

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1567

EXPANDED EDITION for
BAMIDBAR / SHAVUOT / NASO



JUNE 8TH 2024 • ב' סיון תשפ"ד

פרשת במדבר - שבועות - נשא
PARSHAT BAMIDBAR -
SHAVUOT - NASO

Avot Chapter 6



The Purpose of the Census

Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Page 28



Where is Har Sinai?

Rabbi Baruch Taub
Page 70



This week's issue of Torah Tidbits is dedicated in loving memory of
MAX & ANITA KARL z"l and ERNESTO & MARIA SECOMANDI z"l

by the Robert & Nilza Karl Family



עץ-חיים היא למחזיקים בה משלי ג' י"ח

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

CANDLES 7:07 PM • EARLY 6:14 PM • HAVDALA 8:26 PM • RABBEINU TAM 9:01 PM



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Photographed by Shlomo Gherman. When it comes to praying to Hashem there is no place that I'd rather be than at the Kotel. It is truly where Heaven and Earth meet. I could be davening with an Ashkenazi minyan or a Sephardi minyan it makes no difference to me, I feel the presence of Hashem nonetheless. I especially like this photo of the raised Sephardi Torah displaying the beautiful tree of life on it because that is what Torah is to every Jew. It is a tree of life to those who's life is guided by it. That is my message to all for this Shavuot. Live by our Torah because it is the word of the living God.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS



Yizkor is recited on Shavuot.



See pages 52-55 for *halachot and customs for Shavuot*.



Kiddush Levana: Earliest Kiddush Levana: 3 Days After Molad 4 Sivan/ Mon. night June 10

7 Days After Molad: 10 Sivan/ Motzei Shabbat June 15

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 14 Sivan/ Thurs. night June 20

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	BAMIDBAR			SHAVUOT	
	CANDLES	EARLY	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:07	6:14	8:26	7:09	8:28
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:26	8:30
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:26	6:15	8:27	7:28	8:29
Alon Shvut	7:23	6:15	8:26	7:24	8:28
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herziya/K.Saba	7:25	6:17	8:29	7:27	8:31
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:24	6:16	8:27	7:25	8:29
Netanya	7:25	6:17	8:29	7:27	8:31
Be'er Sheva	7:23	6:15	8:26	7:25	8:28
Rehovot	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:26	8:30
Petach Tikva	7:07	6:16	8:28	7:09	8:30
Ginot Shomron	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:26	8:30
Haifa / Zichron	7:16	6:18	8:30	7:18	8:32
Gush Shiloh	7:23	6:15	8:27	7:25	8:28
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	7:25	6:17	8:29	7:27	8:31
Givat Zeev	7:27	6:15	8:27	7:29	8:28
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:22	6:15	8:26	7:24	8:28
Ashkelon	7:25	6:17	8:28	7:27	8:30
Yad Binyamin	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:26	8:30
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	7:19	6:16	8:29	7:21	8:31
Golan	7:23	6:15	8:27	7:25	8:29
Nahariya/Maalot	7:25	6:17	8:31	7:27	8:32
Afula	7:24	6:16	8:28	7:26	8:30

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Bamidbar 9:01 PM • Shavuot 9:02 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

For Zmanim for Shabbat Parshat Naso and Beha'alotecha see page 77

Daf Yomi: Bava Metzlia 101



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JERUSALEM

Ranges 18 days Friday - Shabbat
June 5 - 22 / 28 Iyar - 16 Sivan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **4:34**
Sunrise **5:33 - 5:34**
Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:05 - 9:08**
Magen Avraham **8:22 - 8:24**
Sof Zman Tefila **10:16 - 10:19**
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)
Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **12:37 - 12:41**
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **1:13 - 1:16**
Plag Mincha **6:13 - 6:18**
Sunset (Including Elevation) **7:46 - 7:52**



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

Certain occasions, such as a birthday, remind us of where we are in life. We think about how many years of our lives have passed, what we've accomplished, and where we're going. Similarly, on their anniversary, a husband and wife contemplate their years together and look forward toward the future and their shared goals. *Lehavdil*, the same is true for a *yahrtzeit*, when we think, "Wow, it's been this many years since our loved one passed away. What would they think of us now? What advice would they give us if they were here today? They are sorely missed."

As a nation, we recently experienced several of these types of reflective days. They

are here to help us make sure that these tremendous blessings that we have in our lives won't be taken for granted. They are opportunities to thank Hashem for our families, our jobs, our communities and really take stock. Between *Yom HaShoah*, *Yom HaZikaron*, *Yom HaAtzmaut*, and *Yom Yerushalayim*, we come to realize how much sacrifice it took for Israel to have what it has today.

The holiday of Shavuot is also like this. It will be a time to think about our relationship to the Torah and how grateful we are to have it. It inspires us to appreciate how we as Jews have a special relationship with Hashem, how He gave us the Torah, and how we have the ability to live in this world in a way that brings blessing, goodness, and is *mekadesh shem shamayim*, sanctifying G-d's name. That's why there is a Jewish custom to stay up all night studying the Torah. It is a way of showing Hashem - and also ourselves - how excited we are for *Matan Torah*, so much so that we can't sleep because we don't want to miss it.

My fourth son, Elyashiv Aryeh, was drafted and started basic training for the army two months ago. Last week, my wife and I had the tremendous honor of attending his swearing-in ceremony, called a *tekes hashbaah*. This is a ceremony that is very emotional for many parents. This is where the new soldiers declare to the State of Israel that they will defend Israel, and if necessary, be willing to give their lives in the defense of the State of Israel.

Standing there, I was struck how this was

As we mark the Shloshim of

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher zt"l

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invite family, friends, students,
colleagues, and the community
to celebrate and honor
the life of Rabbi Sprecher

MONDAY, JUNE 17TH

11:30am: Aliya laKever
Har Menuchet, Shar Vered

Followed by a program
at the OU Israel Center

1:20pm: Mincha

2:00pm: Memorial Shiur

Speakers include:

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz,
family members and others..

yet another kind of day of taking stock. A time to realize what we cannot take for granted. We need to be thankful not only that we have an army, but an army of soldiers willing to lay down their lives for the people it defends. This *tekes hashbaah* was a special one, because it had the largest number of soldiers to ever swear in at Latrun at once. The reason for this is because the IDF asked for those who were supposed to join this summer to come in early, because the IDF needed more soldiers. Among these “early” recruits is my son.



Elyashiv Aryeh is by no means the first in the family to go to the army, and yet, it was still an emotional moment for me. When the MC read off the text from which the boys were swearing or declaring, and he reached the part where they declare their willingness even to give their lives for the State of Israel, my mind went to all those soldiers who gave their lives for Israel these past eight months. So many people were there at the *tekes*, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, who said those words a year ago, or many years ago, when they had this *tekes*, and assumed it was an unlikely scenario. We have a mighty army, a strong air force, and with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* help, it will one day never be thought of as anything other than words on a page to be recited. But now, they serve to remind us that our enemies desire to destroy us, whether soldiers or civilians, individuals or the State of Israel itself.

Approximately 1,000 soldiers declared these words at Latrun that day and knew how real they might be. Yet one could look at

that crowd and see how many parents were proud of their children, knowing that they believe in their country, in their land, and in its people, and that they will work hard to protect all of that.

We can't take that will and courage for granted. Our younger generation is full of passion. If the army asks them to come early, they show up. Our younger generation knows what's at stake and fights to keep us safe. We also can't take for granted the Jews all over the Diaspora who volunteered in so many ways to help the Jewish people in Israel. We can't take for granted the tens of thousands of Jews who came from all over the world to join the army and help fight our enemies. At moments like this *tekes*, it was time to stop and say, "I won't take this for granted."

At the *tekes*, I was standing next to a good friend of mine, Anita from Vancouver, who we invited to join us along with her daughter Jessica, also a close friend. Anita is the daughter of Holocaust survivors. This was the first time they ever attended this *tekes*. We stood there in awe and with thanks to our Father in Heaven that we have the ability as Jews to

defend ourselves. Anita said something to me at the end that, in that moment, really struck a chord. She said, “My father’s family was killed without the ability to defend themselves. Today, we have an army and we can stand up strong. Even today, our enemies want to destroy us. But we can now defend ourselves.”

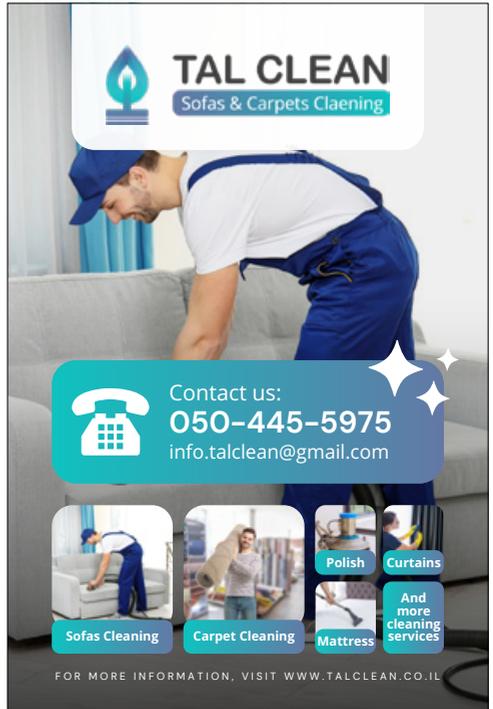
Let’s make sure to continue appreciating what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has given us. Our families, the Torah, our Land and the State of Israel, and the fact that we have so many dedicated soldiers of the younger generation who love our Land and are passionate in making sure we can continue to live here in prosperity and peace. May we one day soon have a *geulah sheleimah* and reach the peace we so desire.

