



CONGREGATION TIFERETH BETH DAVID JERUSALEM

# Shabbat Bulletin

שבת פרשת נשא

יד סיון ה'תש"פ

Shabbat Parshat Naso

June 5-6, 2020

Rabbi  
Yechezkel Freundlich

Chazzan Sheini  
Rev. Amiel Bender

President  
Jonathan Gal

6519 Baily Road, Côte Saint-Luc, Québec H4V 1A1 Canada • 514-489-3841 • www.TBDJ.org • director@tbdj.org

## SHABBAT SHALOM • שבת שלום

Please PRINT this bulletin before Shabbat.

### COMMUNITY NEWS

- Mazal Tov to **Sylvia & Ben Levitt** on their 70th wedding anniversary! Biz 120!
- Condolences to **Sylvia Rothstein Lebner** and her family on the loss of her beloved brother Ralph Rothstein z"l who passed away on Sunday, May 31. Graveside funeral was held on Monday, June 1.
- Condolences to **Lisa & Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz** and their families on the loss of Lisa's beloved father Joe Schwartz z"l who passed away on Wednesday, May 27 in Toronto. Graveside funeral was held on in Toronto on Thursday, May 28.

### SPONSORSHIPS AND THANK YOUS

- This Shabbat Bulletin is sponsored by **Baila & Jerrold Aspler** in honour of their granddaughters' graduations: Riva Drazin, Bachelor of Nursing, New York University; Nediva Aspler, Hebrew Academy High School; Talia Aspler, Hebrew Academy Elementary School.

### MAZAL TOV TO OUR GRADUATES

*These are additional graduates who were not listed in last week's bulletin.*

- Howard Silbiger, son of **Gerti Silbiger**, Bachelor of Education, Concordia University
- Yona Shmuel Steinman, grandson of **Carolyn & Arnold Steinman**, Bachelor of Arts in Economics, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

### THOUGHT FOR SHABBAT BY REV. AMIEL: AT 30 AND COUNTING

This past Monday, June 1st 2020, marked a personal milestone that I had been anticipating for a while. It was my thirty-year anniversary as a Chazzan Sheini and Ba'al Tefilla in our city, beginning at Congregation Beth Ora on June 1st, 1990 and continuing at TBDJ five and a half years ago.

The Torah reading this past Monday was the First Aliya of Parashat Naso. The portion opens with the counting of the Levi'im between the ages of 30 and 50 years old with the purpose of assigning them their respective responsibilities. Important responsibilities of the Levi'im were Avodat Hamishkan - working in the Tabernacle in the desert and later in the Beit Hamikdash - as well as participation in the musical accompaniment of some of the communal offerings, a duty that the Talmud in Erchin characterizes as a "service."

Can it really be a coincidence that, on the day which marked this amazing personal milestone, I was reading about the number 30 and the musical associations that come with it, as well as about the work in the Mishkan in the service of the Levi'im? I would like to think that there is no coincidence here. I would like to think that the Ribono Shel Olam, after blessing me and helping me in my wonderful career L'sheim Shamayim, is joining in my celebratory milestone of Avodat Hakodesh. The work of the Levi'im is, to a large extent, the kind of work to which I have dedicated the past 30 years of my life.

In a very real way, I have spent the past 30 years working in two wonderful shuls in Montreal, taking care of the members of these communities as well as the holiest items that our heritage has given to us - most importantly our sacred Torah scrolls. I have had the privilege and opportunity to share my love of Jewish music and song in these synagogues as well as at numerous Jewish day schools in our wonderful city. As the Levi'im served our nation in ancient times, I too have had the special privilege of working with thousands of congregants and students of all ages in countless capacities over the years.

Pirkei Avot - the Ethics of the Fathers - discusses the significance of different age milestones. The Mishnah says "ben shloshim l'koach" - the age of 30 symbolizes strength. The Maharal explains that 30 is the age of spiritual strength. Rabbi Bulka of Ottawa says that the age of 30 is the prime of life. It is when our mental and physical capacities are more or less peaking simultaneously and are allowing us to expend all our energies towards many aspects of life.

As I reflect on the past 30 years, and what it has meant for me to contribute to the Jewish world as a Chazzan Sheini, a Ba'al Tefilla, a composer and a music director, I am filled with much gratitude and thankfulness. I offer my humble thank you to Hashem, to my wife Cheryl, my parents and family, and to all of my colleagues, congregants and students who have contributed to my spiritual and professional growth over the past 30 years, and who have helped me to get to where I am today.

