

Focus, Purpose, & Intention in Numbers 30-36

Parashot Matot-Mas'ei ([Numbers/B'midbar 30:2-36](#)) 5782 B"H

A Study looking at Kavanah: Intentionality/Focus

Do you speak *legalese*?

I grew up learning *legalese*.

My dad is an attorney so I knew legal phrases like “*for all intents and purposes*” and strange terms like “*eminent domain*” from an early age. I may not have known exactly what went into an affidavit or deposition, but I had the idea . . . *ad nauseam*. ☐

In the second grade, I dressed up like a patent attorney for career day (*do they really dress that differently than the rest of us?*). By high school, I couldn't decide whether I would become a judge or the U.S. Ambassador to France. (*Objection? Only one is appointed at a time? N'importe quoi! I didn't care about those details . . .*)

I was aware that the “normal kids” at school got an allowance. I was voted “Most Unique” female of my senior class, so “normal” wasn't really what I was after. My sister and I used to write up chore *contracts*. We felt we were missing out on the “normal life”, but we actually got some good training! To this day, I can draft some pretty tough contracts.

I joined the high school mock trial team and was talented at prosecution, but could sense that my talents could take me down a very callous, dangerous road.

So perhaps in the interest of making sure my own soul would be saved, I decided to study . . . *theology*.

So much for lucrative. Sorry, dad. *I know that fine man still wishes I were a lawyer!*

I tell you this story because the Scripture passage we are studying today has much to do with that legal phrase: *“for all intents and purposes.”* You’ll see why as we go along.

Tribes and Journeys

If you follow the weekly parashat readings, it will help you to know (if you don’t already) that the terms “Matot” and “Mas’ei” refer to tribes and journeys, respectively. These Torah portions continue the accounts of the tribes, their journeys to the Promised Land, and their inheritance as the 40 year wilderness wandering comes to an end.

We should pause here a moment.

How could the spiritual condition of the people be described here?

With so much grumbling in the wilderness, what was their heart-condition?

Did this generation feel they had a “purpose?”

Did they understand the blessing of their inheritance?

We are informed in Numbers [31:1-2](#) that Moses would soon die. The Hebrew idiom is translated [“you will be gathered to your people.”](#) This was a more pleasant sounding way to describe death. Remember, the ancient Israelites did not yet have the hope of resurrection as we do today because Messiah had not yet come. Being “gathered to one’s people” referred to the very literal sense of being buried in the family cemetery but

also referred to the person being spiritually gathered with other spirits in *She'ol*.

Since we have reached the end of the book of [Numbers](#), it is fitting that the different accounts and histories come to a conclusion here. [Balaam](#) reaches his end as well, as he was killed by sword in [Numbers 31:8](#).

Not all of the passages are sad, as these parashot end with the victory of [Tzelophehad's daughters](#).

But we must be honest. [Numbers 30-36](#) are chapters filled with some difficult things. It covers oaths and annulation of vows, particularly those made by young women, and then there's this:

The Midianite Women

Moshe (Moses) was **angry** with the army officers when they were attacking Midian.

Why?

Because they had spared the women.

Hold on.

Moses **wanted** all the Midianite women dead?!

Hadn't Moses spent many years in exile among the Midianites?

*Doesn't he have **any** female friends or acquaintances there?*

Does he condone femicide?!

Why so much violence!?

Sadly, over time, the Midianites had allied with the Moabites and became enemies of Israel.

Moshe reasons that the Midianite women had followed some of [Balaam's](#) bad advice and caused the children of Israel to be

unfaithful in the matter of Peor ([Numbers 31:16](#)).

He concedes that the *virgin* women should live, but every boy and all the other women should be killed. ([Numbers 31:18](#))

From there, Moses commands purification and Eleazar explains the purification rules to the army. They plundered property, virgins, and gold.

It is hard for me to wrap my head around the righteousness of all that.

I look at what's happening with the war in [Ukraine](#) and it is really hard to grasp. I do not believe that God *wanted* Russia to invade [Ukraine](#). I do believe the attack lines up with [Biblical prophecy](#); however, and these things *must* take place.

We can talk about good **intentions** or divine **purposes**, but violence and bloodshed are things that will just never make sense to me. *For all intents and purposes*, I am perplexed, baffled . . . I really am a pacifist at heart.