Let me take the opportunity to add that it was lovely seeing so many OU event participants and Torah Tidbits readers at the *tekes*, all standing proud for their children being sworn in to the IDF.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a *Chag Shavuot Sameach*,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel




A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

“Of the children of Yosef, of the children of Ephraim” (1:32) לבני יוסף לבני אפרים (א:לב)
 In the counting of the tribes in this week’s parsha, Ephraim is counted before Menashe. In addition, Yosef’s relationship is mentioned by Ephraim but not by Menashe. However, at the second census in the plains of Moav (26:3) the Torah mentions Menashe first.
 The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin 1816-1893) attributes the order of the tribes to their location of travels. While in the desert the Israelites relied on open miracles represented by Ephraim. While preparing to enter the Land of Israel, one needed to begin to work with nature, farming and tilling the land which represented the tribe of Menashe. Nachmanides pointed out that in the story of the spies Ephraim is again mentioned first. It is due to the evil report that Yosef brought to his father concerning his brothers, namely the spy from the tribe of Menashe was among those who spread the evil report about the Land. However, the spy from Ephraim was Yehoshua bin Nun, who was not amongst those who spread the evil report, thereby receiving the honor of being mentioned first. - Shabbat Shalom

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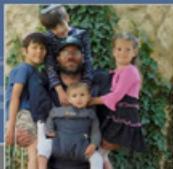
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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



Holding the Keys

On May 13, 1948, one day before the termination of the British mandate of Palestine, as the last British column was leaving the Old City, it stopped and veered up an alleyway to No. 3 Rechov Ohr Hachaim. Inside sat Rabbi Mordechai Weingarten, senior resident of the Jewish Quarter, surrounded by his *sefarim*, engrossed in his studies. His family had lived in that courtyard for five generations. His wife's family arrived in the city from Lithuania in 1740 and were the first Ashkenazi Jews to settle in the Jewish Quarter. Weingarten's own family moved to the Old City in 1813. When Rabbi Weingarten heard a knock at the door, he rose, and seeing that it was a British officer, he put on his vest, jacket and hat and stepped out into the courtyard. I will quote to you (mostly) from the account in the classic book, *O Jerusalem* (p XVI):

There before Weingarten stood a middle-aged British major wearing the yellow and red insignia of the Suffolk Regiment. From his right hand, dangled a bar of rusted iron almost a foot long. With a solemn gesture, he offered it to the elderly rabbi. It was a key, the

key to the Zion Gate, one of the seven gates to the Old City of Jerusalem. "From the year 70 AD until today", he said, "a key to the gates of Jerusalem has never been in Jewish hands. This is the first time in eighteen centuries that your people have been so privileged." Weingarten extended a trembling hand to accept the key. The Midrash (Avos d'Rabbi Nathan 4:5) tells that on the night that the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed the Temple, its despairing priests had climbed to its roof and thrown the keys of Jerusalem to the heavens, crying out, "G-d, these keys that you gave us, we did not guard them well. Please take back your keys." A hand came from the heavens and took the keys. And now, eighteen centuries later, G-d had sent this agent to give us back the keys.

This story is exceptionally moving and profoundly sobering, as the keys to Yerushalayim were wrested immediately from our hands in the War of Independence. It reminds us that the holiness of Yerushalayim, that treasure that was returned to us 57 years ago, is a gift that we must not only cherish but safeguard.

Every Jew is a guard charged with protecting something of immense value. The Jewish people as a whole provided the conscripts for the army that would physically defend us from our mortal enemies, from external threats, while the tribe of Levi were charged with establishing our internal standard and strength, protecting the sanctity of the *mikdash*, G-d's home in our midst (Bamidbar 1:48-53). This is a classic expression of the

לעילוי נשמת

פרומה מלכה בת שלמה זלמן ע"ה

duality of responsibility that drives *klal Yisrael* as we seek to safeguard our material well being while building our religious heritage and mission.

It is striking that the very first command we were given at Sinai (Shemos 19:12), before G-d could speak to us and teach us the Torah, was that we respect and safeguard that which is holy. "Set a boundary for the people around the mountain, tell them not to ascend to it nor even touch its edge." The unique beauty of that moment was that G-d entrusted us with that task. We could be expected to be sensitive to holiness. No guard stood at Har Sinai; G-d's word was enough.

This was a real change. Since the day that Adam had sinned and been banished from the Garden of Eden, the path to access that holy space was blocked and guarded by angels with revolving swords (Bereishis 3:24). While we had been created to live in G-d's presence in paradise, we could no longer be entrusted with it. But at Sinai, a time that our Sages considered a return to paradise and G-d's presence, the pathway was reopened, and we were trusted to self-impose the appropriate respect for that which is holy.

That change has been reflected in our contemporary experience. For centuries, the roads to Zion and Yerushalayim were blocked by others holding "revolving swords." In our time, those roadblocks have been removed and we once again hold the keys to our land and to the holy and precious city of Yerushalayim. The access we have been granted signals that Hashem is again entrusting us to be the guardians of that which is most holy, that He has handed us back the keys and is relying on us to safeguard all that is most precious.

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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BAMIDBAR

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

Sefer Bamidbar is the march to the Land of Israel. The Promise of the Land was made to Avraham. And Yitzchak. And Yaakov. Moshe was told at the burning bush that G-d would take the people out of Egypt because of the promise He made. To give them the Land of Israel. That has been the goal from the time of Avraham. The overlay narrative of the entire Torah is the promise of the Land and the march to it.

Now we know that it is going to take 40 years to get there. But we need to read the Torah trying hard to stay in real time as the story unfolds. And as the story is unfolding, as far as the people know they will enter the Land of Israel imminently.

Bamidbar is the dawn of the march to the Land and as such the Torah changes dramatically. Since Mt. Sinai, the focus of the Torah has been the encounter of G-d and man. We built the Mishkan as a place to rendezvous. The book of Vayikra outlined how we approach Him, when we may not approach him. And that the approach to G-d occurs not only in the drama of the Mishkan but in the holiness of our daily life as well.

Now, the entire narrative changes. We are pivoting from holiness to, well, earthiness. Marching. Conquering. Dividing the Land. Moving from the rarified air of pursuing holiness to the messy business of a national aspiration of taking the Land.



1ST ALIYA (BAMIDBAR 1:1-19)

On Rosh Chodesh Iyar of the second year since leaving Egypt, Moshe and Aharon are to take a census of all men over the age of 20. The leaders of each tribe are to assist. These leaders are named. Moshe, Aharon and the leaders gather the people who establish to which tribe each person belongs.

The census is to be conducted by tribe. The leader of the tribe conducts the census. The names of the leaders of each tribe are listed. And there is an echo. “These are the names” introduced a different book and is repeated here almost verbatim. It introduced the book of Shemot. These are the people who went down to Egypt. And here: these are the names of the leaders of the tribes (the same names as those who went down to Egypt). What a simple way to convey a powerful message: those individuals are now tribes of tens of thousands. We’ve come a long way. From individuals to powerful tribes.



2ND ALIYA (1:20-54)

The census, by tribe, of all men over the age of 20, the age of army service is presented. The tribe of Reuven: 46,500. Shimon: 59,300. Gad: 46,500. Yehuda: 74,600. Yissachar: 54,400. Zevulun: 57,400. Ephraim: 40,500. Menashe: 32,200. Binyamin: 35,400. Dan: 62,700. Asher: 41,500. Naftali: 53,400. The total of this census done by Moshe and Aharon and the 12 leaders of the tribes was 603,550. However, the tribe of Levi is not included. They are to safeguard the Mishkan:

camping around the Mishkan, transporting it, dismantling and assembling it. The tribes camp in distinct groups, while the Leviim encamp around the Mishkan.

The census is taken by tribes. While there were 12 sons of Yaakov, Levi is not a part of this census. That leaves 11 tribes. But there is no tribe of Yosef; his 2 sons, Ephraim and Menashe take their place alongside their uncles as full tribes. Hence, 12 tribes even without Levi.

The emphasis on tribes, or shevatim, is new. Up until now, the Jew has functioned in 2 realms; individual and Am Yisrael, the Jewish people. We have mitzvot for the individual. And we have mitzvot for the people, like the daily offering. It is for the Jewish people.

But why is there a notion of tribe? Why identify in 3 ways, as individual, as tribe and as a people? It is somewhat akin to: I am a Jew, I am an Israeli, and I am a Yerushalmi. While that is true, what does it convey?

And this theme of tribal affiliation will animate much of the book. We camp as a tribe. The Land of Israel will be divided by tribe. If land is sold in the Land of Israel, it reverts back to its original owner in Yovel, in order to maintain tribal integrity. The tribe is like a state within the nation, a province within a country.

I usually like asking questions as a way to offer an answer. But this notion of shevatim, of tribes is perplexing. On some level we can say that all who descend from Binyamin have the genetic influence of Binyanim. The shevatim are, after all, a family, a large extended family, all descendants of Binyamin.

