



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY



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תְּבָרְכוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

בַּמִּדְבָּר וְיָכַג

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SHALOM – From Conflict or Cold Peace to Completeness



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

The Hebrew word “Shalom” is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Judaism. It is often translated as “peace” which is, at best, a partial and superficial understanding of this critical concept.

“Peace” derives from the Roman word “Pax” which is related to the word “appeasement”. Peace in Hebrew would be closest to the word used by our Sages in the Mishna known as “פיוס”. “Peace” is defined as a state of non-aggression where there is no war and no fighting. It refers to a situation where there is no confrontation and hence two or more parties are able to live with each other, either individually or collectively, in a state of peace. When two sides in a conflict make a decision not to kill or harm each other this is a very noble and a great accomplishment and must be lauded. This is, though, a very far cry from the concept of “Shalom”.

The reason for this is that “peace” does not imply any **positive** relationship but only a negation of war – a cessation of fighting. A peaceful relationship is therefore not defined by what it is, but rather by what it is not. It is not war – no combat or confrontation. The problem is that peaceful relationships are often ones where each side is totally emotionally disengaged. It can be an apathetic relationship where each side doesn't particularly care about the other. In many ways it can reflect an absence of any positive relationship. Peaceful relations can be very cold ones; sometimes a chilling peace where there is no positive and warm relationship whatsoever. Not doing bad is not the same as proactively doing good.

Shalom

“Shalom” is something very different. It is closer to the English words of “harmony”,

“wholeness” and “completeness”. שלום in Hebrew means just that – complete. Such a relationship, in order to be wholesome and harmonious, presupposes positive, warm, proactive interaction. Each party does their bit in complementing the other. Two parts, both partial and incomplete, come together to form a harmonious whole. At the core of something whole and complete is the understanding that each side is, by definition, incomplete. So often the two parts are so different that they so deeply contrast each other that it can turn into combative confrontation. This becomes the mainstay of the relationship where both sides are locked inside the proverbial boxing ring of an ongoing power struggle. Some reach the conclusion that the differences are so irreconcilable that they cannot find a way to accommodate them in their relationship and divorce and separation follows. Others choose to remain in the relationship but since the differences are so great, and in order to avoid confrontations at all cost, they step out of the fighting ring and totally disengage emotionally. They settle for an apathetic cold peace.

Divorce, emotional disengagement or constant conflict are not the only ways of interaction. There is also the path of “Shalom” – a great challenge and ultimate blessing. Shalom is the ability to transform contrast and confrontation into something complementary and complete. Difference need not be eternally divisive but can rather be embraced - what Rabbi Sacks has famously coined “the dignity of difference”. Unity never needs to be uniformity. Thesis and antithesis need not be locked in eternal confrontation but can ultimately be converted into synthesis. I can vehemently disagree with your view but not delegitimize you. I can have a very different opinion

from you without destroying or disengaging from you. I can accept that you are also striving, just like me, for similar goals and that we can preserve the integrity of our relationship – there is room for both of us.

Win-Win vs Compromise

The term win-win which is used in relationship jargon in recent years definitely comes from the world and terminology of “Shalom”. It is not to be confused with the word “compromise”. The reason why “compromise” can be negative is because so often the nature of compromise is lose-lose. Both sides feel that they have given up on something very important to them for the sake of peace and indeed they have compromised something essential. When this happens, both sides somehow feel that they have lost. Win-win is something very different. It happens when both sides attempt to truly understand the other, as each side believes that the needs of the other is crucial to the very success and future of their relationship. Neither side wants the other side to compromise something important to them. When too many compromises happen, this often comes with resentment as the genuine needs of the other have not been met. Win-win happens when both sides wish to find a way to accommodate the genuine needs of the other so that both can find expression in any given solution. Both sides feel that they have won, since the good of the relationship has prevailed and both feel

that they have found expression in the relationship. They have both been prepared to limit their “I” for the greater “We”.

Black and White or Grey

A tangible example of this may be with respect to the colors black and white. A compromise between black and white is to mix them together, creating a new color grey. Both colors have compromised in that neither is expressed in this solution. Grey is neither black nor white but something in between. Grey is essentially a disingenuous expression of black and white – they have both compromised themselves to create something which reflects neither. Win-win would be to fill a sheet of paper with half black and half white. Black and white are both fully and genuinely expressed in this solution. What they have done is found a place for themselves and for the other to be who they are in their relationship. This is the nature of win-win and this is the nature of Shalom.

The Ultimate Blessing

It is for this reason that Shalom is the pinnacle and apex of our prayers and blessings – it is at once the final word of the daily Silent Prayer, Shas Mishnayot and the blessings of the Kohanim in this week's Parsha.

“שים שלום” is the final blessing of the *Shmona Esrei* where we pray for peace and harmony and ends with prayer that Hashem blesses his People with Shalom.

The Birkat Kohanim – the Priestly Blessings – which appear in this week's Parsha are beautiful, multi-faceted blessings that the Kohanim are commanded to bestow upon the people. The crescendo and final three words of the Bracha, are “וישם לך” – “שלום” – and Hashem should bestow Shalom upon you. It is the ultimate blessing.

It is also the final word and teaching in the last Mishna in Shas (Masechet Uktzin 3,12) – לא מצא הקב"ה לישראל כלי מחזיק ברכה אלא השלום – “Hashem has not found a greater receptacle for blessing than Shalom”. As the verse which completes the Mishna says, “ה' עוז”, “לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום”, “Hashem will give courage and boldness to his people and will bless them with Shalom” (Tehillim 29).

This last verse is most revealing – to be a person of Shalom requires great courageousness. Remarkable strength and courage are needed to find a place in our relationships for different and strong held views. Contrast need not be confrontational – we need not fight and perhaps can live in peace. Much better still, if we dig deep we can merit to live with the great blessing of Shalom – where contrasting views are converted into something complementary. Where we are more complete and whole, more holy and harmonious in the relationships that truly matter.

The attribute of “Shalom”, on a personal and collective level, is the ultimate key to fulfilling our personal and collective missions.

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עֶשְׂרֵה דוֹרוֹת מְאֻדָּם וְעַד נַח... עֶשְׂרֵה דוֹרוֹת מִנֵּחַ וְעַד אַבְרָהָם... (ה:ב)
עֶשְׂרֵה נְסִיחוֹת נִתְּנָה אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם וְעַמְד בְּכָלֵם... (ה:ג)
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Anonymous Numerical Lists

The fifth perek of Avot diverts from the previous four in two significant ways. As opposed to the first four, which quote “sayings” of various sages, the fifth perek predominantly consists of anonymous statements. In addition, the earlier *perakim* focus mainly on ethics and morals, while the fifth perek presents numerical lists of various historical phenomena, often without delineating an ethical implication.

The first half of the perek presents lists in descending numerical order. The first six *Mishnayot* list groups of ten, the following three groups of seven, and the final six groups of four. The lists of ten are uniquely significant because the number ten symbolizes something full and complete.

These lists of tens appear in historical order. The perek begins with the ten *ma'amarot* (utterances) with which G-d created the world and continues with the world's first ten generations (from Adam Harishon to Noach) and the subsequent ten (from Noach to Avraham). It then mentions the ten trials with which Hashem tested Avraham, the ten miracles that Hashem performed on behalf of the Jewish people in *Mitzrayim* and at Yam Suf, the ten ways the Jews “tested” Hashem, and, finally, the ten miracles that Hashem did on behalf of our ancestors in the times of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

What do these lists aim to teach us?

Significant Actions Significantly Impact a Significant World

A closer look at the lists reveals a broader common theme.

The first *Mishnah* explains that Hashem created the world with ten separate *ma'amarot*

in order to increase the reward and punishment *tzadikim* and *reshaim* (respectively) receive for their impact on the world. The multiple independent *ma'amarot* reflect the significance of each aspect of our world. They should inspire us to take our role and impact seriously.¹

The Generations — Noach, Avraham and the Jewish People

The next *Mishnayot* build off the significance of man's actions. Rashi (5:2) explains that Hashem sustained the world for ten generations (from Adam to Noach) in the hope that (even) **one** person (Noach) might justify its existence. The ten *ma'amarot* gave the **world** a chance; the ten generations gave **man** a chance.

The second series of ten generations link Noach to Avraham. As opposed to Noach, who survived but was unable to save his world, Avraham succeeded in steering (at least part) of the world in the right direction. Through this, he received the reward intended for the ten generations that preceded him. Avraham was not just a righteous individual; he was able to impact his surroundings and, thereby, received the reward of others for his influence upon them.

The ten tests Avraham passed expressed and taught his contemporaries about commitment to Hashem and thus earned him his reward. Rashi links Avraham's ten tests to the ten *ma'amarot*. Avraham's passing of the tests and commitment to Hashem's Will realized the goals the world was created for. Though a full two rounds of ten generations later, Avraham's actions eventually justified the ten *ma'amarot*.

Avot d'Rebbi Natan (Quoted by Rashi 5:3) connects the next ten — the ten miracles

— to Avraham's ten tests. It was Avraham's efforts that merited the miracles Hashem performed for his descendants. Hashem rewarded Avraham's supernatural commitment with supernatural intervention on behalf of later generations of Jews. The reward Avraham received from previous generations benefited future ones.

Appreciating Our Context

May our following Hashem's directives and passing His tests sustain the world He created and merit His reward and His performance of miracles on our behalf and on the behalf of many generations of our descendants.

1. *Kohelet Rabbah* (7:19.) describes how Hashem led Adam Harishon through the world, showed him how beautiful everything was and told him, “Make sure not to destroy it.” This demonstrates the significance of the role we play in this world. *Avot d'Rebbi Natan* (31:2 and quoted by the Bartenura) explains that even one *aveirah* or *mitzvah* greatly impacts the entire world. For example, a murderer of one person is considered as having destroyed the entire world, and one who saves even one life is considered to have saved the whole world. It derives this concept from Hashem's words to Kayin after he murdered his brother Hevel: “What have you done? Your brother's (*achicha*) blood cries out to Me from the ground! (Bereishit 4:10)” The *pasuk* uses the plural form ‘achecha’ to imply that Kayin killed not only his brother Hevel, but also all of his descendants. The *gemara* in Kiddushin (40b) reinforces this idea by asserting that a person should view the world as equally meritorious and liable and see his own action as what determines the whole world's fate.

● Transcribed by Yedidyah Rosenswasser.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Naso – Chinuch and Nezirut



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The obvious connection between this week's haftarah (Shoftim 13:2-25) and Parshat Naso is the subject of nezirut – a vow of various prohibitions. The Torah presents the framework of the nazirite status as a voluntary acceptance, whereas the narrative of the haftarah presents the prohibitions as commandments dictated by Hashem. Therefore, the haftarah does not begin with the naziriteship of Shimshon, but with the prelude of Manoach and his wife's reactions to the visit of a divine angel, thereby serving as commentary on the parasha of "nazir". Closer examination of the narrative of the haftarah, however, reveals parshanut on the broader themes of the parasha as well.

