

## Coming Up...

Full details of all our events are available on our Facebook page, or call the Bayit on 0208 209 1319 to speak to one of the team.

- Applications for key roles in svivot for 5776 are open online! To be part of the lifeblood of Bnei Akiva across the country, visit [www.bauk.org](http://www.bauk.org)
- Every year, Bnei Akiva collectively learns the whole of Tanach in Memory of Marc Weinberg, Mazkir of 5759 and shining example of our ideology. All are welcome to participate. To sign up to learn a section, see the Bnei Akiva Facebook page or for more information, contact [marina@bauk.org](mailto:marina@bauk.org)



**ISRAEL  
MACHANE  
5775 HAS  
BEGUN!  
MORE THAN JUST A  
TOUR**

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# ושבתה הארץ Shabbat Lashem 'שבת לה' מטות מסעי

## No Man Is An Island

Adam Fox

The double Torah reading of Matot-Masei feels like an anti-climax. This should be the stirring end to the narrative of Am Yisrael's journey, before they enter the Promised Land. Yet here we have rules for vow-making, negotiations over living outside the borders of the land of Israel, establishment of cities of refuge, and the thrilling idea that one should not marry out of one's own tribe. Aside from the war against Midian, this isn't a thrilling conclusion.

However, these commands are crucial. The general theme of these rules lies in the tension between individual needs and passions and communal responsibilities: marriage is not a personal act, but a communal one, and must therefore be undertaken with the community in mind. Similarly, cities of refuge exist so that private matters –revenge killings– do not strain the communal structure. The dialogue between Moshe and the tribes of Reuven, Gad and Menashe also highlights this tension, as Moses insists that the tribes fulfil their duty to the rest of the nation, by helping them conquer the Land. Only then can they settle on the other side of the Jordan River.

Rashi offers us an insight into Moshe's personal struggle regarding the war against Midian. Hashem commands Moshe to lead the nation to war against Midian. Moshe understands that upon fulfilment of this commandment, he will die, as God clearly states:

**"Avenge the Israelites against Midian, afterward you will be gathered unto your people" (Bamidbar 31:2).**

Rashi notes that the very next words are "And Moshe spoke to the children of Israel," to command them to make war against Midian: "Even though he heard that his death was tied up in the act, he carried out his orders happily and without delay." That is to say, even with his own death around the corner, Moshe puts communal priorities ahead of his own.

All of this is rooted in the opening of the parasha, with the commandment that whenever one makes a vow,

**"... he shall not violate his word; all that leaves his mouth he shall do" (Bamidbar 30:2).**

When we make a promise, our private world becomes part of the larger world. To live as an island, as John Donne reminds us, is impossible. As the Israelites are about to cross into the land of Canaan, it is essential that we can keep our word and live a life in responsibility to our fellow citizens.

Adam Fox is in Shevet Lehava and is Rosh of Salford Bnei Akiva

## Editor's Corner

Shalom!

Israel Machane started on Monday! Check our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels to see what adventures our five groups are having!

As our activities in Sviva pause for Summer, we would like to thank our hundreds of madrichim and bogrim who have provided incredible educational experiences to hundreds of young people!

Our madrichim set off for pre-camp on Wednesday, where they will spend a week preparing Summer Machane for our chanichim. We can't wait!

Shabbat Shalom!

### THIS WEEK'S SHABBAT TIMES

	🕒	🕒
London	20:55	22:09
Manchester	21:13	22:37
Birmingham	21:03	22:32
Cambridge	20:54	22:21
Leeds	19:50	22:31
Liverpool	21:12	22:44
Jerusalem	19:10	20:26

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## Insight and Inspiration on the Parasha

Rav Ari Faust, Rabbinical Shaliach

### Challenging The Midianite Within Us

We live in a world full of competitiveness and strife, argument and divide. Too often we celebrate our fellow's failures which favour of our advancement. Are all forms of competitiveness negative? What is the root of divisiveness?

In our parasha we read (Bamidbar 31:1-3):

**“And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: 'Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward shall you be gathered to your people.' And Moshe spoke to the people, saying: 'Arm your men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute Hashem's vengeance on Midian.”**

The war against the Midian is absolute: Soldiers from every single tribe must report to the war, Midianite men and women alike are to be executed, every last possession looted. The significance and irregularity of this “holy war” is emphasized by the Aron – holy ark – and other holy vessels, which were onto the battlefield. This is to be Moshe's final task as leader of Am Yisrael, his death dependant on its success.