Perhaps it is an introduction to diversity. In the pivot from holiness to the reality of the march to the Land, we also move from what



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we all share, holiness, to how we are different. We are different due to our genetics, our upbringing, the influence of our surroundings.

And in the march to the Land, this diversity will be challenging. There will be disputes and disagreements. I don't think it is an overstatement to say that diversity is the single biggest challenge to mankind. Managing differences is terribly challenging.

And in this, the book of Bamidbar will be the introduction of diversity and the challenges that it brings.



3RD ALIYA (2:1-34)

The tribes are to camp in a designated manner. For each of the tribes the name of their Nasi, the number of their tribe and the place in the formation is given. On the east side, the front, is Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. Their combined number is 186,400. On the south side is Reuven,

Shimon and Gad. Their combined number is 151,450. The Ohel Moed, surrounded by Levi, both camps and travels in the middle. On the west side is Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin. Their combined number is 108,100. On the north side is Dan, Asher and Naftali. Their combined number is 157,600. The total count of the army age men is 603,550 without the tribe of Levi.

The people travel and camp with the Mishkan in their midst. Physically and metaphorically. We travel our history with G-d in our midst. The distinct feeling you get in the detailed description of where each tribe encamped is the feeling of an army encampment. But with the Mishkan in the middle.



4TH ALIYA (3:1-13)

Aharon's sons' names were Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar. Nadav and Avihu died without children. Elazar and Itamar serve as kohanim with Aharon. Take the Leviim: they are to serve Aharon. The Leviim are responsible for the Mishkan: to support the kohanim and the people, to facilitate the running of the Mishkan. The Leviim shall take the place of the first-born, who became obligated to me when saved in Egypt.

There are 2 groups mentioned here: Kohanim and Leviim. The lineage of the Kohanim is given. It just doesn't take much room. Because Aharon is a kohen and his sons. But he only has 2. So the entire lineage of the kohanim is 3 people. The Leviim, on the other hand, are an entire tribe, descendants of Levi, son of Yaakov. Their lineage, at quite some length, is given in the next aliya.



5TH ALIYA (3:14-39)

Count the tribe of Levi by households, from 1 month and older: the

households of Gershon, Kehat and Merari, the sons of Levi. The sons of Gershon, Kehat and Merari are listed. Gershon's family, from a month and above, is 7,500. They camp to the west of the Mishkan. Their task was to transport and be responsible for the curtains and coverings. Kehat numbered 8,600, camping to the south. They were responsible for the vessels: Aron, Menorah, Table, altars. Merari numbered 6,200, camping to the north. Responsible for the structure of the Mishkan; the walls, supports and beams. The total of the tribe of Levi is 22,000. On the front side, the east of the Mishkan, Moshe and Aharon and families camped.

The encampment around the Mishkan had 2 layers. The Leviim were in close, on 3 of the 4 sides of the Mishkan. The 4th side, the leading side, had Moshe and Aharon. The entire 12 tribes were farther removed on all 4 sides.

The 3 sons of Levi were family groups; Gershon, Kehat and Merari. They had full responsibility for the Mishkan. Their tasks fell in categories. Gershon; textiles. Kehat; furniture. Merari; building. Gershon took care of the curtains and coverings. Kehat, the important main vessels of the Mishkan. And Merari the structure of the building.



6TH ALIYA (3:40-51)

Count all the firstborn of the age of a month and above. The Leviim are to replace the firstborn. There were 273 more firstborns than Leviim; these were redeemed.

The firstborn are replaced as public servants by the Leviim. The notion that the firstborn shall be the public servants has great appeal; every home becomes infused with public service by virtue of the firstborn dedicated to holy work. But, as appealing as

that is, it is not implemented. The firstborn are switched off for the Leviim. Perhaps because it would be an inequitable burden. The poor families rely on their firstborn to work, to be the first to contribute to the family wellbeing. The replacement of the firstborn by the Leviim may be recognition of the inequity that would inevitably result in requiring the firstborn of every family to leave their home for public service.



7TH ALIYA (4:1-20)

Take from Kehat all men from the age of 30 to 50 to do their work of the holy of holies. But since Kehat was to carry the vessels of the Mishkan, Aharon and his sons covered each vessel to prevent Kehat from touching them. The Aron was covered by: the Parochet (curtain), then leather, then techelet covering. The Shulchan: techelet, then the extra utensils, then red, then the tachash skin. Menorah: techelet, then tachash. Incense altar: techelet, then tachash. Outer altar: purple, then tachash. In this way, calamity will not befall Kehat in transporting the holy things.

There are 3 different age surveys. The tribes are surveyed to count all males above 20. For army service. The Leviim were surveyed to count all males above 1 month. For they assume Levi status pretty much from birth. And here, the Leviim who will actually do public service are those from age 30-50. Though their service in our parsha is to transport the Mishkan, their service in the Temple will be as musicians. Later the Torah will say the Leviim begin public service at age 25. The Talmud resolves this: it takes 5 years of training, from 25-30. Then they can play the music in the Temple or sing. 5 years of musical training; the music of the Temple must have been quite sophisticated.

HAFTORAH BAMIDBAR HOSHEA 2: 1-22

This week's *haftorah* begins with the words, "The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea [shore], which can be neither measured nor counted." An appropriate reading for the first Torah reading of the Book of *Numbers*.

Hoshea first delivers prophecy about the eventual reunification of the houses of Judah and Israel. During the Messianic Era, these two perennial antagonists will make peace and appoint a single leader. Hoshea then rebukes the Jewish people for their infidelity, abandoning their "husband," G-d, and engaging in adulterous affairs with pagan deities. He describes the punishments they will suffer because of this unfaithfulness.

Eventually, though, Hoshea reassures the Jews that they will repent, and Hashem will accept them back wholeheartedly. The haftorah concludes with the moving words: "And I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy." ■



STATS

34th sedra of 54 (1st of 10 in Bamidbar).
Written on 263 lines (ranks 3rd).
30 parshiyot - 23 open, 7 closed, ranks 4th.
159 pesukim - ranks 3 (3rd in Bamidbar).
1823 words - ranks 13 (4th in Bamidbar)
7393 letters - ranks 9 (3rd in Bamidbar)



MITZVOT

None of Taryag in Bamidbar - it is the largest of the 17 sedras without mitzvot

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BAMIDBAR

Elite by Commitment

Scholars have had a lot to say about the role of aristocracy in the course of human history. Those of us who grew up in the United States of America were taught about the advantages of democracy and thus developed a prejudice against the very word “aristocracy.” We were convinced that aristocracy meant government by a select group of people who earned their right to govern by virtue of their birth.

Along with the virtues of democracy, we were taught to value meritocracy. Individuals should be granted positions of authority on the basis of their merit. If they prove themselves to be experts in business, they should be given control of the economy. Those who successfully prove their administrative experience should run the government.

As our formal education proceeded, we learned about the danger of another philosophy; namely, elitism. Somewhere in our attic storage room, there remains a

copy of a paper I wrote as a sophomore in college. It was based upon a book by the eminent sociologist C. Wright Mills, entitled *The Power Elite*. In it, the author cautions against the development of a small group, or “inner core,” controlling all the institutions in power in a given society. A more recent book by David Rothkopf makes a similar point and speaks of a “super-class” that dominates contemporary American society. Personally, I suspect that we can detect in the present presidential elections a revolt, by a substantial portion of the populace, against “the power elite” or the “super-class.”

In my rabbinic teaching experience, I have found that students tend to question, or at least wonder about, the existence of aristocracy or elitism in the society prescribed by our Torah. This tendency is especially common among students who have been raised to value “the American way.” I have discovered that it is this week’s Torah portion, *Parashat Bemidbar* (*Numbers 1:1-4:20*), which evokes these questions more than any other.

This week’s *parasha* begins with an enumeration of the leaders of each tribe. The leader of the tribe of Reuben is named Elizur son of Shedeur, and so are named the leaders of every tribe. That is, every tribe but Levi. The Torah then proceeds with the details of the results of the census that Moses

לעילוי נשמות

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Baer z"l
on his sixteenth *yahrzeit* - 2 Iyar

and

Rebbetzin Hannah Baer a"h
on her third *yahrzeit* - 29 Iyar

לא ימוש זכרונם מקרב לבנו

conducted. The total population of each tribe is listed, beginning with Reuben and ending with Naphtali. Again, the tribe of Levi is not recorded. The Torah itself remarks, “The Levites, however, were not recorded among them by their ancestral tribe.” Indeed, the Almighty specifically commands Moses: “Do not on any account enroll the tribe of Levi, or take a census of them, with the Israelites,” (*Numbers* 1:47-48).

The Torah continues to describe the configuration of the tribes as they marched through the wilderness: Three tribes in the north, three tribes in the south, and three tribes, each in the east and west. The glaring omission from this formation is the tribe of Levi.

It is only when we reach the third chapter of this week’s Torah portion that we learn of the special treatment that the tribe of Levi is to receive. It is then that we learn that the Levites are to substitute for the firstborn Israelites and will serve in their stead in the special roles of maintaining the Holy Tabernacle. Finally, the Torah describes the division of the tribe of Levi into three and names the leaders of each of those three divisions. It is only at this later point in the *parasha* that we are informed about the central position of the Levites in the nation’s march through the wilderness.