What is most striking about the story of Manoach and his wife is their passivity, alluded to in the name "Manoach", i.e. menucha (rest). As opposed to other barren couples in Tanach, they seem peacefully reconciled with the status quo of childlessness. There is no mention of prayer or cries, attempts of surrogacy or sacrifice. When an angel appears to "eshet Manoach" she is so frightened that she does not question or engage at all. Manoach, very suspicious of the angel's visit, asks not only what shall be done in utero, but requests an educational "instruction manual" - "What shall be the rule for the child, and what shall be done for him" (v. 12). The haftarah presents the "flip-side" of a neder of nezirut as presented in our parasha – a commitment initiated by the person as a means of serving as a "kohen" amidst the people, a paradigm of holiness. These "parents" are already at a loss for raising a leader; they lack the tools necessary to teach Shimshon how to transition from temporary holiness to everlasting holiness.



Sanctified leadership is not confined to the ivory towers of the sanctuary, but is involved proactively with the people.

These are in fact the broader messages of our parasha – beginning with the appointment of the Levi'im, and followed by the Kohen's interaction with the people in the machaneh, the Torah creates a system of integrated holiness. Sanctified leadership is not confined to the ivory towers of the sanctuary, but is involved proactively with the people. Therefore, the priests lead the impure and the thieves, the promiscuous women and the nazirites and they bless the encampment with benedictions of prosperity. Additionally, the tribal leaders are involved in the inauguration of the altar, known as "chanukat hamizbayach" – the same root as "chinuch", establishment and education!

The haftarah presents the antithesis of Parshat Naso – the absence of parental authority and education in the haftarah is an expression of the zeitgeist of the time – the rejection of the frameworks of authority among the entire people! Just as there is no king in Israel, and everybody does as he pleases, so too there is no parental authority in Shimshon's house from his conception through his inter-marriage with a Plishti woman, "for she pleases me well."

Shimshon's upbringing is introduced as one wherein his father suspects his mother – similar to the "isha sotah" of parashat Naso. The haftarah's twenty-four

verses employ the phrase "ishto" (his wife) seven times, parallel to the four times in the parashah of sotah. Similarly, both repeat the rare term "ish-a", "her man" three times in close juxtaposition. The haftarah presents Manoach and his wife as a man married to a "sotah" woman wherein Hashem gets involved to bring peace – just as the divine angel reappears to resolve Manoach's suspicions. In the parasha, the goal of the nazir, immediately following the laws of sotah, is to incorporate greater sanctity in the camp; as Shimshon the nazir should do the same within his house and nation.

The haftarah thereby ends with the hope of the "nazirite" blessing of "the spirit of Hashem" that should reeducate and lead the people properly. The narrative, however, already alludes to the failure of this "nazir" as it is imposed by Hashem and not voluntarily accepted. Additionally, this nazir (i.e. Shimshon) lacks the proper educational role models who are meant to guide and inspire and lead the people with him. Though the institution of naziriteship contains within it great spiritual potential as presented by the parasha, it presents considerable religious dangers and problems when not directed by proper educational role models of "chinuch".

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: Must one wash their hands before eating Shemita produce?

Answer: The Tosefta forbids the use of Shemita produce in a state of ritual impurity. Although this law is not applicable today, Rav Kook writes that due to the sanctity attached to Shemita produce, one is permitted to wash their hands before eating Shemita produce if he wishes (Kuntres Acharon). In fact, the Chayei Adam writes that it is proper to wash hands before eating Shemita produce. The majority of poskim do not require this. Although the stringent ruling is instructive about the sanctity of Shemita produce, it is better to follow the lenient opinion, as keeping this stringency will prevent people from eating Semita produce.

Question: A couple that has a baby boy feels that having a shalom zachor the Friday night before the brit mila will cause stress in the family and be too much for them. Can they decide not to have one?

Answer: A shalom zachor is a minhag, and therefore, if having one may cause some family stress it should be fine not to have one.

However, you may be able to do something small. The sefer Otzer Habrit writes that there were places in the Galil that would go right after tefillah to the house of the newborn to say Mazal Tov, and would take some sweets but would not sit down.

This may be a good option in this scenario. Have ten people stop by after tefillah and give out some cake or sweets. But even this is not necessarily.

Question: If we are making Shabbat early, can we also start our meal early?

Answer: The Or Zaruah writes that because kiddush is supposed to be said at the place of the meal, once we know that kiddush is allowed to be said early, it must be that the meal can be eaten early as well (see Tosfot and Rosh on Pesachim 99b). The Sefer Chasidim says that if one does start their meal early, they should make sure to eat a kezayit of bread after nightfall to be yozei the mitzvah of seudah.

The Mishneh Berura (267:5) paskins that one can finish their meal even before nightfall, but lechatchila they should eat a kezayit after nightfall. This is the accepted psak.

Question: Can one use a monitor for a child on Shabbat? Is there a difference if it is a video or sound monitor?

Answer: If the monitor is turned on before Shabbat, the monitor can be used on Shabbat whether it is video or sound. Adults near the monitor can speak normally, however, they should make sure not speak with the intention to be heard through the system. If the monitor was not turned on before Shabbat and there is a medical need (or even a safek of medical need), it can be turned on with a shinui (such as using the back of your finger).

Question: What bracha is made on vegetables grown disconnected from the ground through hydroponics?

Answer: At first glance, it seems that shehakol should be made because they are not growing from the ground, just like mushrooms (Nedarim 55b). The Chayei

Adam understood this way, and paskins that a shehakol is made on all vegetables grown in a non-perforated pot (atzitz sheino nakuv).

Rav Ovadya Yosef writes to make ha'adama if something was growing in a non-perforated pot, but a shehakol if it was grown in water (Shut Yechave Daat).

Many poskim, however, understand that a mushroom is shehakol because it grows in the air. Anything which normally grows on the ground, however, should be a ha'adma. Therefore, ha'adma would be said on hydroponics if the vegetable generally grows from the ground (Shevel Halevi, also quoted to be the opinion of the Chazon Ish).

Sprouts grown through hydroponics should be shehakol because they generally grow in water (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach quoted in Vezot Habracha).

Question: Can I use a salt shaker which has rice in it on Shabbat?

Answer: Some poskim are machmir not to use these because the shaker separates the salt from the rice (quoted in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein). Nevertheless, in practice this is permissible. This is because the function of the holes is primarily to spread the salt, and the separation only happens as a result (Az Nedabru). Additionally, Rav Shlomo Zalman (quoted in footnotes in Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata) reasoned that because the separation happens immediately, this is not considered a "kli" in regards to the laws of borer.

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*

תקציר לפרשת נשא

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לנפש, ולעתים הנפש מתגברת עד כדי רצון להתנתק מן הגוף. הנזיר הוא אדם שחש בעצמה את המורכבות הזו, וקיבל על עצמו נזירות לאחר שחש שכוחות הגוף שלו משתלטים על כוחות הנפש ("הרואה סוטה בקלקולה"), במשך תקופת הנזירות הוא הגביר את כחות נפשו על פני כוחות גופו. אך שני המצבים הקיצוניים הללו אינם מאוזנים, ועל שניהם צריך להביא קרבן חטאת.

כאשר מסתיימים ימי הנזירות, חוזר הנזיר אל המורכבות האנושית. אם הוא יחזור בסוף נזירותו לאותו מקום רוחני שבו היה בעת קבלת הנזירות, אזי סיוע הנזירות יהווה נפילה ואפילו חטא. אך אם תקופת הנזירות הצליחה להשפיע עמוק על נפשו, עם סיום הנזירות הוא אמור להגיע אל האיזון, לחזור אל המורכבות האנושית ולחיות אותה ביתר שלמות, ואת אוצרות הרוח ששאב בהיותו מורם מענייני העולם ישוב וישפיע אל תוך חיי העולם החומריים.

הנזיר פורש במידה מסויימת מענייני העולם הזה על מנת להתעלות למדרגה עליונה של קדושה. הרצון להתעלות אל הקדושה המרוממת, יש בו חיוב ושלילה כאחד: קבלת הנזירות היא סוג של הבעת כיסופי הנפש לשוב אל שורשה הזך; אך מצד שני, הקב"ה ברא את האדם בשר ודם, ולא כמלאך, מתוך כוונה שהאדם יחיה את חיי הגוף בשילוב עם חיי הנפש, ויצליח להביא לידי ביטוי את גדולת הנפש דווקא מתוך חיבור אל הגוף ואל כל חיי העולם הזה החומריים. כאשר כוחות החומר מתחברים אל הקדושה, ההתעלות היא הרבה יותר משמעותית, אף שכלפי חוץ היא פחות 'נוצצת'.

הנזיר פורש ומרחיק את עצמו מעסקי העולם הזה כדי להצליח להתקרב אל הקדושה, אך בכך הוא מפסיד את ההתמודדות עם המורכבות של קדושה השורה בחיי העולם הזה.

ייתכן שקרבן החטאת, שהנזיר צריך להביא בסוף ימי הנזירות, בא על הפרת האיזון העדין שבין כוחות הגוף וכוחות הנפש: לעתים הגוף משתלט ומפריע

הנזיר הוא אדם המחליט לקבל על עצמו איסורים נוספים, שאינם הכרחיים. הוא מתנזר (- נמנע) מכמה דברים (יין; תספורת; טומאה), ובכך פורש מהבלי העולם ומתקרב אל הקדושה, ומוכתר ב"נזר" - כתר של גדולה וקדושה.

איסור שתיית יין מרחיק את הנזיר מסיטואציות בעייתיות העלולות לקרות כאשר האדם שתוי, כגון ניאוף או כל קלות דעת שאינה ראויה. אדם הרוצה להתקרב אל הקדושה צריך לשמור על צלילות דעת הדרושה לצורך התקדמות בעבודת ה'.

איסור תספורת מבדיל את הנזיר מן החברה, ובכך מרחיק אותו ממעידות ומחטאים. יחד עם זאת, השיער הארוך הוא "נזר אלקי על ראשו", ומסמל את ייחודו של הנזיר, קדושתו, וחיבורו אל ה'.

מלבד הסייגים המיוחדים שמוטלים על הנזיר כדי להרחיקו מן החטא, התורה מרחיקה את הנזיר באופן מיוחד גם מן הטומאה, כדי לשמור על קדושתו המיוחדת - "כל ימי נזרו קדוש הוא לה".



