

#42 Mattot Numbers 30:2-32:42

By Moshe Schwab

While praying:

- * Stay on the path of refreshing and joy.
- * Let your heart know God's truths and be settled in them.
- * Don't allow the fire of God to go out. That's where you find your joy.
- * God can get you over the things you are facing. He is powerful.

Mattot means, "tribes". This Torah portion begins by talking about the keeping of vows. Vows were to be kept, but the man of the house could annul a vow. Israel attacks and defeats the Midianites. The Midianites had caused Israel to sin at Baal-peor. Israel cleansed and divided the booty and any woman who had had sexual relations was to be killed. The tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to have land east of the Jordan, but they would continue to fight until the land west of the Jordan was conquered.

Israel did not start any of its wars up to this point, but they were drawn in by people who plotted against them. The tribes of Israel that settled east of the Jordan perhaps were never supposed to be there, but that is what they chose just as Lot chose to look to the east and ended up living with the ungodly people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Was there really not enough room for both Abraham and Lot to live peaceably?

The northern tribes didn't expel all the Canaanites; perhaps because some tribes lived east of the Jordan. The northern tribes ended up worshipping idols as least in part because not all the Canaanites had been conquered. Consequently, the northern tribes were conquered and dispersed. Perhaps this portion shows us that we should be careful what we choose. Although we can be chosen by God, what we choose might not be what's best for us.

God wants us to stay on the path of refreshing and joy. Much of that is accomplished by keeping God's commandments and staying faithful to God.

Psalm 19:7-11 NKJV

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
 The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
 The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
 The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
 More to be desired are they than gold,
 Yea, than much fine gold;
 Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
 And in keeping them there is great reward."

God's laws can change our lives, makes us wise, they are right and good, and bring rejoicing in our innermost being. God's laws are pure and enlightening; fearful respect of the Lord is always good for us; and God's judgment is right and better than gold, and sweeter than honey. By God's goodness we are warned and His laws are profitable.

Some say that the Old Testament is done away with. It absolutely isn't, and that's a good thing for us as we can see from Psalm 19. Let your heart know God's truths and be settled in them. We have to get to a point in our lives where make a decision of no return. Imagine Israel going through the sea and then

realizing there was no way they were going to return to Egypt. Its unimaginable that some even talked about going back, especially since God was taking care of them completely.

I've had experiences like that in my life where I believe God took care of me. As a young believer I had times where it seemed impossible I could have made it, but God got me through. Sometimes we forget the goodness of God. I truly have enjoyed living right, doing what is right, and experiencing life that no riches or gold could possibly give me. It is the nature of God to give us refreshing and joy and turn our lives around for the better. "For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul;" Jeremiah 31:25 NKJV. It says in Psalm 31:11-12 NKJV, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever."

We have reason to be thankful, so don't allow the fire of God to go out. That's where you find your joy. Shaul (Paul) said, "Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;" Romans 12:11-12 NKJV. He said don't lag, don't be slothful. Instead, be diligent, be eager and conscientious (thoughtful). Some translations say to be hot for the Spirit. Be on fire with the work of the Holy Spirit. Serve God. The word serving is the Greek word *doulos* which means a person who has made the decision to be a slave; in this case, a willing slave for God.

God can get you over the things you are facing. He is powerful. We will face issues in life. Even if you haven't experienced any yet. They will come. Some of us will have to deal with more and some less, but stay faithful. Even in difficulties, God will show Himself strong for us. Shaul says something astounding, but it is true. "Therefore, I am very happy to boast about my weaknesses, in order that the Messiah's power will rest upon me. Yes, I am well pleased with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties endured on behalf of the Messiah; for it is when I am weak that I am strong;" 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 CJB.

I was in the jungle going down a dirty¹ and winding river at night. The water was about two inches from the top of our canoe. Earlier there were huge water buffalos in the water. Some of us were looking for the red eyes of caiman (alligators in this area of the jungle) lurking nearby. Suddenly, a fish jumped across our canoe; probably scared by our canoe and my wife stood up in the canoe and I thought, we are going to capsize, but we somehow didn't. How we didn't capsize I don't know, but I thank God we didn't.

I've been trapped in the middle of nowhere in the jungle only to get to safety. I've been in places in the jungle where very few people went nor did anyone want to go there except crazy people like me and the missionary who took us there. There is enough going on in life let alone adding to it. Shaul went through extremely difficult situations; he said God was there for him and He will be there for us from the little things to the big things.

Israel had been drawn into wars, but God was with them. He was their help in time of trouble. Psalm 46:1 NKJV says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The Bible says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might;" Ephesians 6:10 NKJV. Be strong, we are not alone. Run to God and trust in Him; He can help us. God is powerful. "He who calls you is faithful;" 1 Thessalonians 5:24 NKJV.

¹ They call them black water referring to the color of the water.

Stay the path and God will refresh you and give you joy. Be settled in the truths of the scriptures and keep God's commandments. Be energized and on fire for God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Be eager for the things of God and don't let that fire go out. Make that decision to be a servant of God. Even in difficult circumstances God can help you and come through for you. Run to God and trust in His strength.