

## Torah During the Time of COVID-19

### Parshat Naso I: Don't I Know You?

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This year, the Torah portion of Naso is divided into two parts due to the timing of Shavuot and Shabbat. For that reason, this week I wish to share some thoughts on Shavuot and Revelation.

The Children of Israel leave Egypt after 400 years of slavery, cross through the Reed Sea on dry land, and reach freedom. They then stand at the foot of Mount Sinai about to receive the commandments and laws of Torah from God. Moses, the reluctant leader, went up the mountain to receive Torah from God. After 40 days, Moses returned to the people only to find that they had lost faith and created the Golden Calf, an idol. Moses smashed the tablets in reaction to seeing the idol and the realization of the moment. Afterwards, he returned to the top of Mount Sinai to be with God. Moses stayed up on Mount Sinai for another 40 days and then returned with a second set of tablets containing the Aseret Dibrot, the Ten Utterances also known as the Ten Commandments.

It is this Revelation and Receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai that we celebrate on Shavuot.

There is a tradition that no one in the Jewish community is a stranger. Its origins originate from a midrash (a legend explaining a concept in Torah) concerning receiving Torah at Mount Sinai.

**Another explanation:** "And God said all of these things, saying" - Rabbi Yitzchak said, What the prophets were to prophesy in the future in each generation, they received from Mount Sinai. As Moshe said to Israel (Deuteronomy 29:14), "But with those here with us standing today and with those not here with us today." It does not say [at the end of the verse], "with us standing today," but rather, "with us today"; these are the souls that will be created in the future, who do not have substance, about whom "standing" is not mentioned. For even though they did not exist at that time, each one received that which belonged to them. (Shemot Rabbah 28:6)

In other words, we ALL stood at Mount Sinai together. Those living at that time and all those who would exist in the future. For this reason, when we meet someone who looks familiar and ask them if you have met them before, the traditional answer is, "Yes, we met at Sinai."

Why would we answer in that manner? Some might answer stating that you must be mistaken or we have never met. Yet, we are instructed to say that we met thousands of years ago during a penultimate moment in our collective history. We do so to recognize the importance of experience within our community. Our community is not just Beth Sholom Temple in Fredericksburg, VA. It is the entire Jewish community. We are a community through time and history. We are held together through Torah and a shared experience. It is this shared thread that binds us together.

We, as a community, have once again celebrated Shavuot. We learned together. We prayed together. We have remained together as a community. We have also received Torah together.

As we approach Shabbat, may we remember the blessing given to us in this Torah portion which we recite to our children on Jewish holidays and Shabbat:

May God bless you and keep you.

May God cause the divine light to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May God turn toward you and grant you peace.

[\(Numbers 6: 24-26\)](#)

Kain yehi ratzion...May it be God's will.

Shabbat Shalom-

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