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Everyone Counts



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

In the Naso parasha, the famous priestly blessing appears:

“May HaShem bless you and protect you,

May HaShem shine his countenance upon you and be gracious unto you,

May HaShem lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace.”
(Bamidbar 6:24-26)

Blessing, protection, a shining divine visage, graciousness, peace.

For thousands of years, parents have been blessing their children with these words on Shabbat eve. At the end of the Amidah prayer, the kohanim also articulate this blessing before the congregation and it is instructive to pay attention to how the blessing is introduced. Someone from the congregation cries out "kohanim!" at which point the kohanim cover themselves in their talit and say: "Blessed art Thou HaShem our G-d, King of the universe, who... commanded us to bless the nation of Israel with love." The end of this blessing is rather astonishing. In other blessings, we do not say, for example, that we have been commanded to light Shabbat candles "with love" or that we have

been commanded to eat matzah "with love." But in order to bless our fellow Jews, we must open our hearts with love. This is the kohen's pre-condition for bestowing the blessings of abundance and goodness upon the people. We too, through a positive attitude, generosity of spirit, and fellow feeling, can bring blessings into the lives of everyone around us.

Rabbi Moshe Grilak writes that the priestly blessing is a daily exercise for all of us. A permanent exercise that teaches us about love. In an era of charlatans who offer fake magical cures, in an era when you never know where your charitable contribution really goes, this Torah portion reminds us that in every synagogue in our neighborhood, every morning, this powerful blessing is given, at no charge and with love.



Two years ago throughout the world, everyone was talking about the front page of The New York Times: a densely packed list of a thousand names of coronavirus victims in the United States with a short sentence describing each of the deceased. A few lines written above the list informed us that these thousand

individuals were among the hundred thousand US virus victims and that their loss is immeasurable: "They were not simply names on a list. They were us." Without huge headlines, without graphics and without photos this front page shocked many people.

This week's Torah portion, parashat Naso, is the longest Torah portion in the Torah. The reason for this is that the parasha describes 12 times in succession and in great detail the many gifts brought by the chieftains of the 12 tribes for the inauguration of the Mishkan (sanctuary). Even though the gifts of the tribes' chieftains were all the same, the list of gifts was repeated verbatim 12 times. The commentators explain that the parasha is extended not because of the storyline, but because of the attention given to the individuals involved. Even if each of the chieftains did the same thing, each one of them found a different meaning in what he did since the perspective of each was unique. We can find here a desire by G-d that each and every one of us deserves our own valued place since we are all uniquely significant – that each of us is an entire world.

Continued on next page

השנים). היום בפרשה ממשיכים להגיע הנשיאים של כל השבטים אל המשכן החדש, כל אחד עם הקורבנות שלו. התורה מאריכה לפרט איך כל אחד מהם הביא רשימה שלמה של דברים, והמסר - לפי הרבה פרשנים - הוא שכל אחד הוא אדם נפרד עם כוונות חדשות ואחרות, ולכן מגיע הפירוט. זה הזכיר לי את הרעיון הזה של הרב קוק - אי אפשר שנשיא אחד יביא הכול עבור כולם. צריך את כולנו בסיפור, את כל טביעות האצבע.

תסתכלו בקצה האצבעות. לכל אחד מאיתנו טביעת אצבע משלו. חד פעמית. אחת ויחידה בכל העולם. כבר כמה שנים הולך איתי הדימוי של הרב קוק על הקשר של אדם עם התורה - הוא כותב שזה כמו טביעת אצבע. מה שנוצר בחיבור הזה של האדם בזמן לימוד התורה הוא חד פעמי ויוצא דופן. אין עוד משהו זהה. אי אפשר להעתיק שיעורי בית, או להגיד למישהו אחר ללמוד במקומי. יש פה משהו ייחודי שרק אתה יכול ליצור. (אגב, אשמח אם מישהו יימצא לי את המקור לדברי הרב קוק, שאבד לי לאורך

אחד יש כוונות ותחושות שונות, כל אחד מביא משהו חד פעמי שאף אחד אחר לא יכול להביא. לכל אחד יש חלק משלו בתורה, יש קדושה מיוחדת באישיות של כל אדם, ממש כמו שטביעת האצבע שלנו היא ייחודית רק לנו. העובדה שהתורה טורחת לפרט בדיוק מה כל אחד עשה - מראה שאין פה אחידות. יש חשיבות לעבודתו של כל פרט ופרט.



For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem said to Moshe, 'One prince (tribal leader) per day, one prince per day, shall they offer their sacrifices for the dedication of the altar'. And the one who offered his sacrifice on the first day was Nachshon ben Aminadav of the tribe of Yehudah" (Bemidbar 7:11-12).

The second half of this week's Parsha lists the offerings of the princes on the occasion of the dedication of the altar. The Torah lists the offerings of each tribal leader in full detail, even though their gifts were identical, making this the longest and most repetitive Parsha in the Torah. Nevertheless, one of the tribal leaders stands out from the rest.

From the second day onwards, every tribal leader is introduced by name and position, e.g., "Netanel ben Tzuar, the prince of Yissachar"; "The prince of the children of Zevulun, Eliav ben Cheilon"; "The prince of the children of Reuven, Elitzur ben Shedei'ur" etc. However, on the first day, the tribal leader is simply



Nachshon ben Aminadav was well known for the bravery he displayed by translating his belief into action by the Yam Suf, as he entered the waters prior to their splitting. He was a venerable personality in his own right, not because of his title or position. Nachshon therefore deserved to bring his offerings first and did not need to be called "prince".

introduced as "Nachshon ben Aminadav of the tribe of Yehudah". Why is the title "prince" omitted?

The Ohr HaChaim explains by differentiating between two kinds of leaders - those who are important because of their position and those who are important because of who they are:

"Nachshon was fitting to offer first even if he was not a prince and his merit was because of who he was, as opposed to the rest of the princes, whose merit was only from the fact that they were the princes of the tribes" (Ohr HaChaim Bemidbar 7:12).

Nachshon ben Aminadav was well known for the bravery he displayed by translating his belief into action by the Yam Suf, as he entered the waters prior to their splitting. He was a venerable personality in his own right, not because of his title or position. Nachshon therefore deserved to bring his offerings first and did not need to be called "prince".

More important than titles or positions of influence is how we use them. Not everybody can be a prince, but everybody can make a difference.

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לא סתם קוראים את הקטע הזה סמוך לחג השבועות. פרשת השבוע ("נשוא") מספרת על כך שכל הנשיאים, כלומר כל מנהיגי השבטים, ניגשו להקריב כל אחד את הקורבן שלו, בזמן חנוכת המשכן במדבר. מדובר בתיאור ארוך מאוד, שבו מתואר איך כל אחד עושה בדיוק את אותו הדבר. אז למה לא לכתוב בקצרה שכולם עשו כך וכך? למה צריך את השם והפירוט, שוב ושוב, ביחס לכל אחד?

פרשנים רבים מסבירים שזה המסר שצריך לקחת מחג השבועות: מבחוח, כולם נראים אותו דבר, לומדים את אותה תורה, מקיימים את אותן מצוות. אבל לכל

בפרשה גם בהיבטים הטכניים והארגוניים. עד היום, בתוך העולם הרוחני שלנו, יש זמנים ושעות מדויקים לתפילה, יש כמויות וזמנים שקשורים בעשיית מצה וכן הלאה. העובדה שמישהו לובש חליפה או גלבייה לא עושה אותו יותר או פחות רוחני. הרב ירוחם ליבוביץ' ממיר כבר קבע: "אדם שחי בלא סדר, חסר הוא בשלמות האדם".



לכאורה, מי שמסודר ו"מתוקתק" הוא בן אדם בורגני ואולי די אפור, ומי שזורם וחי בשאנטי - הוא אדם רוחני. אבל אם מתעמקים בפרשה מגלים שאולי ההיפך הוא הנכון: פרשת השבוע מתארת בפירוט את מה שקורה סביב המשכן במדבר. יש בה הוראות לוגיסטיות מפורטות - מי סוחר מה, איך בדיוק המשכן מתנייד, ומה התפקיד המדויק של כל משפחה ושבט. כל הפרטים האלה יוצרים סדר, והסדר, מתברר, הוא חלק מהרוחניות. הוא הבסיס שלה. מי שטוען שצריך רק השתחררות מכבלים וחוסר מחויבות, מוזמן לקרוא כמה מחשבה והשקעה יש

Two Versions of the Moral Life



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Parshat Naso contains the laws relating to the Nazirite – an individual who undertook to observe special rules of holiness and abstinence: not to drink wine or other intoxicants (including anything made from grapes), not to have his hair cut, and not to defile himself by contact with the dead (Num. 6:1–21). Such a state was usually undertaken for a limited period; the standard length was thirty days. There were exceptions, most famously Samson and Samuel who, because of the miraculous nature of their birth, were consecrated before their birth as Nazirites for life.¹

What the Torah does not make clear, though, is firstly why a person might wish to undertake this form of abstinence, and secondly whether it considers this choice to be commendable, or merely permissible. On the one hand the Torah calls the Nazirite “holy to God” (Num. 6:8). On the other, it requires him, at the end of the period of his vow, to bring a sin offering (Num. 6:13–14).

This led to an ongoing disagreement between the Rabbis in Mishnaic, Talmudic, and medieval times.

According to Rabbi Elazar, and later to Nahmanides, the Nazirite is praiseworthy. He has voluntarily undertaken a higher level of holiness. The prophet Amos said, “I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and your young men for Nazirites,” (Amos 2:11) suggesting that the Nazirite, like the prophet, is a person especially close to God. The reason he had to bring a sin offering was that he was now returning to ordinary life. His sin lay in *ceasing* to be a Nazirite.

Eliezer HaKappar and Shmuel held the opposite opinion. For them the sin lay in *becoming* a Nazirite in the first place and thereby denying himself some of the pleasures of the world G-d created and declared good. Rabbi Eliezer added:

“From this we may infer that if one who denies himself the enjoyment of wine is called a sinner, all the more so one who denies himself the enjoyment of other pleasures of life.” (Taanit 11a; Nedarim 10a.)

Clearly the argument is not merely textual. It is substantive. It is about asceticism, the life of self-denial. Almost every religion knows the phenomenon of people who, in pursuit of spiritual purity, withdraw from the pleasures and temptations of the world. They live in caves, retreats, hermitages, monasteries. The Qumran sect known to us through the Dead Sea Scrolls may have been such a movement.

In the Middle Ages there were Jews who adopted similar kinds of self-denial – among them the Chasidei Ashkenaz, the Pietists of Northern Europe, as well as many Jews in Islamic lands. In retrospect it is hard not to see in these patterns of behaviour at least some influence from the non-Jewish environment. The Chasidei Ashkenaz who flourished during the time of the Crusades lived among self-mortifying Christians. Their southern counterparts may have been familiar with Sufism, the mystical movement in Islam.