How do we reconcile this divinely ordered genocide with our concepts of basic morality? Who were the Midianites and why did they warrant having such extreme action taken against them – “Hashem's vengeance” – actions unmatched in all of the Torah? Why is it so crucial that Moshe is actively involved in the annihilation of Midian, since it is implicit by the wording of the verse that he only ultimately fulfils his purpose once Midian is annihilated?

The background to this story is that the people of Midian and Moav sought to prevent the Israelites from passing through their land on their way towards Eretz Yisrael (Bamidbar 22:4). In order to achieve this, they employed Bilaam to curse the Israelites. While Bilaam's sorcery proved unsuccessful, the Jewish People became enticed by the Midianite and Moavite women and behaved immorally with them, for which they were severely punished. At that point Hashem commands (25:17):

**“Harass the Midianites, and smite them.”**

This is not the first occasion in which we encounter the Midianites. Midian was one of Avraham's children, whom he sent away from Israel with gifts (Bereshit 25:2, 6). The Midianites were central in orchestrating the sale of Yosef to the Ishmaelites and ultimately to Potifar in Egypt (Bereshit 37:28, 36). Later, Moshe escapes Egypt as a fugitive and finds refuge in Midian, where he lives for many years and serves as an arbitrator for the Midianites' various disputes (Shemot 2:15). The next encounter we have with the Midianites is when they seek to prevent Am Yisrael from passing through their land.

The stories all bear common themes: first, in all the cases we are told about Midian, they are not critical to the story. The Midianites are never protagonists; it would make no difference to the storyline had they not been there. Second, story is about quarrel.

Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneerson of Lubavitch (the fifth Rebbe of the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty) notes:

**“[The Hebrew word] Midian is like the word madon, meaning strife and quarrel. For this is the essence of the klipa of Midian, to represent the separation and divisiveness [which are] the source of baseless hatred ...”**

Midian represents divisiveness and argumentation for their own sake. In all cases featuring Midian, they are included only because of the strife involved. The Rebbe continues to explain that there is nothing more antithetical to God and Godliness – the source of oneness– than divisiveness. Thus Midian represents those elements which interrupt our authentic connection to God, and most seriously inhibit Hashem's manifestation in the world.

There is a little bit of Midian in every one of us. It is a dangerous inclination that manifests itself in various ways, but ultimately brings about one result – *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred. It induces us to see divide and opposition instead of unity and harmony. This inclination – which is personified by the Midianite people – must be wholly and thoroughly annihilated in order for us to experience and enjoy the manifestation of Hashem. The ultimate goal of the Torah, the living legacy that Moshe left us, is to appreciate the ultimate unity at the root of our existence and thereby to come to love of all of creation.

During this three-week period of mourning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash – brought-about by *sinat chinam* – we should be inspired to confront the Midianite in all of us – to “harass and smite” it – and rid ourselves entirely of all remnants of hatred, jealousy and divide, filling our hearts with unity and baseless love.

Rav Ari Faust is in Shevet Yechiam, and is Shaliach for Bnei Akiva and the Jewish Agency for Israel



## Oleh Profile: catching up with our Bogrim who have made Aliyah

Neil Gillman



### WHAT WAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN BNEI AKIVA UK?

I grew up in Wembley which at the time had a thriving Bnei Akiva. My parents used to kick my brother and me out of the house on a Shabbat so that we'd be kept occupied with our mates and they could get some peace and quiet! My first Machane was Gimmel Summer at age 15, and I went to every Machane after that. I did Hachsharat Etgar, based on Kibbutz Ein Hanatziv which inspired me to make Aliyah. Before that, I came back to University in Manchester and was a frequent visitor at the Bayit on Singleton Road. Holidays found me on the technical team of various Machanot until I made Aliyah straight after completing my degree.

### WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN ISRAEL NOWADAYS?

Nineteen years after making Aliyah, I'm married with four kids aged seven and a half, five, three and a half, and 3 months. I have the privilege of living in Jerusalem in a thriving community filled with young families and have been joined in Israel by my brother and his family and my Mum. I've spent nearly 16 years working with English speaking Olim, including a stint as the Aliyah Shaliach for Washington DC and its surrounding region. Today I oversee Aliyah from English speaking countries for the Jewish Agency for Israel.

### DO YOU HAVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE FOR US IN BNEI AKIVA UK?

Aliyah isn't easy so preparing appropriately is really important – do what you can to learn Hebrew – the free Ulpan from the Government is not enough. Make sure you have good work skills and see if you can continue to work remotely. Coming with some money saved will allow you time to find your feet without having to panic. The younger you are and the less strings that you have when you make Aliyah, the more likely you are to successfully integrate into Israeli society.

Neil Gillman is in Shevet Hatzvi and made Aliyah in 5756