It is no wonder that students often ask about elitism. Their question is usually phrased along these lines: “Aren’t the Levites being designated by the Almighty Himself as a “power elite” or “super-class?” Are we not to be concerned that the rest of the Israelites will experience the resentment typical to victims of discrimination? Wasn’t the Levites’ special position in this *parasha* accorded them only

because they were born Levites, having done nothing to merit their special distinction?”

The Sages of the Talmud and Midrash respond emphatically to these questions. Here is an especially poetic example, to be found in the Midrash *Bemidbar Rabbah*, chapter 3: “It was the tribe of Levi who were heroes and blossomed forth with their deeds at the time that the Israelites crafted the Golden Calf. It is written, ‘Moses stood up in the gate of the camp and said, “Whoever is for the Lord, come here!”’ And all the Levites rallied to him. Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed Be He raised them above the Israelites. Like the cedar which is taller and higher in the forest of Lebanon than all other trees, so too are they elevated above all of Israel. Thus, it is written in the book of *Psalms* (92:14), ‘Planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God.’”

The point of this Midrash, and of many similar rabbinic passages, is this: The elite position of the Levites was not merely a function of their privileged birth. Rather,

May the Torah learned
from this issue of TT
be in loving memory of and לע"נ
our dear parents
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are observed in Sivan

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they earned their position because of their firm commitment to God. They merited their special role because of their courage and dedication.

In the classes that I have led, however, these rabbinic passages do not suffice. Questions persist: “What about nowadays? Can any person not born a Levi gain access to that tribe’s privilege by virtue of his commitment and courage? Or, is membership in this special group closed to non-Levites forever?”

The response to such questions was given centuries ago by none other than Maimonides: “It is not just the tribe of Levi alone, but each and every person from all of the world’s inhabitants, if his spirit but moves him and his intellect matures, can distinguish himself from the masses and stand before God to serve Him and to worship Him. He can come to know God, and if he walks upright in the manner in which God fashioned him and is willing to discard

all the many considerations which other humans naturally seek, such a person is sanctified as the holiest of holies. He too can become God’s special portion and heritage forever and ever.” (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, concluding paragraph of the Laws of the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee)

Simply put, Maimonides is teaching us that every human being can become a Levite.

Not many of us are familiar with Maimonides’ astonishing remarks.

But there is a statement, spoken daily by every regular synagogue attendee, which symbolically transforms each of us into a Levite. For near the conclusion of the morning service every day of the year, weekday or Sabbath or Festival, we recite a psalm. The psalm differs from day to day, but there is a brief prelude that we all utter: “Today is the first day of the week (or second, or third day, as the case may be) on which the Levites used to say this psalm in the Temple.”

Why do we recite this formula? The customary answer is that we want to retain some memory of the Holy Temple in our religious consciousness. But I like to think that we recite it to connect in some fashion to the Levites in the Temple of long ago. And we recite it whether we are Levites by birth or not. We assert that in some sense we can all become Levites.

Maimonides insists that in Judaism elites are made, not born. Authentic elites are not about power. They are about courage and commitment, and conviction. ■

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BAMIDBAR

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HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Liminal Space

In English, the book we begin this week is called Numbers, and for an obvious reason. It begins with a census, and there is even a second count toward the end of the book. On this view, the central theme of the book is demography. The Israelites, still at Sinai at the beginning of the book, but on the brink of the Promised Land by its end, are now a sizeable nation, numbering 600,000 men of an age to embark on military service.

Within Jewish tradition however, this book has become known as Bamidbar, “in the wilderness,” suggesting a very different theme. The superficial reason for the name is that this is the first distinctive word in the book’s opening verse. But the work of two anthropologists, Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, suggest a deeper possibility. The fact that Israel’s formative experience was in the wilderness turns out to be highly significant. For it is there that the people experience one of the Torah’s most revolutionary ideas, namely that an ideal society is one in which everyone has equal dignity under the

sovereignty of God.

Arnold Van Gennep, in his *The Rites of Passage*, argued that societies develop rituals to mark the transition from one state to the next – from childhood to adulthood, for example, or from being single to being married – and they involve three stages. The first is separation, a symbolic break with the past. The third is incorporation, re-entering society with a new identity. Between the two is the crucial stage of transition when, having said goodbye to who you were but not yet hello to who you are about to become, you are recast, reborn, refashioned.¹

Van Gennep used the term *liminal*, from the Latin word for *threshold*, to describe this second state when you are in a kind of no-man’s-land between the old and the new. That is clearly what the wilderness signifies for Israel: liminal space between Egypt and the Promised Land. There Israel is reborn, no longer a group of escaping slaves but “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The desert – a no-man’s-land with no settled populations, no cities, no civilisational order – is the place where Jacob’s descendants, alone with God, cast off one identity and assume another.

1. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, University of Chicago Press, 1960.

This analysis helps us understand some of the details of the book of Exodus. The daubing of the doorposts with blood (Ex. 12:7) is part of the first stage, the separation, during which time the door through which you walk as you leave your old life behind has special symbolic significance.

Likewise the division of the Red Sea. The division of one thing into two, through which something or someone passes, is a symbolic enactment of transition, as it was for Abraham in the passage in which God tells him about his children's future exile and enslavement (Gen 15:10-21). Abraham divides animals, God divides the sea, but the movement between the two halves is what signals the phase-change.

Note also that Jacob has his two defining encounters with God in liminal space, during his journey from his home towards the dwelling of Laban (Gen. 28:10-22, and Gen. 32:22-32).

Victor Turner added one additional element to this analysis. He drew a distinction between society and what he called *communitas*. Society is always marked by structure and hierarchy. Some have power, some don't. There are classes, castes, ranks, orders, gradations of status and honour.²

For Turner what makes the experience of liminal space vivid and transformative is that in the desert there are no hierarchies. Instead, there is "an intense comradeship and egalitarianism. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenised." People cast together in the no-man's-land of the desert experience the "essential and generic human bond." That is what he means

2. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Transaction Publishers, 1969.



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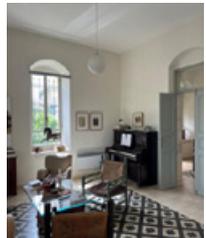
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by *communitas*, a rare and special state in which, for a brief but memorable period, everyone is equal.³

We now begin to understand the significance of *midbar*, “wilderness,” in the spiritual life of Israel. It was the place where they experienced with an intensity they had never felt before nor would they easily again, the unmediated closeness of God which bound them to Him and to one another.

That is what Hosea means when he speaks in God’s name of a day when Israel will experience, as it were, a second honeymoon:

“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her... There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the Lord, “you will call Me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call Me ‘my Master.’” *Hos. 2:14-16*

We also now understand the significance of the account at the beginning of Bamidbar, in which the twelve tribes were encamped, in rows of three on the four sides of the Tabernacle, each equidistant from the holy. Each tribe was different, but (with the exception of the Levites) all were equal. They ate the same food, manna from heaven. They drank the same drink, water from a rock or well. None yet had lands of their own, for the desert has no owners. There was no economic or territorial conflict between them.

The entire description of the camp at the beginning of Bamidbar, with its emphasis on equality, fits perfectly Turner’s description of *communitas*, the ideal state people only experience in liminal space where they have

3. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, Cornell University Press, 1974.

left the past (Egypt) behind but have not yet reached their future destination, the land of Israel. They have not yet begun building a society with all the inequalities to which society gives rise. For the moment they are together, their tents forming a perfect square with the Sanctuary at its centre.

The poignancy of the book of Bamidbar lies in the fact that this *communitas* lasted so briefly. The serene mood of its beginning will soon be shattered by quarrel after quarrel, rebellion after rebellion, a series of disruptions that would cost an entire generation their chance of entering the land.

Yet Bamidbar opens, as does the book of Bereishit, with a scene of blessed order, there natural, here social, there divided into six days, here into twelve (2×6) tribes, each person in Bamidbar like each species in Bereishit, in his or her rightful place, “each with his standard, under the banners of their ancestral house” (Num. 2:1).

So the wilderness was not just a place; it was a state of being, a moment of solidarity, midway between enslavement in Egypt and the social inequalities that would later emerge in Israel, an ideal never to be forgotten even if never fully captured again in real space and time.

Judaism never forgot its vision of natural and social harmony, set out respectively in the beginnings of the books of Genesis and Numbers, as if to say that what once was could be again, if only we heed the word of God. ■

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BAMIDBAR

Why the Desert “Counts”

Although we commonly identify the books of the Torah with their opening word(s), i.e., “Breishit”, “Shmot”, “VaYikra”, etc., Chazal referred to each book through its individual content: “Sefer HaY’tzira”, Sefer HaGeulah”, Torat Kohanim”, etc. These titles were translated into the Greek by “Targum Hashiv’im”- the Septuagint –and eventually adopted by other nations: “Genesis”, “Exodus”, Leviticus, etc. This week, we open Sefer B’Midbar, which Chazal called “Sefer P’kudim” or “Numeri” in Greek, as much of the book focuses upon the theme of numbers or counting. It is interesting to note, however, that the common name of B’Midbar (or, as generally [although incorrectly] pronounced, “BaMidbar”) is a fitting description for the book as well, for the sefer reviews the events that took place in the desert (“Midbar”) from year #2 through year #40.