The ambivalence of Jews towards the life of self-denial may therefore lie in the suspicion that it entered Judaism from the outside. There were ascetic movements in the first centuries of the Common Era in both the West (Greece) and the East (Iran) that saw the physical world as a place of corruption and strife. They were, in fact, dualists, holding that the true God was not the creator of the universe. The physical world was the work of a lesser, and evil, deity. Therefore God – the true God – is not to be found in the physical world and its enjoyments but rather in disengagement from them.

The two best-known movements to hold this view were Gnosticism in the West and Manichaeism in the East. So at least some of the negative evaluation of the Nazirite may have been driven by a desire to discourage Jews from imitating non-Jewish practices. Judaism strongly believes that God is to be found in the midst of the physical world that He created that is, in the first chapter of Genesis, seven times pronounced “good.” It believes not in renouncing pleasure but in sanctifying it.

What is much more puzzling is the position of Maimonides, who holds *both* views, positive and negative, in the same book, his law code the *Mishneh Torah*. In *Hilchot Deot*, he adopts the negative position of Rabbi Eliezer HaKappar:

A person may say: “Desire, honour, and the like are bad paths to follow and remove a person from the world; therefore I will completely separate myself from them and go to the other extreme.” As a result, he does not eat meat or drink wine or take a wife or live in a decent house or wear decent clothing.... This too is bad, and it is forbidden to choose this way. (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Deot* 3:1.)

Yet in *Hilchot Nezirut* he rules in accordance with the positive evaluation of Rabbi Elazar: “Whoever vows to G-d [to become a Nazirite] by way of holiness, does well and is praiseworthy.... Indeed Scripture considers him the equal of a prophet.”² How does any writer come to adopt contradictory positions in a single book, let alone one as resolutely logical as Maimonides?

The answer lies in a remarkable insight of Maimonides into the nature of the moral life as understood by Judaism. What Maimonides saw is that there is not a single model of the virtuous life. He identifies two, calling them respectively the way of

the saint (*chassid*) and the way of the sage (*chacham*).

The sage follows the “golden mean,” the “middle way.” The moral life is a matter of moderation and balance, charting a course between too much and too little. Courage, for example, lies midway between cowardice and recklessness. Generosity lies between profligacy and miserliness. This is very similar to the vision of the moral life as set out by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The saint, by contrast, does not follow the middle way. He or she tends to extremes, fasting rather than simply eating in moderation, embracing poverty rather than acquiring modest wealth, and so on. At various points in his writings, Rambam explains why people might embrace extremes. One reason is repentance and character transformation.³ So a person might cure himself of pride by practising, for a while, extreme self-abasement. Another is the asymmetry of the human personality. The extremes do not exert an equal pull. Cowardice is more common than recklessness, and miserliness than over-generosity, which is why the *chassid* leans in the opposite direction. A third reason is the lure of the surrounding culture. It may be so opposed to religious values that pious people choose to separate themselves from the wider society, “clothing themselves in woollen and hairy garments, dwelling in the mountains and wandering about in the wilderness,”⁴ differentiating themselves by their extreme behaviour.

This is a very nuanced presentation. There are times, for Rambam, when self-denial is therapeutic, others when it is factored into Torah law itself, and yet others when it is a response to an excessively hedonistic age. In general, though, Rambam rules that we are *commanded* to follow the middle way, whereas the way of the saint is *lifnim mishurat hadin*, beyond the strict requirement of the law.⁵

Moshe Halbertal, in his recent, impressive study of Rambam,⁶ sees him as finessing the fundamental tension between the civic ideal of the Greek political tradition and the spiritual ideal of the religious radical for whom, as the Kotzker Rebbe famously said, “The middle of the road is for horses.” To the *chassid*, Rambam’s sage can look like a “self-satisfied bourgeois.”

Essentially, these are *two ways of understanding the moral life itself*. Is the aim of the moral life to achieve personal perfection? Or is it to create a decent, just, and compassionate society? The intuitive answer of most people would be to say: both. That is what makes Rambam so acute a thinker. He realises that you cannot have both. They are in fact different enterprises.

A saint may give all his money away to the poor. But what about the members of the saint’s own family? A saint may refuse to fight in battle. But what about the saint’s own country? A saint may forgive all crimes committed against him. But what about the rule of law, and justice? Saints are supremely virtuous people, considered as individuals. Yet you cannot build a society out of saints alone. Ultimately, saints are not really interested in society. Their concern is the salvation of the soul.

This deep insight is what led Rambam to his seemingly contradictory evaluations of the Nazirite. The Nazirite has chosen, at least for a period, to adopt a life of extreme self-denial. He is a saint, a *chassid*. He has adopted the path of personal perfection. That is noble, commendable, and exemplary.

But it is not the way of the sage – and you *need sages if you seek to perfect society*. The sage is not an extremist, because he or she realises that there are other people at stake. There are the members of one’s own family and the others within one’s own community. There is a country to defend and an economy to sustain. The sage knows he or she cannot leave all these commitments behind to pursue a life of solitary virtue. For we are called on by God to live in the world, not escape from it; to exist in society, not seclusion; to strive to create a balance among the conflicting pressures on us, not to focus on some while neglecting the others.

Hence, while from a personal perspective the Nazirite is a saint, from a societal perspective he is, at least figuratively, a “sinner” who has to bring an atonement offering.

Maimonides lived the life he preached. We know from his writings that he longed for seclusion. There were years when he worked day and night to write his

Commentary to the Mishnah, and later the *Mishneh Torah*. Yet he also recognised his responsibilities to his family and to the community. In his famous letter to his would-be translator Ibn Tibbon,⁷ he gives an account of his typical day and week – in which he had to carry a double burden as a world-renowned physician and an internationally sought halachist and sage. He worked to exhaustion.⁸

Maimonides was a sage who longed to be a saint, but knew he could not be, if he was to honour his responsibilities to his people. That is a profound and moving judgement, and one that still has the power to inspire today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Did Rambam believe being a Nazir was a good thing, or a bad thing? Which do you believe?
- In Rambam’s own life, did he demonstrate a tendency toward being a saint or a sage?
- Which of these two types do you most connect with, the sage or the saint?

1. See Judges 13:1–7; and 1 Sam. 1:11. The Talmud distinguishes these kinds of cases from the standard vow for a fixed period. The most famous Nazirite of modern times was Rabbi David Cohen (1887–1972), a disciple of Rav Kook and father of the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, Rabbi She’ar-Yashuv Cohen (1927–2016). Taanit 11a; Nedarim 10a.
2. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Nezirut* 10:14
3. See his *Eight Chapters* (the introduction to his commentary on Mishna Avot), ch. 4, and *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deot*, chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6.
4. *Eight Chapters*, ch. 4.
5. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deot* 1:5.
6. Moshe Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 154–163.
7. There were Sages who believed that in an ideal world, tasks such as earning a living or having children could be “done by others” (see Brachot 35a for the view of R. Shimon b. Yochai; Yevamot 63b for that of Ben Azzai). These are elitist attitudes that have surfaced in Judaism from time to time but which are criticised by the Talmud.
8. See Rabbi Yitzhak Sheilat, *Letters of Maimonides* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Miskal, 1987–88), 2:530–554.

Ten Levels of Kedushas Hamikdash



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

The Gemara (Pesachim 67a) notes that the word מחנה (camp) appears three times in the pessukim that list those who may not remain in the camp: “Command Bnei Yisrael that they shall expel from the camp everyone with tzara’as, everyone who has had a zav-emission, and everyone contaminated by a human corpse. Male and female alike shall you expel, to the outside of the camp shall you expel them, so that they should not contaminate their camps, among which I dwell.” (Bamidbar 5:2-3)

The Gemara explains that these three machanos correspond, in descending order of kedushah, to the מחנה שכינה (azarah – Beis HaMikdash courtyard), מחנה לוי (Har HaBayis – Temple Mount), and מחנה ישראל (Yerushalayim). The passuk lists three impure individuals – the tamei mes, the zav, and the metzora – in order of increasing tum’ah, teaching that these individuals are prohibited, respectively, from entering these three machanos.

The Sifrei Zuta discusses the mitzvah to send the teme’im outside the various machanos, stating: “There are ten levels of sanctity.” The Mishna (Keilim 1:6-10) similarly list these ten levels in ascending order of kedushah, starting with Eretz Yisrael and concluding with the Kodesh HaKodashim.

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of discussing the first level of kedushah listed in the Mishnah – that of Eretz Yisrael: “Eretz Yisrael is holier than all other lands. And what constitutes its holiness? That we bring from it the [barley used for the] omer-offering, the [first fruits offered as] bikkurim, and the [wheat used for the] shetei halechem [two loaves on Shavuos], which we do not bring from all other lands.”

First, it seems strange that of all the dinim that make Eretz Yisrael unique

– agricultural mitzvos dependent upon the land – specifically these three obscure dinim are the ones chosen to express the uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael.

Furthermore, although one of the Mishnah’s examples of Eretz Yisrael’s kedushah is that the fruits of bikkurim may only come from produce of Eretz Yisrael, certain versions of the text of the Sifrei Zuta neglect to mention this third example. What accounts for this apparent discrepancy, whether to list the din of bikkurim amongst the dinim that demonstrate Eretz Yisrael’s distinctiveness?

The Sifrei Zuta and Mishnah are not merely outlining the special kedushah of Eretz Yisrael per se. Of course, there exists a concept of kedushas Eretz Yisrael, which gives rise to the long list of mitzvos dependent upon the land. In this context, however, Chazal express the notion that there are ten levels of kedushas haMikdash. The core of kedushas Beis HaMikdash, its most intense degree, is found in the Kodesh HaKodashim. The kedushah then spills over to the other areas in descending levels of kedushah, until it fills the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael itself, which possesses the tenth level of kedushas haMikdash.

Chazal seek to prove that Eretz Yisrael, apart from its own kedushas ha’Aretz, is endowed with a lower level of kedushas haMikdash. This cannot be demonstrated from the group of mitzvos dependent upon the land, for they are dependent solely upon kedushas ha’Aretz. The two dinim that can demonstrate a kedushah in the form of kedushas haMikdash are those regarding the omer and the shetei halechem. These dinim indicate that there is a requirement for the barley for the omer and the wheat for the shetei halechem to have grown within the “Beis HaMikdash.”

The Beis HaMikdash proper, of course, is not used for agricultural purposes; this requirement is fulfilled by using items grown in Eretz Yisrael, which contains, on some level, an element of kedushas Beis HaMikdash.

