

## Listen Carefully



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KLEIMAN**

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Aharon, brother of Moshe and a key protagonist in the Torah, has passed away at the age of 123; it was a peaceful death on Mount Hor, described as a 'Divine kiss' by the Talmud in *Bava Batra* (17a).

The Torah records this event twice – once here in Parashat Masei and another time, several Torah portions ago, in Parashat Chukat.

On that first occasion, we are told that the Canaanite king of Arad "heard that [the nation of] Israel was coming by the way of Atharim", before pursuing the people of

Israel, taking some of them captive (Bemidbar 21:1).

Yet, on this latter occasion, in Masei, we are told that the king of Arad seemingly heard something else! The actual verse (Bemidbar 33:40) appears to exclude the subject, telling us that "the king of Arad heard" as the Israelites were on their way... But what did he hear?

According to Rashi (1040-1105), the subject was the news of Aharon's death!

Therefore, the question remains to be asked: why does Chukat suggest that the king of Arad heard that their enemy, Israel, was approaching, whereas Masei suggests that he heard the news of Aharon's passing?

Maybe we can answer this question by understanding the

meaning of the Hebrew word '*vayishma*', classically translated as 'and he heard'. The famous root '*shema*' does not only mean 'to listen'; '*shema*' is understood to be more dynamic – to both listen and understand, as famously illustrated in the *Shema* prayer itself.

Plugging this into our question, the first '*vayishma*' in Chukat could be understood to be the classic act of listening, the news that the nation of Israel was nearby. The second '*vayishma*' in Masei is the phase of understanding; the appreciation that Israel's vulnerability could be linked to the death of the holy Aharon, the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest).

The king of Arad's experiences give us a profound insight into thorough listening – the listening which is achieved by processing information and realising its full meaning and significance.

## Matot Masei Mash Up!

Rearrange these anagrams to reveal names of people found in this week's Torah readings

- 1 **HOMES** (Bemidbar 31:1)
- 2 **SPINACH** (Bemidbar 31:6)
- 3 **CABLE** (Bemidbar 32:12)
- 4 **GO** (Bemidbar 32:33)
- 5 **AIRY** (Bemidbar 32:41)
- 6 **HOPED** (Bemidbar 34:23)