What to do when things don't make sense

When something doesn't make sense, it's time to trust. Trust in the LORD. And just like you wouldn't sign legal documents without understanding that legal jargon, make sure you find a way to gain understanding.

Do you need an interpreter?

Do you need a dictionary?

When it comes to the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will help you interpret and gain clarification.

Trust that the LORD will make things plain for you and put people into your life who can assist you in understanding

those things which you find difficult.

Don't be ashamed if you need to use a dictionary or a Bible dictionary when you study the Word. On the contrary, you *ought* to use these valuable tools! Otherwise, even Scripture itself can seem overwhelming.

Speaking of being overwhelmed . . . when you feel overwhelmed in life, the way to find peace is by trusting in the LORD.

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the world's problems?

For me, when I watch the news and see images of the war itself or the consequences of war

(such as famine and mass migration) I know that it is all out of my hands. I can't do much anything about it except pray. And that requires trust. I have to trust that the LORD hears my prayer and will intervene on behalf of those who trust in His Name.

See, God has a plan and whether or not it makes sense to us, He will see it through. Likewise, He had a plan for Israel and still does. With the Midianites turning against Israel, logically there would be a consequence – whether it was war or otherwise. The [borders of Israel](#) were being formed and action had to be taken to ensure that the land would be prepared for the Israelites.

מִגְרָשׁ *Migrash* in Biblical Zoning & City Planning

In [Numbers 35:2-5, 7](#) the Hebrew word מִגְרָשׁ *migrash* is used.

This is not to be confused with the more commonly known term, *midrash*, which refers to Biblical interpretation and commentary.

“Migrash” refers to green, open space. It is often translated as “pastureland” or “suburb.”

Did you know that Scriptural zoning regulations require open space around cities and special open spaces within the city?

I find this to be intriguing because way back in the desert wilderness, divine instruction was given for future city planning to ensure green spaces – even in and most especially in Israel.

To this day, Israel is an agricultural marvel, a miracle really, but those of us who believe what the Bible says cannot be completely surprised. After all, we are talking about the land of milk and honey, the place where water can come out of rocks and manna appears on the ground. There is water in this desert and even luscious greenery.

Have you heard the new song, [Honey in the Rock](#)? I love the [Brooke Fraser Ligertwood version](#), but YouTube wouldn't let me embed the video. Oh well. You can easily find it by searching Google. Here is a sweet sister singing that same song in a church:

What is the **intent** behind this green space? What is the **purpose** of these “suburbs?”

Certainly the green space provides a place for the animals and also allows for urbanization to be tempered by parks and places of solace. The land is to be cared for – there should be concern for the environment and all inhabitants.

Ultimately, the green spaces help the land to be purified:

[“You are not to defile the land where you live, where I dwell, for I dwell among Bnei-Yisrael.”](#)

[Numbers 35:34](#)

We are not to defile the land because the LORD dwells with us
– on Holy Ground, in that Holy Land!

קַוְנָה **Kavanah: The Intention of the Heart**



The word *Kavanah* comes from the Hebrew root קָנָה *kun* which refers to “being firm.” [Strong’s Hebrew Concordance](#) helps us to understand that the term carries with it the connotations of something being “set up and established” or “fixed/securely determined.”

Kavanah is central to Jewish thought, taking this idea of firmness and applying it to one’s intention. It refers to the sincerity of the heart. *Kavanah: what is the direction of your heart?*

Maybe you have heard the old saying: “*The road to hell is paved with good intentions.*”

Truly, good intentions **can’t save you**, but good intentions **can improve your spiritual life.**

Incidental vs. Intentional

Do you just **incidentally** “happen” to worship because you know you should?

Or do you with total **intentionality** worship because you have a depth of sincerity in your heart?

The Jewish tradition would say that the person who “incidentally” participates in worship is not participating at all. Without *kavanah*, without intentionality, worship is not worship at all.

We cannot be ambivalent.

*What is the attitude with which **you** approach worship?*

*What is your spiritual **intention**?*

*What is the **direction of your heart** toward God?*

*Are your eyes **fixed on** Jesus (Yeshua)?*

*Are you a person who is **securely determined** to walk in faith?*

As the tribes began to settle in the land, their intentions would become clear. Would they choose to continue to obey the God of Israel? Would they select land based on selfish ambition or based on care for their neighbor? Would they seek God with their whole heart or drift away to follow pagan deities?

Whenever faith becomes an afterthought it becomes an incidental.

Ever been to a pricy hotel?