Shlomo HaMelech, upon the dedication of the First Beis HaMikdash, offered the tefillah, “And they shall pray to You by way of their land that you gave to their forefathers, and [by way of] the city that You have chosen, and [through] the Beis HaMikdash that I built for Your Name” (Melachim I 8:48). This tefillah is related to the description of the Beis HaMikdash as a beis tefillah in the passuk, “for My House will be called a House of Prayer for all the peoples” (Yeshayah 56:7). Tefillah is to be directed to the Beis HaMikdash where it can be accepted. The requirement to face Eretz Yisrael during tefillah, which then ascends to Hashem, is based on the fact that the entirety of Eretz Yisrael contains an element of kedushas Beis HaMikdash. The Rambam seems to hold that it is a d’oraisa requirement within the dinim of tefillah for one outside the Land to face Eretz Yisrael.

Another din that reflects the kedushas haMikdash aspect of Eretz Yisrael is that ma’aser beheimah (animal tithes) and bechor beheimah tehorah (firstborn kosher animals) are not offered as korbanos if they come from outside Eretz Yisrael. Similarly, the Mechilta holds that the allowance, during certain periods in history, to offer a korban on a bamah (mizbe’ach outside of the Beis HaMikdash) was likewise only applicable in Eretz Yisrael.

The Mishnah added a third din to demonstrate that Eretz Yisrael contains an element of kedushas haMikdash – that only the fruits of Eretz Yisrael are obligated in bikkurim. The Mishnah must hold

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Carrying the Weight of the Torah on Their Shoulders



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

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In Parshat Naso we talk about the donations of the נשיאים, which include the wagons which were given to the לויים to help transport the different parts of the Mishkan. However, the Pasuk makes it very clear that the family of קהת did not receive any wagons, as they were charged with carrying the holiest of vessels and therefore had to carry them on their shoulders.

”וְלִבְנֵי קֹהֶת, לֹא נָתַן כִּי-עֲבֹדֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ עֲלֵהֶם, בְּכַתְּףֵי יִשְׂאֹר.”
The Gemara in Masechet Sotah says that Dovid Hamelech, when transporting the Aron, made a mistake specifically about this Pasuk. Dovid transported the Aron in a wagon, instead of having the לויים carry it on their shoulders as this Pasuk requires, and for that he was punished. The Gemara even explains further that the reason why Dovid did not remember the Halacha found in our Pasuk is “מפני שקרא לדברי תורה זמירות”, because he called the words of Torah a song, thereby indicating a lack of significance given to them. In essence, Dovid referred to the words of Torah as a song, and for that he was made to forget the Pasuk in our Parsha, ultimately leading to his punishment. The question that we must ask is what is the connection between all of this. What is the relationship between calling the words of Torah a song, and then forgetting this Pasuk?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in the Darash Moshe, explains that in fact Dovid did not just forget the Pasuk of “בכתף ישאור”, but rather misunderstood its significance. One can understand “בכתף ישאור”, that the לויים should carry it on their shoulders, as simply relating to the story of what happened, and not specifically teaching a Halacha that it must be carried on their shoulders. Rav Moshe explains that this was specifically Dovid’s mistake. Dovid did not express adequate respect for the seriousness with which we should approach the words of Torah, in understanding that every single word has significance and is there for a reason. He read “בְּכַתְּףֵי יִשְׂאֹר” as relating the story of what happened, rather than a specific command about how to carry the Aron. On Dovid’s level, a lack of significance given to the words of the Torah by referring to them as a song is exactly what caused Dovid to assume that these words of “בכתף ישאור” were nothing more than a story. Thus, what we can learn from both the story of Dovid, as well as the Pasuk in our Parsha, is the tremendous חשיבות, significance, we must give to every word of Torah.

In a similar vein, Rav Hutner explains another connection between referring to the Torah as זמירות, and misinterpreting the Pasuk of “בכתף ישאור”, relating to the

general theme of the Aron being carried on the shoulders of the לויים. The fact that the holiest of vessels, and specifically the Aron, must be carried on the shoulders of the לויים is meant to teach us the hard work that we must be willing to invest to learn Torah. The Aron, as we know, symbolized the Torah, and the fact that the לויים had to carry this symbol on their shoulders is meant to teach us that in order to be successful in learning Torah, we must be willing to work hard, to be “willing to sweat”. Rav Hutner explains that this is the problem with referring to the words of Torah as a song. Obviously, one is meant to enjoy his or her learning, and שמחת התורה is one of the greatest שמחות in the world. However, ultimately the main focus cannot be centered around enjoyment, and must be focused on the hard work and seriousness that must be put in. When Dovid referred to the words of Torah as being an enjoyable song, he missed the point of specifically this Pasuk, and for that he was punished. Connected to what we said earlier from Rav Moshe, it comes out this this Pasuk of “בכתף ישאור” not only indicates the seriousness with which we must take each and every word of the Torah, but also the seriousness with which we should approach the study of Torah in general.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

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that bikkurim is not one of the mitzvos dependent upon the land, but is rather part of the avodah of the Beis HaMikdash, and the fruits must therefore grow on land that possesses kedushas Beis HaMikdash. This is the point of dispute between the Mishnah and some versions of the Sifrei Zuta, which

do not include the din of bikkurim along with the omer and shetei halechem. The latter maintain that bikkurim is one of the mitzvos dependent upon the land.

Therefore, while it is true that the fruits of bikkurim may only come from produce grown in Eretz Yisrael, this din does not

prove anything regarding the kedushas haMikdash aspect of Eretz Yisrael. This aspect of the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael can only be proven through the dinim regarding the omer and the shetei halechem.

● From ‘Rav Schachter on the Parsha’.

How Do We Move On In Life?



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

On 4 March 1987, then US President Ronald Reagan addressed the American people from the Oval Office about the Iran-Contra Scandal. It involved senior government officials secretly facilitating the sale of arms to Iran, which was the subject of an arms embargo.

Taking full responsibility for his role in the affair, Reagan famously said:

"Now, what should happen when you make a mistake is this: you take your knocks, you learn your lessons, and then you move on. That's the healthiest way to deal with a problem... You know, by the time you reach my age, you've made plenty of mistakes. And if you've lived your life properly – so, you learn. You put things in perspective. You pull your energies together. You change. You go forward."

Unfortunately, this honest, unflinching admission of wrongdoing is often the exception rather than the rule. From Cambridge Analytica to the Panama Papers, Watergate and other scandals, public figures have been famously reluctant to admit the error of their ways.

And it's a practice that goes all the way back to the beginning of human history. When G-d confronts Adam after he has eaten from the forbidden tree, his response to avoid accountability: "The woman whom you gave to me, she gave from the tree to me and I ate it." (Bereishit 3:12). Rather than accept responsibility and acknowledge his wrongdoing, Adam's first instinct is to shift the blame.

In his commentary on this verse, the Sforno contrasts Adam's response with that of King David – who, when he was confronted by the prophet, Natan, with regards to his

sin with Batsheva, immediately responds: "I have sinned to Hashem." (Samuel 2:12-13). This is how we should respond when we realise that we have done wrong.

In this week's Torah portion, *Naso*, we learn the mitzvah of confession. The verse states, simply: "If a man or a woman commits any sin... they shall confess their sin that they committed." (Bamidbar 5:6-7). The Rambam, in his *Laws of Repentance*, defines the process of repentance and sets out its various components: regretting the mistakes of the past, desisting from that wrongdoing in the present, and resolving not to return to this course of action in the future. But, there's a fourth element, no less crucial to the repentance process – *confession*. (Laws of Repentance, Chapter 1). Confession – in Hebrew, *viduy* – is simply a *verbal expression* to G-d of the errors of the past and our resolve for the future, an acknowledgment of full responsibility and accountability for our actions. And to confess requires real courage and honesty.

Why is verbal confession central to repentance? The *Sefer HaChinuch* emphasises the element of transparency – that G-d knows all and sees all, and that by verbalising our wrongdoing, we are acknowledging our lives are an open book before our Creator.

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik has a different take. He compares confession, *viduy*, to the mitzvah of reciting the *Shema*, and of the mitzvah of prayer to G-d. All of these mitzvahs have a deep internal, emotional, spiritual and intellectual component, and yet all are made concrete and tangible through verbal expression which strengthen, give form and shape and make impactful the deep internal processes taking place. So to explain, the internal process of the *Shema* is to accept G-d as the Master of the Universe and to

crown Him as king in our lives. That is a very deep internal process, which is given expression by the reciting of the words of the *Shema*. Prayer is defined by our sages as the "service of the heart" – deep feeling of emotional and spiritual connection to G-d – yet this hidden aspect is made concrete and tangible through verbal expression using a siddur. By vocalising the prayers, we reinforce, and give shape and form to, the deep internal processes happening beneath the surface.

Confession is also about repairing the damage our actions have caused, specifically to our relationship with G-d and with those we have wronged. The repentance process is about healing those rifts, and restoring our connection to the people we have hurt, and to our Creator. The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuva*, which literally means "return". Through *teshuva*, we return to that pristine state in which there was no distance or disconnect in our relationships.

The Rambam says when it comes to wronging other people, it is sometimes necessary to confess not only privately to G-d, but to make a public confession and apology to the people harmed, in order to rectify the damage. In addition to confession, we are also obliged to ask those we have wronged for forgiveness, in situations where we have caused harm to another. The Rambam further writes that the victim of our misdeed needs to act with compassion and graciously grant forgiveness, and in this way, the relationships that have been damaged by our wrongdoing can be fully restored.

When it comes to restoring our relationship with G-d, our confession is made before Him alone. The purpose, says the Maharal, is to help us restore our

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In the Basket!



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In Parshat Naso we are introduced to the *nazir*. A *nazir* is an individual who takes an oath to refrain from drinking wine, cutting his hair, or becoming *tame met* (impure from a corpse). There is a debate among the *rishonim* as to whether or not *nezirut* is commendable. The Rambam believes it is not ideal and indicates a weakness in one's self-control, to take an oath in order to refrain from certain physical pleasures. The Ramban on the other hand argues that *nezirut* is praiseworthy and one offers a *chatat* after having completed his or her *nezirut* period because they are digressing from a higher spiritual level.

At the end of one's *nezirut* cycle there is an obligation to offer three sacrifices: one as a *Korban olah*, one as a *chatat*, and one as a *shlamim*. (Bamidbar 6:14). In addition, the *nazir* is to bring a basket of bread – referred to as a סל - “sal” (Bamidbar 6:15)

סל מצות סלת חלה בלולת בשמן ורקיקי מצות משחים בשמן ומנחתם ונסביה.

It is interesting to note that the bread that is brought by the *nazir*, is specifically placed in a סל – basket. In fact, the term סל - basket is used three times in this paragraph (pasuk 15, 17 and 19). When

one offers a *korban todah* and brings 40 loaves of bread there is no obligation to place the bread in a basket. What is the emphasis here on the basket?