In the very opening of our haftarah the navi Hoshe’a shares the divine message that, in the future, the population of B’nai Yisra’el would number as the grains of sand in the sea, a promise that provides us with the clear connection of the prophet’s message to the parasha’s census. However, it is the contrast to the Torah’s counting that sends a more optimistic message than that which is read in our Torah reading. In the Torah, we are given the precise number of Israelites

who traveled through the desert, while the haftarah guarantees that the nation’s population would be **innumerable** (“asher lo yimad v’lo yisafer”)! This also explains why it is Moshe who is to count the nation in our parasha while in Sefer Hoshe’a it is G-d Himself Who sets the number as being beyond human ability to count.

Interestingly, when we proceed to study the navi’s entire message we uncover yet another connection to our parasha – one that focuses not on the “p’kudim” (counting) but on the “midbar”. Rav Yissachar Ya’akovson turns our attention to the 17th pasuk in the haftarah, a comforting verse that followed those of censure and condemnation, in which Hashem promises “Hineh anochi m’phatiha”, I will lure Israel, and “v’holachtiha **hamidbar**”, I will lead her into the **desert**, “v’dibarti al libah”, where I will speak comfortingly to her. Here we are reminded that the midbar is the pathway **OUT** of the Galut and **IN** to the Geulah - just as it was in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu.

In studying Sefer B’Midbar, we often remember the desert as the place of Israel’s sins – those of the egel hazahav (Golden Calf), of the meraglim (Spies), of the grumbling, of the complaints and of the demands to return to Egypt. Hoshe’a opens our eyes to the realization that Hashem “lures” us into

the midbar to become a place of repair and repentance and for a time of returning to G-d. The haftarah teaches us to regard the years of desert wandering as the era when we constructed Mishkan and learned to worship G-d properly, when we received His Torah and taught us His mitzvot and when we were able to develop a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father.

It should be no wonder, therefore, that the navi Yirmiyahu praises Israel by telling us how G-d remembers with deep love the years when His children followed Him through the wilderness. For He, too, regards those years with affection for they were years when He was able to develop a loving relationship with His chosen nation.

Ultimately, it is certainly true that Sefer P'kudim is filled with many "countings" but it is also important to remember that those desert years themselves really did count – both for us and for G-d! ■

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BAMIDBAR

The Purpose of the Census

שָׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם
לְבַיִת אֲבוֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל־זָכָר לְגִלְגֻלְתָּם
(שמות א:ב)

*Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by families following their fathers' houses; a head count of every male according to the number of their **names**. (Shemot 1:2)*

PURPOSE OF COUNTING

In parshat Bamidbar we encounter one of the few times that a census is conducted to count the members of Am Yisrael. What was the purpose of the census? The Ramban

offers two explanations (Bamidbar 1:45): (i) the Torah wants to emphasize God's **kindness** in transforming seventy individuals into a large nation; and (ii) so that each individual would pass before Moshe and Aharon and be **known** to them by name.

KNOWLEDGE OR RECOGNITION

Rav Soloveitchik (Masoret Harav) explains that the two explanations set forth by the Ramban reflect two types of counting. The first is simply to gain **knowledge of the total number of an item**. For example, one counts his money to know how much he has. Each individual coin is insignificant, his sole purpose is to become familiar with the overall sum.

The second type of counting has a different objective. The ultimate goal is to **recognize and appreciate each and every individual**, rather than be concerned with the total number. In the process of conducting the census, Moshe and Aharon would pass through each home and familiarize themselves with each individual and their families.

It did not suffice for Moshe to merely know the amount of people that comprise the nation, he had to become familiar with שמות – the names and personalities of each individual. A nation is comprised of individuals and it is essential that each person be recognized not just as a “hefza”, as being a part of a nation, but rather as a “gavra” someone unique and



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FATHER VS TEACHER

Later in the parsha we are told: ואלה תולדו – These are the offspring of Aharon and Moshe, yet enumerated are only the children of Aharon. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 19b) explains that since Moshe taught Aharon's children Torah, it was as if he was their father. The terms used is כאילו ילדו – as if he gave **birth** to them.

In the sefer, Eileh Hadevarim, a second source is cited (Sanhedrin 99b) that uses similar but different language – כאילו עשאו – anyone who teaches Torah to a child it is as if he **shaped** them. What is the difference between the terminologies? A father who gives birth to a child is רחמן – sympathizes for his child. A teacher is demanding of his students, sometimes without any sympathy. Perhaps the ideal is to combine both of these characteristics. To be sympathetic yet firm in pushing a child to achieve their potential.

Combining these two ideas, we have the ultimate manner in which to raise children. First each and every child and student is to be viewed as a unique and special individual and not get swallowed up within a family or classroom. Second, one should be sympathetic yet firm, and with sensitivity help each child achieve their full potential. ■

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IDF Converts and *Bishul Akum* by Family - Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, the IDF along with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel has overseen thousands of conversions for IDF soldiers, many of whom made aliyah from the former Soviet Union together with their families. This phenomenon has raised many halachic questions, one of which concerns *bishul akum* by the convert's family members. As discussed in past articles, our Sages decreed that kosher food cooked by a non-Jew is largely prohibited, due to concern that unnecessary closeness could lead to intermarriage. Early authorities add that even in a case where intermarriage seems unlikely or even impossible, such as a Catholic priest who does not marry or have children, the decree still applies. This ruling follows the principle that our Sages' decrees are categorical and generally leave no room for exceptions.

Regarding soldiers specifically, there is a unique halachic question. In the IDF, soldiers may decide on their own to join an army conversion program, while their parents and siblings do not participate in the conversion process. Rabbis and rabbinic judges were asked to consider the issue of such converts eating food cooked by their non-Jewish family members. Although most soldiers board on

base, sometimes for weeks at a time, they are regularly granted leave to go home for a weekend or a few additional days. Would a soldier convert be prohibited from eating his non-Jewish mother's cooking because of the Sages' decree of *bishul akum*? Furthermore, if the non-Jewish family members consume non-kosher food in their home, there is the important question of credibility; halachically, one cannot rely upon someone to serve kosher food if that person himself eats non-kosher. This question is discussed at length in numerous modern halachic journals and books such as *Techumin* (41, 42), *Sefer Michtav Shlomo* (10, 13), and *K'lalei HaGiyur* written by Rishon L'Tzion HaRav Yitzchak Yosef.

THE LENIENT OPINION

There are rabbinic judges who are lenient to allow IDF converts to eat food cooked by their non-Jewish family members. This leniency is based on several principles. As mentioned in previous articles, some early authorities rule that *bishul akum* does not apply in a home or establishment owned by a Jew. In addition, there are opinions amongst early authorities that when the non-Jew is in a position of servitude such as a maidservant, there is no concern of intermarriage and thus



no prohibition of *bishul akum*. Furthermore, there is a minority opinion that only non-Jews who engage in idol worship are included in the decree of *bishul akum*. Based on these factors, Rav Shmuel David (*Techumin* 41) and Rav Shlomo Krispin allow for an IDF convert to consume kosher food cooked by their mother or sister when they arrive home on leave from the army. The unique situations mentioned by early authorities, such as cooking in a Jewish home or the leniency of maidservants, show that in a case where there is no chance for intermarriage our Sages were lenient. Rav Shmuel David (*Techumin* 41) explains that although in the case of servants or cooking in a Jewish establishment, the majority opinion is to be stringent, (*Shulchan Aruch, Rema*, and later authorities in most cases), in the case of a mother and her convert son or daughter, the ruling should be lenient since there is no issue of intermarriage.

These rabbinic judges also tackle the issue of relying on non-Jewish family members who don't keep kosher. Early Talmudic sources relate that a person who is not careful about eating only kosher cannot be relied upon to serve others kosher food. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 119-1) rules, based on numerous authorities, that one may not eat the food of someone who does not keep kosher, even if that person declares that the food is kosher. Although the opinion of Rabbis David and Krispin resolves the issue of *bishul akum*, there is the much greater question

of whether the food itself is kosher! They deal with this halachic concern by citing a responsum of Rav Moshe Feinstein regarding an elderly religious man in Soviet Russia in the 1930's. The man was unable to go out and buy food, and was living with his son and daughter-in-law who were complete atheists and surely anti-religious. He asked Rav Moshe if he could rely on their testimony that they only bought kosher food for their father. Rav Moshe ruled that they could be relied upon, since the elderly man saw that they actually purchased kosher meat and his son and daughter-in-law were careful not to harm him in any way. The elderly man could rely upon this as an absolute fact that they would purchase only kosher meat for him. Thus, the issue of testimony is irrelevant in such a case. Rabbis David and Krispin use the same logic with non-Jewish parents of an IDF soldier. Since they surely do not want to cause any harm or discomfort to their child, and kosher food is very easy to find in the State of Israel, they may be relied upon when they claim they purchased kosher food and cooked it in a kosher manner.

There are many who dispute this ruling regarding converts eating food cooked by their non-Jewish mothers. The opposing opinion will be discussed in next week's article. ■

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Eternal Faith, Eternal Love

HOSHEA 2:1-22

וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצַדִּיק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט
וּבְרַחֲמִים וּבְרִחוּמִים:

And I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness and mercy,

וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְאֱמוּנָה וְיִדְעַתְּ אֶת־ה'

And I will betroth you with faithfulness; then you shall know Hashem.