The Parasha is called Naso - to "count." I am, Baruch Hashem, counting my blessings.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rev. Amiel

Shabbat Parshat Naso

Torah: Numbers 4:21-7:89 (Stone p. 748)  
Haftara: Judges 13:2-13:25 (Stone p. 1181)

*When davening at home, it is preferable to daven at the same time together as a community.*

Friday, June 5

4:00pm Musical Kabbalat Shabbat with Rev. Bender on Facebook  
*Thirtieth Anniversary Special!*  
5:00pm Kef Club Kabbalat Shabbat on Zoom  
5:00pm Daf Yomi on Zoom  
6:50pm Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat on Zoom  
7:03pm Plag Hamincha  
8:21pm Candle Lighting  
8:40pm Sh'kiah

Shabbat, June 6 / 14 Sivan 5780

9:00am Shacharit  
9:00am Sof Zman Kriyat Shema  
8:15pm Mincha  
8:40pm Shkiah  
9:37pm Havdala  
10:15pm Daf Yomi on Zoom

### Mazal Tov Amiel!

This week marked a significant professional milestone for our beloved Chazzan Sheini Amiel Bender: The completion of 30 years of dedicated service to Montreal synagogues. With his *Aishet Chayil* Cheryl always by his side, Amiel has brought his passion, commitment, love of people, infectious and genuine smile, compassion, warmth - and of course his immense musical talents to Beth Ora and now TBDJ. It is the epitome of irony that we can't celebrate together in shul, the very place where Amiel has invested his heart and soul into making everyone feel at home. Please join us in wishing him and Cheryl a well deserved mazal tov, with blessings of good health for them and their family and continued success for the future!

-Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich

SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
Daf Yomi	See Email	Daf Yomi	See Email	Daf Yomi	See Email
Zoom Mincha	8:25pm	Zoom Mincha	8:25pm	Zoom Mincha	8:25pm
Shkiah	8:41pm	Shkiah	8:42pm	Shkiah	8:42pm
WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
Daf Yomi	See Email	Daf Yomi	See Email	Daf Yomi	See Email
Parsha Class	12:15pm	Zoom Mincha	8:25pm	Zoom Mincha	6:55pm
Zoom Mincha	8:25pm	Shkiah	8:43pm	Candle Lighting	8:25pm
Shkiah	8:43pm			Shkiah	8:44pm

**Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem extends heartfelt thanks to Linda, Iris and Mark Levitt who are honouring the 70th Wedding Anniversary of their parents Sylvia & Ben Levitt by embarking on a project to renovate and beautify the lower exterior entrance of our shul!**

**This wonderful project will update the entrance with beautiful new landscaping, and will make it more functional and accessible for Shabbos and weddings. A sanctuary should be beautiful both inside and out. This project is a most magnificent way for the Levitts to beautify our shul in tribute to a magnificent couple who is similarly beautiful - both inside and out.**



## COVENANT & CONVERSATION

FINDING FAITH IN THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SACKS



WOHL LEGACY

*"With thanks to The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, Maurice was a visionary philanthropist. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humility. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving."*

*Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face toward you and grant you peace."' Let them put My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.*  
(Numbers 6:23-27)

These are among the oldest continuously-used words of blessing ever. We recite them daily at the beginning of the morning service. Some say them last thing at night. We use them to bless our children on Friday nights. They are often used to bless the bride and groom at weddings. They are widely used by non-Jews also. Their simplicity, their cumulative three-word, five-word, seven-word structure, their ascending movement from protection to grace to peace, all make them a miniature gem of prayer whose radiance has not diminished in the more than three thousand years since their formulation.

In previous years I have written about the meaning of the blessings. This time I ask three different questions: First, why Priests? Why not Prophets, Kings, Sages or saints? Second, why the unique form of the birkat ha-mitzvah, the blessing made by the Priests over the commandment to bless the people? The blessing is, "who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aaron and commanded us to bless His people with love." [1] No other blessing over a command specifies that it be done with love.

There is an argument in the Talmud as to whether commands must be performed with the proper intent, kavannah, or whether the deed itself is enough. But intent is different from motive. Intent merely means that I am performing the command because it is a command. I am acting consciously, knowingly, deliberately, in obedience to the Divine will. It has nothing to do with an emotion like love. Why does this command and no other require love?

Third, why have human beings bless the people at all? It is God who blesses humanity and His people Israel. He needs no human intermediary. Our passage says just this: "Let them put My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." The blessings come not from the Priests but from God Himself. So why require the Priests to "put His name" on the people?