There is only one other occasion when the Torah dictates that one brings bread in a basket in connection with a *Korban* and that is in reference to the *korbanot* that were brought during the *miluim* and *chanukat Hamishkan* (Shemot 29:3 and Vayikra 8:2).

Not only is the basket of bread mentioned both with respect to the sacrifice of the *nazir* and the *miluim*, but the same three *korbanot* (*olah*, *chatat* and *shlamim*), were offered on both occasions as well.

What exactly is the connection between a *nazir* and the *miluim* (the days the *mishkan* was inaugurated)? One would think that they are in fact opposites. The *miluim* represented the **initiation** of the *mishkan*, while the *nazir* brought these offerings and the basket of bread at the **completion** of his cycle.

Rav Sorotzkin in *Oznayim L'Torah* derives an important lesson from this apparent parallelism. The purpose of *nezirut* is not to set aside a certain period where one

“feels” holy. Rather, it is supposed to be a period that elevates an individual such that it impacts his future, post *nezirut* period and leads to a permanent change. Essentially to place that spiritual boost into the “basket” and take that uplifting moment with you. Similar to the *chanukat hamishkan*, which represented the preparatory stage of priming the *mishkan* for the *avoda*, – so too the *nezirut* period should be viewed as a preparatory stage in grooming the individual to undergo a permanent, positive and lasting change in his or her life.

Although we cannot fulfill *nezirut* today in its complete format, this lesson is very relevant to each and every one of us. We often feel inspired after hearing a good shiur, performing an act of *chesed* or participating in a meaningful davening. We cannot allow those inspirational experiences to dissipate. Rather, we have to internalize these moments by inserting those inspirational highs into our “spiritual basket” and carry them with us. To allow that feeling to penetrate us and to serve as the primer to enable us to permanently improve upon ourselves and enhance our religious observance.

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closeness to G-d, a natural state of being which is disturbed by our wrongdoing. Through the process of confession, we pour out our heart, and affect a deep, emotional reconciliation with our Creator.

Teshuva is an incredible G-d-given gift to restore that which has been broken. Our sages teach that through the simple act of taking responsibility, of doing *teshuva* – acknowledging and sincerely regretting

our wrongdoings, desisting from them in the present, resolving not to repeat them, and confessing before G-d - we are given the opportunity to travel back in time and undo what has been done.

Through honesty, accountability and true humility we return to a point in time in which our relationships were undamaged, and we renew and reinvigorate our connection with G-d and with those around

us. It's a second chance, the gift of a new start, an opportunity to begin afresh so the future is not destroyed by the past - and so we can look ahead with fresh energy, new hope and optimism.

The Nsiim



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Rarely does anyone pay careful attention to the second half of Parshat Naso; and for a very simple reason. In those last eighty-some psukim, the Torah repeats twelve times the exact same details of the exact same korban brought by each "nasi"! Then, 'to top it off,' in the final five psukim the Torah tallies them for us as well.

At the conclusion of the Torah's tally of all of the offerings brought during those twelve days we find what appears to be a 'perfect' summary pasuk: "zot chanukat ha'mizbeich..." - 'this was the dedication offering for the Altar on the day that it was consecrated.'

But to our surprise, after this summary is complete, the Torah 'adds on' an additional pasuk that appears to be totally unrelated: "...And when Moshe would come into the OHEL MOED to speak to Him, he would hear G-d's voice speak to him from above the KAPORET above the ARON between the two keruvim, and then He would speak to him."

The information in this pasuk may be important, but it has absolutely nothing to do with the 'korbanot' that were just offered. After all, what connection could there be between 'how G-d spoke to Moshe from the Ohel Moed' and 'the twelve days of korbanot' that were just offered by the Nsiim?

Recall that in the aftermath of chet ha'egel, G-d concluded that Bnei Yisrael would not be able survive if His divine Presence - the shechina" - remained in their midst. Therefore, G-d informed Moshe that He would be taking away His "shechina" from the camp of Bnei Yisrael. As a consequence of this punishment, G-d instructed Moshe to re-locate his own tent from inside the camp to **OUTSIDE the camp**.

With this background, we can better appreciate the thematic importance of the wording of G-d's opening commandment for Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan: "And you shall build for Me a MIKDASH, so that I can dwell in THEIR MIDST..." Building the Mishkan

would enable the shechina to return to the camp of Bnei Yisrael.

Recall as well that even though G-d had answered Moshe Rabeinu's plea to forgive their sin by invoking His thirteen attributes of Mercy - the "shechina" did not immediately return. Rather, in order to re-establish their special covenantal relationship with G-d, Bnei Yisrael are instructed to first build the Mishkan.

Until the Mishkan would be assembled, the existence of Moshe's special OHEL MOED outside the camp served as constant reminder to Bnei Yisrael that were still not worthy for G-d to dwell in their midst.

Thus, the location of the Mishkan at the center of the camp, and G-d speaking to Moshe from its innermost sanctuary would certainly serve as a sign to Bnei Yisrael that G-d had forgiven their sin, and that they have returned to their pre-"chet ha'egel" status.

With this background, it becomes clear why the highlight of the day of the Mishkan's dedication would be the return of G-d's "shechina" to the camp, a sign not only of their divine pardon but also an indication that they could now continue their journey to Eretz Canaan.

From this perspective, the final pasuk of Parshat Naso becomes the most important pasuk of the entire Parsha! It is no longer a misplaced 'add on'; rather it should be understood as the highlight of the entire chapter - for it describes how G-d spoke to Moshe from the KAPORET in the OHEL MOED - the key event that everyone was waiting for!

On the day of the Mishkan's dedication, the leaders of the twelve tribes - i.e. the Nsiim - took a joint initiative to donate six transport wagons - that would help the Leviim carry the Mishkan during their journey. Together with the presentation of these six wagons, each and every "nasi" also offered a special korban - in honor of the dedication of the Mishkan.

Instead of each leader trying to outdo the other to our surprise - each NASI offered the

exact same korban, and they all presented their korbanot to Moshe Rabeinu together on that very first day. One could suggest that this show of 'unity' was so important, that the Torah found it worthwhile to detail each and every korban, even though they were all identical!

It would have been significant enough had the Torah only repeated each korban; but to 'top it off', the Torah continues by providing us with a tally of all the offerings brought over those twelve days.

"This was the dedication of the MIZBAYACH, on **THE DAY that it was anointed**, by the NSIIM of Israel..."

The Torah has returned to 'Day One' of the dedication ceremony, reminding us that all of these korbanot were first presented jointly by all the Nsiim - on the very first day.

This could provide us with a reason for this summary. The Torah does not need to teach us multiplication; rather it is emphasizing once again how all of these korbanot were presented to Moshe Rabeinu by ALL of the NSIIM on the very first day - in a show of national unity!

The nation, via its leaders, had shown their worthiness to return to its status as G-d's special nation - chosen to represent Him before the eyes of all mankind. United in purpose, Bnei Yisrael were now ready to leave Har Sinai with G-d in their midst, to take the challenge of establishing G-d's model nation in the Promised Land.

It may be that it was because of this collective effort, where everyone acted together towards a common goal while keeping their own identity; that G-d found it important to give each Nasi his own special day. By acting with unity, each Nasi was now able to shine as an individual. It may have been that understanding of the important balance between the nation and the individual - that made room for G-d to 'join along' with His nation, as they prepared for their next stage of Redemption!

Generosity Begins at Home



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In Parshat Naso (5:9-10), we find a pair of verses that emphasize the importance of giving Terumot and Ma'aserot – the various gifts that one must give to Kohanim and Leviyim from his agricultural produce. In these verses, as Rashi explains, the Torah promises great reward for those who comply with these laws, and warns that those who stingily deny the Kohanim and Leviyim their portions from their fields will be punished, as their fields will produce only a small percentage of what they are capable of producing.

These verses are followed by the law of the Sota – a woman whose husband suspects her of infidelity. The husband would bring the woman to the Bet Hamikdash, where the Kohen would give her special water to drink. The water would cause the woman to die if she was guilty of adultery, and if she survived, this meant that she was innocent, and she and her husband could resume their marital relationship. The Gemara (Berachot 63a) teaches that this section appears in the Torah immediately following the discussion of Terumot and Ma'aserot to teach that one who refuses to give the Kohen his due portion will end up having to bring his wife to the Kohen to drink the water. In other words, one of the punishments for refusing to give Terumot and Ma'aserot is that one's wife becomes a Sota.

What is the connection between failing to give Terumot, and one's wife's suspected infidelity? Why is one punished for withholding Terumot and Ma'aserot by having a disloyal wife?

Generosity is a character trait embedded within our beings. It is not a button that can be turned "on" and "off." Therefore, if a person is, by nature, stingy and selfish,



What is the connection between failing to give Terumot, and one's wife's suspected infidelity? Why is one punished for withholding Terumot and Ma'aserot by having a disloyal wife?

this will, invariably, affect his marriage. If a person is too selfish to share his crops with the Kohanim and Leviyim as the Torah demands, then he is likely selfish at home, as well. Somebody who always says he doesn't have enough for those who rely on his assistance – like the Kohanim and Leviyim – probably always tells his wife, too, that he doesn't have enough time for her, and does not give her the attention, the help and the affection that she needs.

This is why the Torah warns that withholding Terumot and Ma'aserot results in a situation of a Sota. If a husband is selfish and does not give of himself for his wife, then she will feel tempted to find affection elsewhere.

This also explains why the section of the Sota is followed by the laws of the Nazir – somebody who decides to take a vow to abstain from wine. The Gemara teaches, "Ha'ro'eh Sota Be'kilkulah Yazir Asmo Min Ha'yayin" – "One who sees a Sota in her disgrace shall separate himself from wine." The proper response to the situation of Sota is limiting one's indulgence, and working to overcome one's selfish tendencies. By abstaining from that which is rightfully his, one gradually develops the traits of kindness and generosity.

The section of Nazir is then followed by the command of Birkat Kohanim – because once a person overcomes his selfish instincts, he becomes worthy of Hashem's blessings.

The Misva of "Ve'halachta Bi'drachav" ("You shall follow His ways"), as discussed by the Rambam and others, requires us to try to emulate Hashem's qualities. Although we are human, and will always be human, we are expected to strive to act G-dly, to whatever extent we can. One of the most important aspects of this obligation is the requirement to be selfless and giving. Hashem sustains the entire world and all its inhabitants, receiving nothing in return. As G-d is perfect, there is nothing He could possibly receive in exchange for all that He gives. This is how we are supposed to be – always giving, without expecting anything in return. And this is why marriage is a central part of living a Torah life. Having a spouse and children puts a person in a position to dispense kindness all day, every day. When a person has a family to care for, virtually everything he or she does is an act of giving, because the person's life revolves around caring for his or her spouse and children.

