



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

Parshas Matos-Masei 5773

In living a Torah-inspired life, we endeavor to fill our days with sanctity and spirituality. Our quotidian routine, however, demands that we deal with the mundane. The pursuit of a career, the need to care for our physical self, and a myriad of other commonplace matters all occupy our thoughts and time. Moreover, the allure of the material world beckons and entices us, further confusing and complicating the clear spiritual journey that we have set out for ourselves.

How do we balance our spiritual quest with the material demands of our daily lives? How do we preserve our noble goals while dealing with the physical temptations that confront us? Let us look into our parsha for guidance.

Having conquered the lands of Sichon and Og on the eastern banks of the Jordan, the Nation of Israel was poised to enter to Land of Israel proper. The Tribes of Reuven and Gad, who were prosperous and abundant with livestock, discerned the eastern bank to be especially fertile. Realizing the opportunities that the lush pastures would afford their livestock, they approached Moshe with a proposition. They would forgo their portion in Israel proper for exclusive rights to the eastern bank of the Jordan. In response to Moshe's concern that they would not cross the Jordan and participate in the conquest, the Tribes of Reuven and Gad reassured Moshe of their commitment. They approached him [Moshe] and said "pens for the flock we shall build here [the eastern bank] for our cattle, and cities for our children." (22:16) The two Tribes went on to communicate that they would cross the Jordan and lead the nation in battle. Only when the conquest was complete and the land apportioned would they return to the eastern bank to settle. Moshe accepted their proposal, but in summarizing their offer he rephrased their words. Build for yourselves cities for your children and pens for your flocks. (22:24) Where the two Tribes gave precedence to their livestock, mentioning them before their children, Moshe inverted the order, mentioning the children first. The Sages in Medrash Tanchuma explain that, through his re-ordering of their words, Moshe was in fact rebuking Reuven and Gad. Moshe was teaching them that while wealth is a heavenly blessing to be preserved and cared for, one must not lose sense of his priorities. Our primary goals and objectives must always remain clear and be our main focus. Our physical and material needs, while necessary and important, cannot be given the prominence of our precious ideals.

True, in our spiritual quest, we cannot ignore the realities of everyday life. We need to support our families, build a home, and take care of our health. *But when we subordinate the material aspects of our lives to our spiritual endeavors, seeing them as means to further our journey instead of as ends unto themselves, we will be successful in infusing all facets of our lives with the sanctity that we desire.*

***Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Menachem Winter***