

## Parashah Matot

The one where the Israelites face challenges as they are finally about to enter the Promised Land

The parasha begins with Moses addressing the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel, instructing them about the laws concerning vows and oaths. He emphasizes the importance of keeping one's word and the consequences of breaking a vow.

Soon after, the story shifts to a situation where the Israelites are finally about to enter the Promised Land. However, a shadow looms over their path as they encounter the Midianites, a tribe entangled in idolatry and immoral behavior. In response, Moses commands the Israelites to take vengeance upon the Midianites for their transgressions. This leads to a military campaign against the Midianites, with the Israelites emerging victorious and capturing their cities, spoils, and livestock.

It's not just a military conquest; it's a spiritual journey, and the Israelites know it. They adhere strictly to rituals and laws, ensuring they remain ritually pure throughout their campaign. They purify themselves and their possessions according to the laws and customs. This commitment to spiritual integrity showcases their unwavering faith.

After their victory, the Israelite warriors express their intention to settle in the conquered territory, known as Transjordan. However, this raises concerns among Moses and the leaders, as they believe it is important for all able-bodied men to help conquer land west of the Jordan River before settling down. An agreement is reached, allowing the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh to settle in Transjordan on the condition that their warriors assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan. These tribes agree to this arrangement, demonstrating their commitment to their fellow Israelites.

Parashah Matot digs into the themes of oath-keeping, vengeance against those who lead others astray, and the careful observance of ritual purity. It also highlights the unity of the Israelite tribes as they work together to secure their future in the Promised Land, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling their collective destiny.

## Teen Takeaways from Parashah Matot

1. **Keep your promises:** Just like in Parashah Matot, it's crucial to honor your commitments and promises. This builds trust with friends and family. If we break one vow, it becomes easier to break another, and pretty soon it is habitual. But making a habit of honoring our promises helps us to just behave that way without having to think about it.
2. **Think before you act:** In the story, impulsive decisions caused problems. Remember, taking a moment to think before reacting can help you avoid unnecessary conflicts.
3. **Resolve conflicts peacefully:** Instead of fighting, try to find peaceful solutions to problems. Conflict resolution and compromise can go a long way in maintaining good relationships. That requires patience and listening to the other.
4. **Meet your responsibilities:** When you take on a task, follow through on it. This shows responsibility and reliability, which are important qualities as you grow up.
5. **Work together:** Just like the tribes in the parashah united for a common goal, remember the power of teamwork and how it can help you achieve great things in school, sports, and life. When was the last time you did something as part of a team, not just in sports?
6. **Respect authority:** It's essential to respect your parents, your teachers, and other leaders. They're there to guide and help you.
7. **Stay true to your beliefs:** Just as the Israelites remained committed to their faith, it's important to stick to your own values and beliefs, even when faced with challenges.
8. **Learn from your past:** Reflect on your experiences to make better choices in the future. Don't be afraid to learn and grow from your mistakes. Often situations remind us of other times when we faced similar challenges. We should use these "triggers" to recall what worked and what did not.

## Summary

These lessons can help you **navigate your teenage years with wisdom and integrity.**