These verses from Hoshea are familiar as they are recited when binding Tefillin. They describe the covenant that binds us to Hashem, our G-d. In His spousal role, Hashem outlines the elements of commitment He will demonstrate to us, His people, in our eternal relationship. What are the components of our Divine marriage?

The Malbim interprets צַדִּיק, righteousness as the willingness to go beyond the letter of the law while מִשְׁפָּט, justice means following the letter of the law. In a lasting relationship, one goes out of the way for the other but has low expectations in return. Kindness, רַחֲמִים, is giving to the other, showering the one you love with as much as you can share. Mercy, רַחֲמִים, according to the Maharal is being there for one another in a time of crisis or difficulty.

Why, then, is the fifth element in a separate pasuk? What is it about faith that it

stands on its own but is only mentioned after an affirmation of the relationship? The simple translation of the word אֱמוּנָה is faith. The Radak however explains that in this Divine relationship, אֱמוּנָה connotes an eternal relationship, one that is predicated on trust. The root of the word אֱמוּנָה is מ-נ-א as used in the verse in Megillat Esther, וַיְהִי וַיִּרְאֶה אֶת־הַדַּסָּה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר רָאִישׁ הַדַּסָּה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר raised Hadassah, that is Esther.” The more accurate translation of this pasuk is that he nurtured Esther, committed himself to her every need and as such, Esther relied and depended on Mordechai to protect and care for her. By presenting faith as separate from the other four principles of marriage, Hoshea tells us that to achieve longevity in our Divine relationship, we must have faith in Hashem, and Hashem in us.

In these times of crisis and upheaval, knowing that Hashem is committed to an eternal relationship provides us with the fundamental faith to persevere. May Hashem protect the people of Israel, His Eternal Love. ■

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Washing Dishes with Steel Wool on Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I saw a *frum* woman wash dishes on Shabbat with steel wool, which I thought was unacceptable. Isn't it forbidden to do so?

Answer: There are two possible reasons to forbid using steel wool to wash dishes on Shabbat.

The *gemara* (Shabbat 50a) says that one may generally scrub utensils thoroughly on Shabbat, except that one may not scrub silver with an abrasive material called *gartekun* because that will definitely smooth out the surface. (Cleaning well is permitted, whereas smoothing a surface is included in the *melacha* of *memachek*). The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 323:9) *paskens* this *gemara* and highlights the fact that silver is a relatively soft metal. While the Mishna Berura (323:39) says that for other, harder materials even a *gartekun* can be used, some say that steel wool is worse, as it is meant to smooth out even the surface of steel (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 12:10; Dirshu 323:41). Some *Acharonim* (see K'tzot Hashulchan 146:(126)) claim that there are also problems of *uvdin d'chol* (weekday-like activity) in this scrubbing.

On the other hand, this logic for stringency applies primarily for a more common use of steel wool – scrubbing pots with this quite abrasive substance to remove baked-on residue. (It is rarely permitted to clean pots, and certainly not scrub them, on Shabbat, with any material, as this is rarely needed for Shabbat, but should be done on *motzaei Shabbat*. Development of that topic is beyond our present scope.) You, though, asked about washing dishes, which are usually glazed flatware, and glasses, which do not need smoothing of their surfaces. This process is not similar to the *gemara's* description of the use of *gartekan*, even if the same steel wool could be used in that way. Therefore, using steel wool like a dish sponge is unlikely forbidden on the grounds of abrasive scrubbing (Shalmei Yehuda 9:(7) in the name of Rav Elyashiv and Rav B. Zilber).

The bigger problem is the similarity to a sponge, which may not be used on Shabbat because of *sechita* (squeezing out) of absorbent objects. (There is a *machloket* as to the *melacha* to which this belongs – see Orchot Shabbat, I, p. 399). One can argue cogently that steel wool, made up of thin **metal** strands, is not an absorbent object, and just as the *gemara* (Shabbat 128b) says there is no *sechita* of hair, so too there should be no

sechita of steel wool. However, we generally assume that there is a Rabbinic prohibition to squeeze hair (Mishna Berura 326:25). This may also apply to other non-absorbent materials (see Orchot Shabbat 13:56).

The question is where to draw the line. The following is probably the basic guideline that most people knowledgeable about the *halachot* of Shabbat keep. If the non-absorbent elements of the material lie together in very close proximity, it is prohibited to squeeze the liquid between them, as this is in many ways equivalent to classic *sechita* (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 12:15). For this reason, specially made "Shabbat sponges" are not only made out of hard, nonabsorbent materials such as plastic, but the strands are somewhat spread out. Steel wool does not meet these standards, and this is particularly a problem when it is desired that the liquid in between the strands (soapy water) come out to use for the washing (see Mishna Berura 320:55).

Therefore, *poskim* generally do not allow washing dishes with steel wool (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 12:10; Orchot Shabbat 13:58). Nowadays, there are effective alternatives, broadly accepted for Shabbat use. However, since the idea that there is *sechita* on non-absorbent materials and its exact parameters are not trivial (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 12:(46)), the woman you refer to might have received a legitimate rabbinic leniency.

Even **if** one is going to use steel wool,

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he should be careful not to cut a piece off a roll or mass, on Shabbat (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 340:13), and if he is particular about the piece's size, it violates the *melacha* of *mechatech* (see Rambam, Shabbat 11:7; Mishna Berura 340:41). ■

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RABBI GIDEON

Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

WEITZMAN

The Supervisor's Role

Last time we discussed using cameras to supervise fertility treatments. Generally, it is accepted that halachic supervision must be done with direct sight of the procedures to prevent human error.

There has been some concern that using a camera would not be accepted halachically since, despite the old saying, the camera can sometimes lie. Cameras can give an inexact representation of what actually happened, and, therefore, it is problematic to completely rely on them for halachic supervision.

We also saw that some suggest that the Torah did not want us to rely on modern techniques to uphold Torah obligations. Therefore, the Torah defined seeing as what one can do with the naked eye and not through a camera. Since witnessing must be a result of what the witness saw, a camera cannot be employed in any halachic testimony.

A practical concern was the inability of humans to monitor screens for extended periods with accuracy.

Last time we saw that the Torah does trust the midwife to declare which child was born first or which is a Kohen or Levi. This is considered a case where we do rely on one witness or we rely on a professional testimony since the professional involved would taint their reputation if they were inexact and this would have a negative

impact on their livelihood.

The halachic supervisor in fertility laboratories can be considered a halachic witness or at least fulfill a similar role to the midwife. She is present when the embryos are formed and can declare that this embryo is a product of this couple.

We do not see that the midwife needs to adhere to the regular laws of witnesses. The same can be applied to the halachic supervisor as well. As such, even if there is halachic ground to be wary of supervision using a camera, this may be sufficient in the fertility clinic.

This is a complex and highly debated issue, and since there is not a consensus, most authorities will not accept cameras as a legitimate form of supervision. Especially when there is a concern that it is the beginning of a precarious slippery slope that could eventually end with all supervisors being banned from entering the laboratories at all.

The discussion is important since it forces us to define supervision, when and why it is needed and how couples can continue to use the Divine gift of medical advancement within a strict halachic framework. ■

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BAMIDBAR



Gavriel Novick
Development Director

When 1 Plus 1 is More Than 2

Both parshiyot Bamidbar and Naso describe Hashem’s counting of Bnei Yisrael. Why is it so important to count the Jewish People with such length and detail. Perhaps we can find an answer in Parshat Beha’alotcha. There Hashem tell us that when we listen and do what is right:

“Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.” (Vayikra 26:8)

Rashi asks the obvious question: the proportion is not correct. If 5 of us will pursue 100 of our enemies, then 100 of us should pursue 2,000 enemies, not 10,000. Rashi explains that we can’t compare a few Jews following the ways of Torah to many Jews following the ways of Torah. When the Jewish people unite in the way of Hashem they are so much more powerful than the sum of their parts.

Over the past 8 months this idea has been echoing in our heads: Yachad Ninatzeach. The strength of the Jewish people is with our coming together.

Perhaps this is why the Torah now emphasizes the counting of the Jewish People. Because as a unit, together, we are qualitatively more powerful. As we see from Rashi

it is impossible to compare how much more we can accomplish when we work together, when we do good together.

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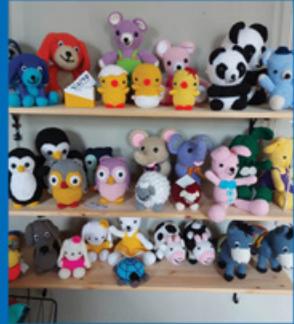
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11:00PM

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Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union



11:45PM

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on Shavuot **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Executive Vice President Emeritus, Orthodox Union



1:00AM

Divine Connections-Discovering the Meaning in Mitzvot

Rabbi Sam Shor Program Director, OU Israel Center



2:00AM

Understanding Shavuot **Rabbi Eitiel Goldwicht**

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3:00AM

Orot HaTorah-Rav Kook on Limud Torah

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

Editor, OU Israel Torah Tidbits

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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SHAVUOT

SHAVUOT SHEMOT 19:1-20:23

The Torah reading for Shavuot (Shemot 19:1-20:23) is the story of the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. It describes the prelude to the giving of the Torah, the preparation for it and then the 10 Commandments.

