

The parshiyos of מטות מסעי always come out in the middle of the three weeks, the time of בין המצרים, when we are focused on the המקדש, what we had, what we lost, and what we can do to compensate for its loss. The summer months are בין הזמנים, so it behooves us to think of ways in which we can increase our Torah study these during these summer vacation months. We certainly have more time, and generally more time is frittered away on נארישקייטן, and we don't really devote ourselves as strongly as when we're in a structured program. So we should structure these days for ourselves.

Now it's very well known that R' Chaim Kanievsky had his set quotas of what he learnt every day. In the year 5762/2001, he נעבעך had a stroke, and on סוכות he was not even able to walk, he had to be carried from bed to chair and chair to bed. He was barely managed to move at all. Once they put him into bed and he lay down, he asked them to bring him a בבא מציעא. Holding it in his hand, he finished the eight blatt of בבא מציעא that night.

After יום טוב, he was admitted to a hospital where they cared for him. He was partially paralyzed and could not even concentrate. He never missed one day of learning his eight blatt. It serves as a model to us of what we could strive for. He once said, "After so many years of learning my daily quotas, I became somewhat familiar with the material, so after looking at the beginning of the גמרא, I'm able to complete it by heart." He knew ש"ס by heart.

Now, turning to the פרשה. Generally, the beginnings of every פרשה have more מזל than the ends. That's just the way it is. Everyone knows the first פסוק of almost every פרשה, but almost no one knows the last פסוק of almost any פרשה. Even after the last פסוק of the last פרשה, almost all the חומשים include little words to tell you how many פסוקים are in that פרשה. The last words in מסעי are על ירדן יריחו. After ירדן יריחו, there's a little note that says פרשת מסעי has 132 פסוקים in it. The mnemonic is given: מחלה חולה. Some of my children and grandchildren asked me this week, "What kind of name is מחלה for a person?" I told them that was one of צלפחד's daughters. Someone once came to R' Chaim and said, "מחלה חולה - if you translate that literally, it means someone who got sick with an illness. Is that really how we're ending the פרשה? And especially at the end of a ספר? We always try to end on a good note. Many of the הפטרות, for example, repeat the next-to-last פסוק because the final פסוק ends on a negative note, and we want to close on something positive.

R' Chaim immediately responded, "חולה doesn't mean sick in this context. It means dancing, as in מחול," as the משנה in תענית says: יוצאות במחולות בכרמים. On ט"ו באב and on יום כיפור, the young girls would go out and dance in the vineyards so that they could make שידוכים. So they were discussing preparations for החתונה. This מחלה is not someone who's sick, it's צלפחד's daughter, whose marriage is recorded at the end of the פרשה. It refers back to מחלה חולה - she's dancing.

Just incredible בקיאות. I was totally blown away by this little, little פינטעלע, this small point that shows the גדלות of R' Chaim and what he was. We were fortunate to have him in our time, and אם ירצה השם, we should strive to duplicate even one little fraction of his work.

