a)

“There are three territories in respect to the law of removal [of sheviit produce]: [these are]: Judea, Transjordan, and Galilee, and there are three territories in each one.” (Sheviit 9:2)

“Eretz Yisrael is divided into three separate lands with regard to marriage: Judea, Transjordan, and the Galilee.” (Ketubot 13:10)

שתי ידי לך הקדשתי מולדת, שתי ידי למגל ומגן
אך תשכח ימיני הבוגדת אם אשכח את שמאל הירדן
שתי גדות לירדן, זו שלנו – זו גם כן! (זאב ז'בוטינסקי)

The Fate of the Eastern Tribes

When they came to the region of the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a great conspicuous altar. A report reached the Israelites: "The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar opposite the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, across from the Israelites." When the Israelites heard this, the whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh to make war on them (Joshua 22:10-12)

We did this thing only out of our concern that, in time to come, your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the ETERNAL, the God of Israel (Joshua 22:24)

But they trespassed against the God of their ancestors by going astray after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel roused the spirit of King Pul of Assyria—the spirit of King Tillegath-pilneser of Assyria—and he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, to this day. (Divrei haYamim 5:25-26)

You find similarly with the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, who were wealthy and they had considerable livestock. But they loved their money and settled themselves outside of the Land of Israel. That is why they were exiled first among all the tribes, as it is stated: "He exiled the Reubenite, the Gadite, and half the tribe of Manasseh" (I Chronicles 5:26). What caused this for them? It is because they separated themselves from their brethren because of their acquisitions. From where is it derived? It is from what is written in the Torah: "The children of Reuben [and the children of Gad] had much livestock..." (Bamidbar Rabbah 22:7)

Cities of Refuge

The towns that you thus assign shall be six cities of refuge in all. 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 (Bamidbar 35:13-14)

Then Moses set aside three cities on the east side of the Jordan to which a manslayer could escape, one who unwittingly slew another person without having been an enemy in the past; that person could flee to one of these cities and live:
Bezer, in the wilderness on the plains, belonging to the Reubenites; Ramoth, in Gilead, belonging to the Gadites; and Golan, in Bashan, belonging to the Manassites (Devarim 4:41-43)

So they set aside Kedesh in the hill country of Naphtali in Galilee, Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba—that is, Hebron—in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 20:7)

But to the descendants of Aaron the priest they assigned Hebron—the city of refuge for manslayers—together with its pastures (Joshua 21:13)

Haftarah: The Desert as a Refuge

Go proclaim to Jerusalem: Thus said the LORD: I accounted to your favor The devotion of your youth, Your love as a bride— How you followed Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown. (Jeremiah 2)

Oh, to be in the desert, At an encampment for wayfarers! Oh, to leave my people, To go away from them— For they are all adulterers, A band of rogues. (Jeremiah 9)

Near Living Waters

For My people have done a twofold wrong: They have forsaken Me, the Fount of living waters, And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, Which cannot even hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13)

Thus the LORD said to me: “Go buy yourself a loincloth of linen, and put it around your loins, but do not dip it into water.” So I bought the loincloth in accordance with the LORD’s command, and put it about my loins. And the word of the LORD came to me a second time: “Take the loincloth which you bought, which is about your loins, and go at once to Perath and cover it up there in a cleft of the rock.” (Jeremiah 13)