There is a tradition to read the 10 Commandments with what is known as “taamei elyon”, literally, the higher set of notes. There are 2 sets of trop or how to read these verses. One version divides the verses as we have them in our Chumash. The second, the taam elyon, does not divide by verses but by paragraphs. For example, the first 6 verses are combined into one long verse. Similarly, the 3 verses of the commandment of Shabbat are combined into one long verse. The motivation for doing this seems to be to want to read these as 10 Dibrot – utterances. Not to emphasize the cognitive meaning of the verses but the experience.

And that is really an expression of the meaning of Shavuot. The Torah is filled with mitzvot. It is not the content of the 10 Commandments that is significant. It is the drama of G-d speaking to man. The Divine communicating with the finite. That is a cosmic moment, an incredible moment, a unique moment in history. It is G-d descending, summoning us to Him, and communicating directly with man. Amidst fire, smoke, thunder and lightning, the

mountain shaking. It is a sublime moment. A moment of intimacy, of desire of G-d for mankind, of the touch of heaven and earth.

We reflect this theme of intimacy, of uniqueness, of experience in 3 ways. One is by reading Akdamot before the Torah reading, which essentially is an expression in poetry of this sublime moment. And secondly, by standing for the Torah reading, which is a way of perhaps emphasizing the experience rather than the content of this moment. And third, by using this unique trop, the taam elyon, dividing the reading into utterances, phrases, as if we are hearing the 10 Dibrot, the 10 utterances as they heard at Sinai.

This emphasis on the experience of Sinai motivates the choice of the Haftarah, the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel. This chapter is known as Maaseh Merkava, the vision of the chariot. It is a description of the angels and the Divine, full of metaphoric perception of G-d. This is chosen to parallel the Torah reading, emphasizing the sublime, mysterious, awesome experience of Sinai.

HAFTORAH SHAVUOT YEchezkel 1:1-28, 3:12

The haftarah describes Yechezkel’s Vision of the Chariot reminiscent of the revelation experienced by the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, on the very first Shavuot of history.

Yechezkel relays the vision he had of a

chariot led by four creatures that resemble men and describes their physical appearance and actions in detail, “When they [the living beings] would go, they [the wheels] would go, and when they would stand, they would stand, and when they would lift themselves up from the ground, the wheels would lift themselves correspondingly to them, for the will of the living being was in the wheels... Like the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness roundabout; that was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Hashem and when I saw, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking.”

The Haftorah ends with the mention of the prayers of the angels to Hashem. ■

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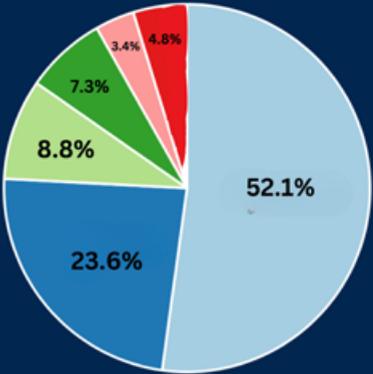
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**SUNDAY
JUNE 9**

2:00PM

Men's Gemara Chabura
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

SPECIAL EVENT:

12:00PM-9:00PM

Crafts Fair to Support
Artisans from
Northern Israel

**MONDAY
JUNE 10**

**All classes are
@ OU Israel Center**

9:15 AM

The Different Shades and
Colors of Prayer
Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Deepening Our Eternal
Relationship with Eretz
Yisrael-Timely Teachings from
the Wisdom of Rav Kook
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:15 PM

Israel's Continuing
Struggle for Survival
Dr. Deborah Polster

8:30 PM

The Bais
Semichat Chaver Program
Rabbi Elyada Goldwicht

**TUESDAY
JUNE 11**

**EREV
SHAVUOT**

SPECIAL EVENTS:

9:00 PM

JCHAT Shavuot
Seuda for Young
Professionals Ages
30's and 40's

10:45 PM- 3:45 AM

Tikkun Leil Shavuot-
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**WEDNESDAY
JUNE 12**

CHAG SAMEACH!



**THURSDAY
JUNE 13**

ISRU CHAG

**Thursday Shiurim
will resume
next week**



VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

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Parsha, 7:00pm Mon
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Parshat HaShavua
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This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning v

**SUNDAY
JUNE 16**

2:00PM

Men's Gemara Chabura
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

**MONDAY
JUNE 17**

**All classes are
@ OU Israel Center**

9:15 AM

The Different Shades and
Colors of Prayer
Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Deepening Our Eternal
Relationship with Eretz
Yisrael-Timely Teachings from
the Wisdom of Rav Kook
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:15 PM

Israel's Continuing
Struggle for Survival
Dr. Deborah Polster

7:30 pm

The Bais- Safrut Chabura
for Men in Modiin
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner

8:30 PM

The Bais
Semichat Chaver Program
Rabbi Elyada Goldwicht

**TUESDAY
JUNE 18**

**Torah Tuesdays in
Bakaa-Classes
@ Kehilat Nitzanim,
3 Asher Street**

9:15 AM

Pirkei Avot In Depth
Rabbi Moshe Snow
(NEW CLASS SERIES)

10:15 AM

Minchat Chinuch-
Meaning in Mitzvot
Rabbi Yitzchak
Breitowitz

11:15 AM

Sefer Breisheet Chumash
B'lyun Rabbi Yossi
Goldin

12:15 PM

Unlocking the Eternal
Wisdom of Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

7:30 pm

The Bais- Safrut Chabura
for Men in **Modiin**
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner

**TUESDAY
JUNE 18**

**L'Ayla Women's Day
of Learning
@ OU Israel Center**

9:15 AM
Mrs. Shira Smiles
Torah Tapestries

10:20 AM
Mrs. Leah Feinberg
Haftarot

11:10 AM
Mrs. Zemira Ozarowski
**Towards Meaningful
Tefilla**

12:00 PM
Mrs. Shani Taragin
**Delving into the
Halachot of Shabbat**

**WEDNESDAY
JUNE 19**

8:30 PM
The Bais (For Men)
**War Time Halachic
Dilemmas**
Rabbi Aschi Dick

10:15 AM
SPECIAL EVENT:
Three Aspects of
Torah- Session 1
**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh
Weinreb**

**THURSDAY
JUNE 20**

9:30 AM
Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:45 AM
**Iron Sword-Perspective
for Today from Parshat
HaShavua** Rabbi Baruch
Taub

12:00 PM
Lunch and Learn
Rabbi Neil Winkler.
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2:00 PM
Men's Gemara Chabura
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld



VIRTUAL SCHEDULE
(Zoom Only Classes):

Rabbi Baruch Taub
Parsha, 7:00pm Mon
Halacha, 7:00pm Wed
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88363420460>
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Rebbetzin Shatz
L'Ayla-Insights of Chazal
Tues., 5:00PM
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Rabbi Goldwicht
Parshat HaShavua
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MINHAGIM AND GUIDELINES FOR SHAUVUOT

A. It is customary to decorate the Shul and home with greenery and flowers for Shavuot.

B. There is customary to eat dairy foods.

C. There is custom to remain awake and study Torah on the night of Shavuot. For those who follow this practice, there are a number of points to bear in mind if one has not slept at all:

The blessing of *Al Netilat Yadayim* and *Asher Yatzar* may be said only after going to the bathroom.

The following blessings should not be said: a. *Al mitzvat tzitzit* b. the blessings on Torah study c. *Elokai neshama* and *Ha'maavir sheina*.

If possible, one should hear someone else (who has slept during the night) say them and intend to fulfill his obligation by listening to the recitation

of the blessings. (The individual who is saying the blessings must also have in mind to allow the listeners to fulfill their obligation through his recitation).

If there is no one to recite these blessings, then the blessing for the *talit gadol* can be used to cover the *talit katan* as well, and the blessing of *Ahava raba* can cover the blessings for Torah study if one specifically has so in mind and if immediately upon termination of the Amida one recites some Torah passages.





MEGILAT RUTH AND TORAH READING FOR SHAVUOT

Many communities read Megilat Ruth on Shavuot morning before Torah reading. (Outside of Israel it is read on the second day.)

Some communities read it in the afternoon (before Mincha).

A recent trend in Vatikin (pre-sunrise) minyanim (in Israel) is to read it before davening. While some feel that it is not ideal to do so, it has become a popular practice because of the time saved for people who are quite tired and appreciate the early morning davening.

When read from a kosher megila (Minhag Yerushalayim), the reading is preceded by the brachot... Al Mikra Megila and Shehechyanu. Read from a book, no brachot are recited.

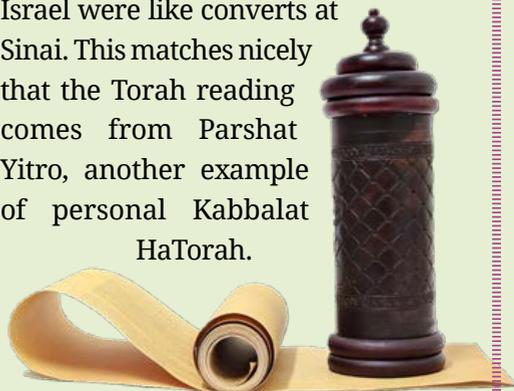
Various reasons combine to make Ruth a perfect reading for Shavuot:

The text itself tells us that its

story takes place at the time of the "cutting of the wheat". Shavuot is Chag HaKatzir.