Those incidentals will cost you.

One extra fee might not seem like much, but if you keep helping yourself to those miniature-sized snacks in that

miniature convenience fridge, you will not have such a miniature bill at the end of your stay.

You've got to watch out for the incidentals.

You've got to read that fine print.

I'd rather get out a magnifying glass than not understand the covenant . . .

Oh Magnify the LORD! Set your intentions on Him! Seek Him with total sincerity!

In this way, your life, your family, your land, and even your city will be blessed.

Because truly, where there is focus, there is vision! Some people strive for many years to "find their purpose." Some of that is ok. But, ultimately, as a believer, your purpose is to live for Him and He will outline His calling in your life. *He* will be your sense of direction and your purpose, if you allow Him.

Adhering to a purpose-filled lifestyle that puts God and His Eternal Word first will enable you to benefit from all of the blessings He has for you. I encourage you to focus on Him so you see clearly the path He has set for you, set your sights on heaven as you walk with Him, and walk in the ways of our Messiah Yeshua (Lord Jesus) today!

Order & Anointing: How

Numbers 1-3 prove these go hand-in-hand

Parashat B'midbar ([B'midbar/Numbers 1-4:20](#)) 5782 B"H

[Numbers chapter 1](#) begins in the wilderness of Sinai. We are given the very *specific* date when the LORD spoke to Moses regarding a census.

It is a very orderly book, with very specific details and instructions. Truly, all of God's Word and, especially the Torah, is well-ordered, and I hope you will be able to see how the divinely-established orderliness goes hand-in-hand with the anointing upon the Israelites.

There was to be a census of those men who could fight for Israel.

Simply, every Israelite son aged 20+ would have to serve in the Israelite army ([Numbers 1:3](#)).

It had been 2 years after the Exodus from Egypt. Specifically, the first day of the second month, 2 years later.

The encampment at Mount Sinai would have been taking shape as a full-fledged community meaning Israelite families and their assets would require protection as the community grew.

Men were looked to as protectors. They were numbered so that they could be assigned to their military divisions.

I am aware of feminist interpretations of this passage suggesting that God is somehow "unfair." Feminists make the mistaken claim that the LORD "ignored" all the women because [Numbers 1](#) only talks about men. Well, I grew up under feminist theology, so let me tell you plainly: **it's a bunch of**

nonsense. *If God didn't value women, He wouldn't have gathered up the men to do the protecting: women would've been left to fend for themselves.*

Men are naturally stronger. This doesn't make women inferior, just different. We have different roles, that's all. We do well to live in the order YHWH has established. We will experience the anointing of the LORD on our households when we live as He has prescribed.

The Bible says there were 603,550 men able to go out with the army of Israel ([Numbers 1:46](#)).

Certainly, that would suggest a large number of women and children! What a blessing that so many men would be able to protect them.

Numbers 2 defines the expected order for each of the military groups.

I love how the Scriptures are very **orderly**.

The fact that the Scriptures are so orderly reflects the **orderliness of our Heavenly Father**.

He has everything well thought out, organized, and He cares about how each facet of how His creation functions.

Sometimes passages like these from Numbers seem tedious or irrelevant, but if you will slow down and look at the wider context, you will discover many treasures even in these words. Likewise, for [what to do when the Scriptures make you squirm](#), check out this recent post on "[The Value of Human Life](#)".

[Numbers 3](#) gives greater depth to a theme introduced in [Leviticus 1:47-51a](#) regarding the roles of the Levites. Here is that passage:

[The Levites, however, were not counted by the tribe of their ancestors, for ADONAI told Moses saying, “Definitely you are not to number the tribe of Levi, nor take the sum of them among *Bnei-Yisrael*. Instead, you are to appoint the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its implements and all pertaining to it. They are to carry the Tabernacle and all its utensils, tend to it and camp around it. Whenever the Tabernacle sets out, the Levites are to dismantle it, and whenever the Tabernacle is pitched, the Levites are to set it up. Leviticus 1:47-51a](#)

[Numbers 3](#) addresses the duties assigned to the Levites (and *their families*). See, the women weren't neglected or ignored!

The tragic death of Aaron's two oldest sons

Before the specifics of the Levitical assignments are addressed, we find out in [Numbers 3:2](#) about the tragic death of Aaron's two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu.

[Numbers 1 and 2](#) had us thinking about the military, but these two young men didn't die in battle.