This must be our outlook on marriage and family life – as an opportunity for constant Hesed, for ongoing kindness, to break our selfish instincts and become truly giving, generous people, and thereby resembling our Creator.

Vessels for Hashem's Blessings



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
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One of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah is the kohanim's mitzvah to bless the Jewish people (Bamidbar 6:23): "Thus shall you bless the children of Israel..." But how is it possible for one Jew to bless another? Can a person of flesh and blood be a source of blessing? How does this work?

It must be that when one person blesses another, it is more akin to a prayer to the Hashem, the Source of Blessing. We see this clearly reflected in the language of Yitzchak's blessing to Yaakov: "May G-d give you from the dew of Heaven and the fats of the earth..." (Bereishis 27:28). When the kohanim say *birkas kohanim*, they do not view themselves as the source of the blessing. Rather, they recognize that they are intermediaries through whom Hashem's blessings descend down onto the nation. This is reflected in the fact that the pasuk says about *birkas kohanim* (Bamidbar 6:27): "And they [the kohanim] shall place my Name on the children of Israel and I will bless them." Hashem wants the kohanim to transmit His blessings with "love," as it says in the blessing before *birkas kohanim*. By doing so, they awaken the quality of love below and thereby open up the gates of love and generosity Above.

Let us examine one word from the first line of *birkas kohanim*: "May Hashem bless you and safeguard you." We understand that when the kohanim ask Hashem to bless us, they mean that we should have everything good, both spiritually and physically. But what does it mean that they ask Hashem to safeguard us? Rashi explains based on the Midrash: "And safeguard you' that no robbers come and take your money. One who gives a gift to his servant cannot guard him from every other person. So when robbers come to him and take it away from him, what benefit does the [the servant]

have in this gift? But Hashem is the giver and the guardian."

We see that according to Rashi, "and safeguard you" is the completion and fruition of the blessing of "May Hashem bless you." If we lose Hashem's blessings after receiving them, what good are they? This is the kohanim's prayer and blessing that Hashem should guard everything He gives us so that we should not lose His blessings.

In *penimius hatorah*, we speak of "light" and "vessels." Hashem's blessing is the light and the safeguarding is the vessel. Without the vessel, all of the light in the world will simply slip through our fingers and will come to nothing – or worse.

We see this in the world in many ways. Many lottery winners who were not previously well-adjusted people wind up much worse off after winning the lottery than they were before. If someone was not accustomed to such blessings, he does not have the tools to receive those blessings in a healthy way. We are also familiar with people who suddenly became wealthy sports stars. Many of these individuals have virtually nothing a short time after they retire. Because they do not have the tools to manage their sudden wealth, unscrupulous people take advantage of them or they squander their money and have nothing left in the end.

There are other character defects which are indicative of broken-vessel type people. Those who are stingy, arrogant, self-aggrandizing, or negative will see no joy in the blessings they receive. Returning to a sports analogy, imagine players on the basketball court who, after scoring a difficult basket, exult and bump chests to the point that one of the players on the other team makes a lay-up right behind them and they do not even notice. Similarly, a person

who is full of himself or who consistently focuses on the negative in others and in his own life will never be happy no matter how much good he experiences.

The more a person internalizes the attributes of generosity, love, joy, and gratitude, the more he makes himself into a vessel capable of safeguarding all of the blessings Hashem showers upon him. And if such a person only has a little, or if he is beset by problems, challenges, and failures, he will still be happier than one who is a broken vessel. A healthy, positive person will grow from his failures and difficulties because he is a strong vessel. He safeguards every drop of light that Hashem gives him. And not only will such a person not be broken by his difficulties; he will gain more empathy for others and become even more generous and sensitive to his less fortunate brothers and sisters among our people.

The Rachmistrivka Rebbe, shlita, was once walking with his chassidim out of the shul during a thunderstorm when a gust of wind blew by. All of the chassidim's hats remained on their heads, but unfortunately the one person to lose his hat was the Rebbe. The Chassidim made a mad dash to catch the Rebbe's hat as it rolled down the middle of the street. The Rebbe smiled the whole time his hat was traveling away. Finally, the chassidim caught the hat and brought it back to the Rebbe. The Rebbe smiled and thanked the person who brought it back to him, but commented, "It's not such a bad thing if I lose my hat. It would be much worse if I lost my head."

Let us merit never to lose our heads. Instead, may Hashem help us attain all of the qualities that will make us whole vessels to contain all His blessings in both spirituality and physicality!

Harmony, Expulsion, Frustration

Don't Get Frustrated by Your Frustration



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

Anonymous Numerical Lists

Levi, one of the 12 sons of Yakov, had three sons - Gershon, Kehas and Merari - as well as a daughter, Yocheved. While Yocheved mothered Moshe and Aharon, the teacher and High Priest of Israel, her three brothers fathered the Levi tribe who dedicated their lives to the spiritual service of the Holy Tabernacle and at a later point the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, an abode the Jewish people erected for the manifest presence of G-d.

In this week's portion, Naso, the Torah relates how these three Levite families were charged with the mission of carrying the Tabernacle and its accessories when the Jewish people traveled in the Sinai desert for 40 years.

The Kehathites carried the holiest items of the Tabernacle: the ark, candelabra, table, altars and all their utensils. The Gershonites were given the job of carrying the coverings and curtains of the Tabernacle. The third of the Levite families, Merari, was responsible to carry the planks, bars, pillars and sockets of the Tabernacle structure.

Three Personalities

One of the axioms that define traditional biblical scholarship is the idea that each event recorded in the Torah may be understood also from a psychological and spiritual point of view, granting all biblical events timeless significance.

This obviously is valid for our subject as well. While on the surface, the intricate description of the three Levite families as the movers of the Tabernacle bears no relevance to our lives today, a deeper look at the spiritual meaning behind their

respective roles allows us to glean wisdom and inspiration for our daily challenges and struggles.

Let's examine for a moment the names of the three brothers who fathered the Levite families -- since the names of people do express something of their inner soul. The translation of the Hebrew name Kehas is harmony.

The meaning of the name Gershon is expulsion. The third name Merari is translated as frustration. Now, the spiritual Divine soul existing within each of us is defined in the Kabbalah as a "microcosmic Tabernacle," a sacred and vulnerable place in the depth of our hearts where G-d is manifestly present.

Gershon, Kehas and Merari personify three distinct psychological and spiritual states of man, each of which may become in its own unique way a carrier and porter of the spiritual Tabernacle existing in the human heart.

Kehas – Harmony

Kehas -- the name of the Levite family that carried the sacred items and utensils of the Tabernacle -- represents the human being who succeeds in integrating all of the facets of his personality into a cohesive and harmonious whole. This remarkable individual manages to transform all of his traits and characteristics into sacred items and all of his limbs and organs into sacred utensils, housing the presence of the Divine reality.

Gershon – Expulsion

Gershon -- the name of the Levite family assigned to carry the coverings and curtains of the Holy Tabernacle -- personifies

the human being who constantly needs to expel and drive away from the immoral impulses and sensations that intrude on his psyche. This individual cannot define himself as harmonious and complete. His job in life is ensuring that the sacred Tabernacle existing within his heart remains protected and shielded from the many physical and emotional hazards that threaten to undermine it (expressed by the fact that Gershon carried the coverings and curtains).

Merari – Frustration

Merari - the name of the family that carried the pillars and planks of the Tabernacle - personifies that individual who may not even be expelling the negative patterns of his daily life. Yet he is not apathetic to his lowly condition; he is frustrated and disturbed by it. He longs for wholesomeness and redemption. One may think that a human being in this state of mind is not one of the carriers of the Divine tabernacle. After all, he is so distant from the spiritual sacredness of his soul.

Yet, in truth, it is this disaffected and frustrated human being who carries the very foundations of the Divine Tabernacle. This is because the beginning of all healing and the foundation of all change is a feeling of frustration and yearning. The disappointment and lack of contentment with one's present condition are what propels man to discover new horizons in his life. Simply put, if you are truly frustrated by your present situation, you are in a place far better than you can imagine. Now get on with the journey in stride.

Shavuot: Stay Until Sunday



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpia, OU-NCSY

There was a busy Chasidishe businessman who had been procrastinating and putting off his regular visit to see his rebbe. When he finally found time to visit, he decided he would stay for Shabbos and leave immediately after.

Normally, he would receive a warm welcome from the tzadik upon arrival, but this time the rebbe barely acknowledged him. The chasid felt insulted and asked if everything was okay. The rebbe looked at him and responded: “A chasid who can’t stay until Sunday doesn’t need to be here on Shabbos either.”

The chasid regretted the way he had come to his rebbe, had a change of heart, and said, “I’m here as long as the rebbe wants me to be.”

That Shabbos at Shalosh Seudos the rebbe taught the pasuk of Matan Torah: *Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, Alei Alai heHara, veHeyeh Sham* (Shemos 24:12), “Come up to me to the Mountain and be there.” The rebbe asked, “What does the seemingly extra phrase *veHeyeh Sham* teach us? Sometimes there’s a chasid who is coming to see his rebbe, and while on his way, he’s already leaving. So certainly, even when he is there, he isn’t really there.”

Hashem tells Moshe — and instructs each one of us — that it’s not enough to ascend the Mountain. ‘I just want you to be with Me, *veHeyeh Sham*, be there.’

When it comes to celebrating Shavuot, *Zeman Matan Toraseinu*, the Time of the Giving of Our Torah, there are a lot of Minhagim that come along with it. Whether it’s learning Torah all night,

going to the Mikveh at dawn, or eating milchigs, we sometimes go about the Yom Tov like busy ‘businessmen’. It’s easy to forget that the main focus of Shavuot is simply to stop, be present, and ‘receive the Torah’. On Shavuot, Hashem invites us to come up to the Mountain of Revelation and just be there with Him.

A common misconception regarding Shavuot is that the primary way to celebrate it is through learning Torah. *Kabbalas haTorah* is not the same as *Limud haTorah*; receiving the Torah is not the same as learning Torah.

Every day, we pursue the value of *Talmud Torah K’neged Kulam*, “The Torah study takes precedence over all.” All year round, we attempt to observe *VeHagisa Bo Yomam v’Laila*, “and meditate in it day and night;” there is no set time for the Mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. We are called to Torah day and night, everywhere, at all times. Thus, ‘*Limud HaTorah*’, studying, is not essentially connected to the observance and celebration of Shavuot.

