

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS  
MATOS-MASEI

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## BUILT UPON BROKEN PROMISES

**P**arshas Matos begins with a description of the laws of *nedarim* — promises. When one makes a promise, they are required to uphold their commitment; this is because one is expected to value their words, and recognize that words have meaning.<sup>1</sup>

However, we find that if, under certain circumstances, someone regrets the promise they made<sup>2</sup> they can approach a *beis din*, or a *talmid chacham* who is an expert in these matters, and explain the situation they find themselves in. After investigation, the *beis din* or *talmid chacham* can release the person from their responsibility. Based on the above reasoning, that one should value what they say, how can we explain why the Torah gives a person a way out? Are our words so hollow and trivial that all it takes is a visit to the local court, and we are free to do as we please?

The Sefer HaChinuch<sup>3</sup> (Attributed to Reb Aharon HaLevi, 1235–1290) explains that Hashem recognizes that although our words should be sacrosanct, human beings can be fickle and impulsive. Because of this, a person may make a commitment that they cannot truly carry out. Therefore, Hashem has given us an escape plan — after discussing the circumstances with a qualified expert or panel, and after genuinely regretting having made the promise in the first place, one is released from their pledge.

We may never have need for someone to nullify our promises, but there is a profound lesson found in this Sefer HaChinuch, hidden in plain sight.

There are times where we are sure we are correct, we know what's what, and there is no doubt about it. It might concern something as inconsequential as the next day's weather, or as significant as what we are looking for in a job, a spouse, or ourselves. However, as we find in the Sefer HaChinuch, people can be fickle and impulsive. We can be absolutely sure one day, and look for absolution the next.

This is the nature of the human being. However, we can use this knowledge to our advantage — if we are engaged in a disagreement and we are positive we are correct, now we know that there is quite the possibility that we are in error. And we can be more forgiving when others make mistakes; after all, this is simply the way of the human.

<sup>1</sup> Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 406, Mitzvah 30

<sup>2</sup> Not all promises may be removed, notably, those that are commitments to others.

<sup>3</sup> Mitzvah 30

**People can be fickle and impulsive. We can be absolutely sure one day, and look for absolution the next.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is the very nature of our emotional personality to be capricious and unstable.<sup>1</sup> This is the way Hashem made us, and we can use this to further our *avodas Hashem*.

As mentioned in the *Dvar Torah*, it is not uncommon to be absolutely sure of oneself, and then feel exactly the opposite the next day. Using this knowledge can help temper our temper during disagreements, as we recognize that it very well may be us who are in the wrong.

As well, we can be more forgiving with others when they make a mistake. Again, that's very likely to happen, seeing as that our emotions and feelings can change on a whim.

But perhaps the greatest lesson we can apply is the idea of growing in *avodas Hashem*. Sadly, we sometimes resign ourselves to a certain character trait or habit. "This is just the way I am," we may think.

The truth is, though, that we are always changing. By harnessing our changes, and guiding them in the direction of *avodas Hashem*, we will turn ourselves from the person we are to the person we want to be.

<sup>1</sup> *Ohr Yisrael*, Letter 30

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**Everyone — Talmidei Chachamim, the unlearned, men, women — must identify Mussar seforim that they connect with, so that they can study a page of Mussar every day. How enriched are the lives of those who contemplate Mussar! - R' Yehonason Eibeschutz zt"l, Ya'aros Devash, vol. 1**

# FICKLE AND FORGIVING

Mrs. Hindy Pearson\* nodded to her husband when she saw him walk in the door. It was *Shabbos* afternoon, and she was spending some time at her parents, having brought the kids over to play in the backyard, and spend time with *Saba* and *Savta*. Her concentration momentarily broken, she turned back to the woman she was sitting with, a friend from her school days.

"And another thing, Hindy! You just don't respect me. Here I am talking, and you're looking around, as if you are trying to escape!"

Hindy nodded, listening as Mrs. Miriam Grossman detailed all of her faults, character defects, and deficiencies. Finally, after listing a litany of complaints, Mrs. Grossman announced her departure, and with that, walked out of the house.

Mr. Shmuel Pearson came into the living room from the kitchen, and sat in the chair that was recently occupied. "What was that all about? Are you ok?" Shmuel Pearson's face was a mixture of concern and hurt.

Hindy exhaled, and then smiled. "I'm fine. I've known Miriam for a long time, and, well, that sometimes happens. She has a challenging background, and needs emotional support. And because of her sensitivities, she sometimes perceives an insult where there was none, or none meant."

Shmuel frowned. "That doesn't mean that you need to be her punching bag..." he trailed off.

Hindy shook her head. "Miriam knows what's going on — you can bet that in the next day or two she will call me and apologize."

Soon after the end of *Shabbos*, Hindy's phone rang. It was Miriam. "I'm so sorry, I got carried away. I really did, and I didn't mean it. Just, in the heat of the moment, well, I said things that I shouldn't have."

Hindy listened like she always did. "Miriam, what you said was hurtful, but I thank you for calling. Apology accepted."

Miriam sighed. "Hindy, I just want you to know, I really didn't mean it. Have you ever had that, that you said something, and even at the time you knew it wasn't exactly right, but the words already escaped? Has that ever happened to you?"

"Of course! It happens to all of us."

**"Have you ever had that, that you said something, and even at the time you knew it wasn't exactly right, but the words already escaped?"**

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The fact that a person can create a totally new *halachic* obligation simply through words speaks to the amazing power of the individual, and the relationship of the Torah to the individual.<sup>1</sup>
- Even our greatest forefathers have been accused of impulsiveness and volatility.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Da'as Chochmah U'Mussar* Vol. 3, 125

<sup>2</sup> *Bereishis* 49:4, see *Ohr HaChaim* *ibid.* ע"ד רמ"ז. s.v.

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