They were Levites, so they weren't fighting in the army.

Instead, Nadab and Abihu offered “unauthorized fire” before the LORD. ([Numbers 3:4](#))

The New Living Translation (NLT) simplifies this to the [“wrong kind of fire.” \(Num.3:4\)](#)

Nadab and Abihu died before the presence of the LORD that day due to carelessness. They didn't do their assigned task in the **orderly** manner required.

How often are we guilty of something similar?

The LORD had given specific instructions, but Nadab and Abihu somehow made a mistake that cost them their lives.

I am thankful for the LORD's grace today! I am also thankful that **ADONAI** is a [God of order \(1 Corinthians 14:33\)](#). Order has to do with understanding and lack of confusion. **He has redeemed us so we do not have to live confused, disordered, disoriented lives.**



We must also be careful that we **honor the Holy Spirit**. When we **worship**, we must **seek to be filled with the Holy Fire** that comes from heaven alone and reverence His glorious presence.

Because Nadab and Abihu died, Aaron's younger sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, served as priests under Aaron, their father ([Numbers 3:4b](#)).

Nadab and Abihu were *replaced* because the community still needed priestly leaders. May we learn from this tragedy to be faithful in all of our ways and to seek God's guidance in every action we take. If we allow our lives to be ordered by the LORD, we will make right decisions and live in *shalom*.

The Levite families' unique

giftings



Each Levite family was assigned different duties that ranged from caring for the implements of the sanctuary (such as the menorah, the Ark of the Covenant, and the altars) to the Tent of Meeting and its coverings to the care of the sanctuary itself.

Each family seems to have been anointed with a particular gifting, because as you read, you can observe that they were responsible for **specific areas**.

The Gershonites

If we analyze it plainly, the **Gershonites** were responsible for the fabrics. They were responsible for the curtains and the ropes used around the Tabernacle and altar ([Num.3:25-26](#)). They had an anointing for working with textiles.

The Kohathites

The **Kohathites** were responsible for “caring for the

sanctuary.” ([Numbers 3:28](#)). They were assigned to care for the implements including the menorah, the Ark of the Covenant, and the altars. Perhaps they were anointed in metalworking, able to polish and repair any utensil as needed.

The Merarites

The **Merarites** held the responsibility to care for the structure of the Tabernacle. Their anointing was in engineering! They were to care for the posts and frames and crossbars, bases, pegs, and ropes.

Each clan had to follow the orderly instructions given by the LORD. If they didn't, a job would go undone. A mistake could be made.

And we know from Nadab and Abihu that mistakes can prove instantly fatal.

If a non-Levite approached the Tabernacle area, the consequence was also death.

["You are to appoint Aaron and his sons to maintain the priesthood; any commoner who approaches must be executed." Numbers 3:10](#)

[That's another one of those verses that makes me say, "WHAT?"](#)

But we must understand. The Tabernacle was set-up to teach us about the holiness of God. He is unapproachable without our [Mediator \(1 Timothy 2:5\)](#).

["For there is one God and there is one Mediator between God and men - a human, Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself as a ransom for all -the testimony at the proper time." 1 Timothy 2:5-6](#)

Had our Messiah never come, we would still bear the consequence of death. But praise be to our LORD who has sent His Son, *Messiah Yeshua*, (Jesus Christ) to save us from sin

and death!

Anointing and giftings today

Throughout the Bible, we find all sorts of examples of people having received special anointing and giftings. The purpose of the anointing was so that a person would be [divinely empowered](#) or inspired to carry out a task that would be of blessing. The Spirit of the LORD rested on people for a time, and today, the Spirit of the LORD infills believers to accomplish the Great Commission!

God remains a God of order.

If we seek the blessings of the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*), we must do so in an orderly manner, with a spirit of gentleness. He will fill us with His supernatural giftings if we seek to use those gifts to bless the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps there is no census of believers taken on tablets of stone or sheets of papyrus, and we haven't all had to enlist for military service. But we are (as believers) members of the royal priesthood, and [even the hair on our head has been numbered \(Luke 12:7\).](#)

Today, I encourage you to seek to order your life, your every step, on the Biblical pattern God has established for a full and abundant life!

And I believe if you submit to His vital instructions and guidance, He will surely anoint you with His Holy Spirit to serve Him with success and joy!

Thanks so much for reading today! Please leave a comment below and subscribe to our monthly newsletter!