On Shavuot we simply aim to relive the experience of Revelation, our *Maamad Har Sinai*, “standing in awe at Mount Sinai”. We focus on experiencing our collective joy at receiving the Torah. This experience is beyond the activity of delving into the information, the mitzvos, and the philosophy of Torah. It is beyond observing the specific Minhagim of the Yom Tov. Shavuot is a holiday of *Dveikus*, “being with Hashem”, connecting with and celebrating our relationship with the *Nosein HaTorah*, the Giver of the Torah.

Zohar teaches, *Istakel b’Oraisa uBara Alma*, “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” Torah predates Har Sinai, and therefore even when we are not learning, we are connected to it. On Shavuot, we realize that Torah is the context of our lives; *Ki Heim Chayeinu...* “Torah is our life itself.”

This brings us to a deceptively profound and deep teaching of our *Bubbies* and *Savtas*: “Shavuot is the best of the *Shalosh Regalim*, the Three Festivals. On Pesach we may eat wherever we want, but not whatever we want. On Sukkos, we can eat whatever we want, but not wherever we want. But on Shavuot, we can eat whatever we want, whenever we want, wherever we want!”

Whether we are davening or reciting the *Tikkun Layl Shavuot* in shul, celebrating at home, or eating Milchigs or Fleishigs at a Yom Tov Seudah; whether it is day or night, we are sleeping or awake, the main expression of *Zeman Matan Toraseinu* is the awareness of this special opportunity to “be with Hashem.” Whatever we are doing it is to celebrate our receiving of the Torah by affirming that Torah embraces and addresses every facet of our lives. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, Hashem wants us to “be with Him,” and to enjoy!

(Based on story as it appears in *Living in the Presence*, by Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Epstein)

Dedicated in Loving Memory of Yisrael ben Eliezer by his family and students.

Individuality

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Throughout Parashat Naso, we find numerous intimations to one of Judaism's most fundamental principles: the distinctiveness and individuality of each person. Chazal teach that every person is required to say, "for ME the world was created" (Masechet Sanhedrin 4;5). Indeed, the word Adam has no plural form, for each person is unique. The Maharal points out that man is the only species created as an individual, unlike other organisms and plants that were created in groups. This demonstrates how everyone has their unique make-up and particular struggles which enable them to bring the great glory of Hashem into this world. In the times of the Prophets, the Gra notes, the Navi had the extraordinary insight to tell a person how to actualize his specific mission using his singular strengths. Although we do not have this advantage today, we can use the teachings of the Torah and mitzvot as our guide to fulfill our exclusive potential.

The end of the parashah details the sacrifices that each of the princes brought at the time of the Mishkan's consecration. The Torah enumerates the specifics of each prince's sacrifice to the smallest details albeit they all brought the exact same gifts. The Ramban teaches that although the sacrifices seemed to be identical on the outside, each prince brought his gift and injected his individual kavanot reflecting the distinctiveness of his tribe. What comes to mind when reading the parashah is that one must be acutely aware that outer behavior needs

to be understood within the context of the inner mindset. This is what creates uniqueness and individuality. Naso, the lengthiest parashah in the Torah, reminds us to see beyond superficiality and highlight that which is distinct.



Whatever situation we are in, Hashem gives us the people and the resources to navigate our unique circumstances.

We find this concept echoed further in the parashah where the Torah describes the appointments of each Levite family (Bamidbar 4;24-33). The Ramban emphasizes that the jobs were not just given to the tribe at large or to a particular household, rather, each job was directed to a specific person. This again underscores the individual mission each person is assigned when they are born.

Whatever job we are given and whatever challenges we face, we are also given the wherewithal to manage it. Hence, the family of Merari, who carried the heaviest items of the Mishkan, were given four wagons to help with their load. The family of Gershon, however, carried a lighter load so they were given only two wagons. The Pnei Menachem of Gur comments that we find this exact concept intimated in Pesukei Dezimra. Dovid Hamelech tells us that Hashem is "hanoten sheleg kat-zamer, kfor kaefer yefazer" (Tehillim

147;16). Hashem gives snow like wool; He scatters frost like ashes. Whatever situation we are in, Hashem gives us the people and the resources to navigate our unique circumstances.

Finally, we learn from the family of Kehat, who carried the Aron on their shoulders, the necessary attitude we must have toward our mission in this world. The Torah tells us that they did not receive any wagons since "bakatef yisau", they carried the Holy Ark on their shoulders. Chazal question why the word "carry" is necessary here. Is it not understood from "on their shoulders" that they were carrying it? Rather, "yisau" is related to "seu zimra", raise up in song. The members of Kehat sang with joy at the opportunity to carry the Aron. Likewise, notes the Sefat Emes, each of us who is 'carrying the glory of Hashem' in our lives, should do so with joy and song.

An Addictive Game



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

“Were not Your teaching my delight,” King David would say, “I would have perished in my affliction.” Delight?! Chazal say that when David declared, “Your laws are a source of strength to me,” G-d was angry with him because Torah is not a source of strength. But the Torah is a delight? A game?!

Just this week, when I was teaching how a chicken did not cluck and a cow did not moo while the Torah was being given, someone said to me, “This is exactly how my son looks when he’s in a computer game,” and explained everything ...

The house might shake and he will not move. The room is messy and he will not notice. Call him over and over and ? You do not see him and you do not hear him. Addicts.

This is exactly how King David apparently saw the power of Torah. Exactly the power that draws them to the computer in this way.

1. See the voices. This is not reading a book, this is reading an instruction, this is an instruction that must be fulfilled. So when you study the Torah, according to the Ramban, you should see it as a practical instruction for the moment. What is the key you need to press, where do you need to go now.

2. Make it short!!! They have no patience for a long message, they want the whole Torah in a nutshell. And G-d “sums up” all the time: Ten Commandments, Seven Commandments of the sons of Noah, Chabakkuk came and stood on one: faith, Daf Yomi, there was no generation in which this wisdom could be consumed, even in a nutshell, because they hated nothing more than length. And even if they want to say that it is too long, they will say it in abbreviations: ITL

3. On topic!!! There is no age in which topicality is squeezed into verse as it is today. A daily letter from G-d, written on the screen, Bennett and Parshat Naso, the question of conversion and Ruth, the cheesecake and Mount Sinai, the Parsha and a woman.

4. Motion. Things are in motion on the screen. Learning should also be in constant motion. The Baal Shem Tov would say, “do not spend all your study with the same book.” A guide for attention and concentration difficulties. Insist on not persisting.

5. Relationship apps. Rabbi Nachman of Breslav used to say, “Because the Torah couples matchmakers,” explaining in a mystical statement that the study of Torah exposes the learner to completely opposite opinions that will eventually be reflected in the

same Torah itself. Even the spouse will sometimes have opposing views. Torah study will reconcile the soul with these differences and allow for matchmaking.

6. Clashes on Twitter. Rabbi Wolba calls this clash, “the instinct of chavrutas.” Let these passions out in the form of an argument over a topic in the Gemara “Waheb in Suphah”: shout at each other while studying the topic, and do not get up from it without loving each other in the end ...

7. Have you lost? You can play again. The Ten Commandments are written in the future tense. They do not say, “Thou shalt not steal.” They say, “Have you ever stolen? Okay. You lost the first tournament. Now what? You will not steal again. Try it again.”

Forget it, Mom, my son told me when I gave him this list that this is just idling! Do not look for anything else! The screen is working, we are resting.

That’s exactly the Torah, I told him. Even if you do nothing, if you learned from it, it has assigned you elsewhere” in general...

Moshe Rabbeinu also saw a thick screen. But he approached the fog that had been set up by Hashem.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

Parashat Naso contains the laws of the nazir. Included in the prohibitions are limitations on what the nazir can drink:

מִיַּיִן וְשֵׁכָר יִזִּיר חֹמֶץ יַיִן וְחֹמֶץ שֵׁכָר לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְכֹל־
מִשְׁרַת עֵבְבִים לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְעֵבְבִים לַחִים וְיִבְשִׁים לֹא יֵאָכֵל:
“He shall abstain from wine and any other intoxicant; he shall not drink vinegar of wine or of any other intoxicant, neither shall he drink anything in which grapes have been steeped, nor eat grapes fresh or dried.” (Bamidbar 6:3)

Let’s take a look at some of the words for the liquids forbidden to the nazir.

The first word we find in the verse is יַיִן – “wine.” The Hebrew “yayin” and the English “wine” have similar sounds. The same can be said of their cognates. The related Semitic words include Ugaritic “yn,” Arabic “wayn,” and Akkadian “inu.”

English is a member of the Indo-European language family, where we find the Greek “oinos,” the Latin “vinum,” as well as the English “vine.”

While all the above words are related, it’s not clear which language family borrowed from which. One theory notes that wine making began in the Caucasus - in modern-day Turkey and Armenia, and the word originated there, perhaps the Hittite *wiyana*. There are those that connect this fact to the first story of wine in the Bible - Noah’s planting a vineyard after landing on Mount Ararat, in that region.

The next word is שֵׁכָר, translated here as “intoxicant.” It comes from the root שכר, the root of verbs meaning “to intoxicate.” In Biblical Hebrew, שֵׁכָר refers to any alcoholic beverage other than wine, including those from grain (like beer), or from apples, honey, or other fruits.

When the Greeks translated שֵׁכָר, they created the word *sicera*. The same word was used in Latin, and in Old French was called *cisdre*. Over time the “s” was dropped, and the word was spelled *cidre* in French, and eventually became “cider” in English.

Lastly, we have חֹמֶץ – “vinegar.” It comes from the root חמץ meaning “to be sour, to ferment, to be leavened.” This root is also the origin of הֶמֶץ – “leavened (food),” forbidden on Pesach. In Megillat Rut (2:14), Boaz tells Rut בָּחֶמֶץ פְּתַיִר, וְטָבַלְתָּ בִּפְתַיִר - “dip your bread in the vinegar.” Some say that it wasn’t wine vinegar, but sour milk. A different theory says it wasn’t sour at all, but rather a dip made from חֶמְצָא – the Aramaic word for chickpea. That would make it hummus, an appropriate dip for bread.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

Find a set of four words in a row, whose Roshei Teivot (initials) spell G-d’s Name of Yud, H-ey, Vav, H-e, in the reverse order.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

There were a total of 54 words written on the parchment which is placed in the jug with the מַיִם הַחַיִּים, “the potentially curse-laden waters,” mentioned in verse 22. (Maimonides Hilchot Sotah 3:7). The number 54 represents the middle two letters of the name יהוה, the name of G-d with those letters in reverse order. In other words, the number 54 is an allusion to the attribute of justice. It means that the subject matter under discussion by the Torah at that point is one in which the attribute of justice is poised to strike against the guilty party concerned.

Rabbenu Behaye explains that that whenever the letters of the name of G-d appear in the reverse order this is an allusion to the attribute of justice. And in the priest’s hands shall be the water of bitterness that induces the spell. Bamidbar 5:18



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