In answer to the first, Sefer ha-Hinnuch [2] says simply that the Priests were the sacred group within the people. They ministered in the House of God. They spent their lives in Divine service. Their life's work was sacred. So was their habitat. They were the guardians of holiness. They were therefore the obvious choice for the sacred rite of bringing down God's blessings upon the people.

Rabbi Aharon Walkin, in the preface to his Matsa Aharon, offered a more prosaic explanation. The Priests had no share in the land. Their sole income was from the matanot kehunah, the gifts of the Priests, that was their due from the people as a whole. It followed that they had an interest in the people prospering, because then they, too, would prosper. They would bless the people with a full heart, seeking their good, because they would benefit thereby.

Rabbi Avraham Gafni offered a third explanation. [3] We read that on the consecration of the Tabernacle, "Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them" (Lev. 9:22). Rashi says that the blessing he gave the people on that occasion was indeed the priestly blessing as specified in our parsha. However, Ramban suggests that perhaps Aaron's blessing was spontaneous, and because he showed such generosity of spirit, he was given by God the reward that it would be his descendants who would bless Israel in future.

What then about the reference in the blessing to love? There are two different interpre-

tations: that the reference is to the Priests, or that the reference is to God. The second reverses the word order of the blessing and reads it not as "who commanded us to bless His people with love," but rather, "who in love commanded us to bless His people." The blessing speaks of God's love, not that of the Priests. Because God loves His people, He commands the Priests to bless them. [4]

The first reading, grammatically more plausible, is that it is the Priests who must love. This is the basis of the statement in the Zohar that "a Priest who does not love the people, or a Priest who is not loved by the people, may not bless." [5] We can only bless what we love. Recall how the blind and aged Isaac said to Esau, "Prepare me the tasty food that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (Gen. 27:4). Whether it was the food that Isaac loved, or what it represented about Esau's character – that he cared enough for his father to find him the food he liked – Isaac needed the presence of love to be able to make the blessing.

Why then does the blessing for this mitzvah and no other specify that it must be done with love? Because in every other case it is the agent who performs the ma'aseh mitzvah, the act that constitutes the command. Uniquely in the case of the priestly blessings, the Priest is merely a machshir mitzvah – an enabler, not a doer. The doer is God Himself: "Let them place My name on the children of Israel and I will bless them." The Kohanim are merely channels through which God's blessings flow.

This means that they must be selfless while uttering the blessings. We let God into the world and ourselves to the degree that we forget ourselves and focus on others. [6] That is what love is. We see this in the passage in which Jacob, having fallen in love with Rachel, agrees to Laban's terms: seven years of work. We read: "So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her" (Gen. 29:20). The commentators ask the obvious question: precisely because he was so much in love, the seven years should have felt like a century. The answer is equally obvious: he was thinking of her, not him. There was nothing selfish in his love. He was focused on her presence, not his impatient desire.

There is, though, perhaps an alternative explanation for all these things. As I explained in Covenant and Conversation Acharei Mot – Kedoshim, the ethic of character. The key text of the holiness ethic is Leviticus 19: "Be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy." It is this chapter that teaches the two great commands of interpersonal love, of the neighbour and the stranger. The ethic of holiness, taught by the Priests, is the ethic of love. This surely is the basis of Hillel's statement, "Be like the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah." [7]

That ethic belongs to the specific vision of the Priest, set out in Genesis 1, which sees the world as God's work and the human person as God's image. Our very existence, and the existence of the universe, are the result of God's love.

By blessing the people, the Priests showed them what love of one's fellow is. Here is Rambam's definition of what it is to 'love your neighbour as yourself': "One should speak in praise of his neighbour, and be considerate of his money, even as he is considerate of his own money, or desires to preserve his own honour." [8] Blessing the people showed that you sought their good – and seeking their good is what loving them means.

Thus the Kohanim set an example to the people by this public display of love – or what we would call today "the common good." They thus encouraged a society in which each sought the welfare of all – and such a society is blessed, because the bonds between its members are strong, and because people put the interests of the nation as a whole before their own private advantage. Such a society is blessed by God, whereas a selfish society is not, and cannot, be blessed by God. No selfish society has survived for long.

Hence our answers to the questions: why the Kohanim? Because their ethic emphasised love – of neighbour and stranger – and we need love before we can bless. Love is mentioned in the blessing over the commandment, because love is how blessings enter the world. And why have human beings bestow the blessing, instead of God doing so Himself? Because the Kohanim were to be role models of what it is for humans to care for the welfare of others. I believe that Birkat Kohanim contains a vital message for us today: A society whose members seek one another's welfare is holy, and blessed.

Shabbat Shalom