

Torah Portion Matot

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What do we do when our ideas about gender dominance and war spoils have changed since the time of Torah? From our modern perspective Matot is a hard parshah. Men's vows are to be held honorably while women's vows are subject to their father's or husband's veto. That anathema is followed by the horrifying treatment of the Midianites where all the adult men and non-virgin women were to be killed and their possessions taken. And this is attributed to an instruction of God!

Many commentators slight at least the horrifying treatment, but instead of brushing the passage aside, we can use it to ask stimulating questions. Do we accept all instructions attributed to God by the ancients? Were they necessary evils of the time? Were they self-defense? Are there limits to what is justified in self-defense? How do we decide when to accept an instruction found in the Torah?

We often have ideas to add to those of the d'var Torah presenter. Reform Judaism is a champion of such diverse thinking. We are grateful for opportunities to share with each other our reflections on ideas of significance to human existence.