One of the major purposes of the book of Ruth is to show us the lineage of David HaMelech and the Davidic line. Tradition tells us that David HaMelech died (and was born) on Shavuot.

Perhaps more significantly, the story of Ruth is the inspiring story of Kabbalat HaTorah on an individual level, just as Shavuot is the commemoration of Kabbalat HaTorah on a national level. All of Israel were like converts at Sinai. This matches nicely that the Torah reading comes from Parshat Yitro, another example of personal Kabbalat HaTorah.





Ruth is the story of Chesed, acts of kindness. The Torah begins and ends with G-d's acts of kindness—clothing Adam and Chava on the one side and burying Moshe on the other.

We recite **Akdamut** on Shavuot morning. After the Kohen is called to the Torah, before his bracha and before the reading begins, it is the Ashkenazi custom to responsively recite a 90-line poem praising G-d, His Torah and His people. Written by Rabbi Meir of Worms (one of Rashi's teachers) it conveys the spirit of love of G-d and Judaism even under the adverse conditions of the Crusades. Rabbi Meir's son was killed by Crusaders and he himself died soon after a "forced debate" with Christian clergy of his town. The poem celebrates Torah. Each line of Akdamut ends with a syllable TA, TAV-ALEF, last and first letters of the Alef Bet, some see this as a reminder of the nature of the Torah itself - as soon as we complete reading or learning the Torah, we immediately begin it again.

Sfardim do not read Akdamut, but they have the custom of reading a poem called the Ketuba composed by Rabbi Yosef Najara, celebrating the marriage, so to speak, of G-d and Bnei Yisrael, or the Torah and Bnei Yisrael. They read the Ketuba when the Ark is opened, before the Torahs are taken out.

Torah Reading from the first of two Torahs on Shavuot, we read from Parshat Yitro, the account of Ma'amad Har Sinai and Matan Torah, from Shmot 19 & 20 a total of 48 psukim. The reading is divided among 5 Aliyot, as on all Yom Tov days (that don't fall on Shabbat – which Shavuot never does).

The reading begins with the famous pasuk: "In the third month from the Exodus, on this day, they (Bnei Yisrael) came to Midbar Sinai." Rashi's two comments on "this day" are:

1. It was Rosh Chodesh Sivan that the People arrived at Sinai, and
2. The Torah uses the term





this day (Bayom Haze) rather than (Bayom Hahu) to teach us that Matan Torah should not be thought of as a "once upon a time, a long time ago" experience, but rather "words of Torah should be fresh in our eyes as if we received them today."

This is such an important concept that it bears constant repeating, attention, and effort to internalize. Especially when there are so many detractors who proclaim the Torah and its Mitzvot as antiquated, outdated, and irrelevant, we must be enthusiastic proponents of the opposite view. Etz Chayim Hi.

Could the Torah's being described as a living tree also contribute towards the custom of adorning the shul and home with tree branches?

The second pasuk is no less famous. "Vayichan sham Yisrael..." Israel, as one being with one heart and a singular purpose, camped opposite the mount. The unparalleled experience of Jewish unity that gave standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai its everlasting significance, become one of our special goals of Jewish life.

This explains the dayeinu couplet: Had You brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, we would still have reason to thank You.

Aseret Hadibrot is read in the "upper notes", Taamei Elyon, even according to Minhag Yerushalayim (which uses Taamei Hatachton for Parshat Yitro and Vaetchanan.) Taamei Elyon presents the text as separate commandments – with fanfare and flair-rather than psukim -like all the Torah- which is the way we hear it with Taamei Tachton.

Maftir (in the second Torah) is the Musaf of Shavuot from Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar 28:26-31).

Haftara is Yechezkel's first chapter and his most vivid and esoteric vision. The level and type of prophecy attained by the Jews at Sinai has been compared to the visions of Yechezkel.

Chag Sameach!





Shavuot Supreme

What exactly do we commemorate on the Shavuot holiday? The popular answer is that we celebrate the great event we call *Matan Torah*, that Hashem gave *Am Yisrael* the Torah. However, this is only partially true since Moshe broke those *luchot* that were given on Shavuot. The new *luchot* were only given on Yom Kippur, making that the “real” day of *Matan Torah*.

How then can we say “*zman matan torateinu* – the time of the giving of our Torah” in our tefilot on Shavuot if the Torah we were given was in essence retracted? What, then, is the significance of this day that we celebrate at Shavuot?

In *Matnat Chayim*, Rav Matityahu Salamon quotes the *Da’at Tevunot* who understands that the Har Sinai experience was unique in that, along with the Torah, *Am Yisrael* were infused with a dual *koach*; the power to keep Torah and to allow Torah to affect creation. In a sense, it was like the ‘bar mitzvah’ of the Jewish people, wherein they became obligated to keep the Torah and were given an inner mechanism to succeed in doing so. As such, Yom Kippur can be viewed as more like the wedding ceremony between Hashem and His people with the Torah as the marriage contract.

This is what we allude to in *Dayeinu*, “had we been brought to Har Sinai and not been given the Torah, it would have been enough.” The very experience of Sinai was transformative, it established our role as a people who impact the entire world through our actions.

Further, the experience of *Ma’amad Har Sinai* generated an awe of Hashem and a belief in the authenticity of Torah. This lays the foundation for us to accept Torah and mitzvot. Thus, each time we say a bracha with the words, “*asher kideshanu bemitzvotav ve’tzivanu* - who has sanctified and commanded us with His mitzvot,” we reactivate this metamorphosis. Indeed, each year on Shavuot, we return to this moment, and feel the joy of being gifted with the responsibility to be Hashem’s agents to sanctify and elevate the cosmos through our Torah and mitzvot.

It is equally important to recognize that this special status has been wired into the core of our being. Rav Yerucham Levovitz in *Da’at Torah* cites a beautiful example illustrating how the gift of Torah permeates our thoughts with an elevated perspective. When a Jew loses money and knows there is no way he will find it, he naturally will hope that at the very least a poor person should find the money so he can benefit from it. A Jew by nature wants to do the will of Hashem and perpetuate goodness and kindness. This is the spiritual DNA endowed to us on Shavuot at Har Sinai.

Rav Freifeld adds that as *Am Yisrael* stood at Har Sinai we reverted to “*tzurat haAdam*,”

the ideal form of man that Hashem envisioned at creation. This is what the midrash means when it describes that all people were healed at the time of the Sinai Revelation. This healing was not only physical in nature, but it was also a spiritual healing. Even though it was short lived, because soon after the nation committed the sin of the golden calf, for those moments *Am Yisrael* became aligned with the ultimate vision of what it means to be totally connected to the Divine Will, as *Adam Harishon* was before he sinned.

Each year on Shavuot we celebrate that we have been given the opportunity to be Divine emissaries to bring light and holiness into the world. Further, we recognize the supreme exaltedness in the power of our actions. It is a day to ponder how we can work towards achieving G-d's original vision for each of us to reach our most developed, perfected self. ■

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Tikkun Leil Shavuot In Yemin Moshe

תיקון ליל שבועות בימין משה

June 11, 2024

11:00 p.m.

למי נתנה התורה

Prof. Nahem Ilan



Academachob

Prof. Nahem Ilan, until his retirement this past year, was Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities at Hemedat Ha Darom Academic College. He specializes in the Jewish intellectual history of Spain and the Islamic World from the Middle Ages to Modern Times and is the author and editor of many books and articles.

11:45 p.m.

חרדים לביטחון המדינה

השתלבות חרדים למנגנוני המודיעין ומיטחון בעבר ובהווה



Academachob

Dr. Moshe Kahan

Dr. Rabbi Moshe Kahan is a member of the Hebrew Language Faculty of Michlala College, Jerusalem, and is founder and CEO of the NGO Pardes Project. He specializes in medieval Hebrew linguistic studies and is the author of two books and more than a dozen articles.

12:25 a.m.

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a rare peek behind
the curtain..."

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1:00 a.m.

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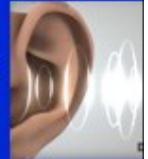
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Executive Director, Camp HASC
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SHAVUOT

Never Give Up!

Before his distinguished fifty year career as a surgeon at Hadassah Hospital, Dr. Nachum Kook was beloved for his righteousness and dedication to the members of the Jewish underground in pre-State Israel and his service as the unofficial doctor of the Irgun. During the Six Day War, Dr. Kook was a supervisor at the emergency military field clinic at Bikur Cholim hospital in Jerusalem, working day and night as a physician in the triage room.

Amid the raging battles, decisions in the field clinic were made at a dizzying pace. Wounded soldiers were arriving on stretchers in a desperate condition; there was a constant need to make life-and-death decisions and to prioritize treating the victims whose lives could be saved. A young soldier, evacuated from the warfront, arrived at Bikur Cholim unconscious and severely wounded, his leg barely attached to his body.

The doctors tried everything, but soon realized that they had a terrible choice to make: if the young man was to live, he had to lose his leg. Dr. Kook, however, adamantly insisted that the attending doctors do more to save the soldier's leg from amputation. With a steady flow of injured soldiers coming in, the medical team felt there was no time to deliberate further on the matter, but Dr. Kook continued to insist: they should not give up on the limb.

In the face of Dr. Kook's persistence, despite their opposition, the doctors reviewed the case once again. Emerging from the operating room a short while later, their faces beaming with joy: the soldier's leg had been saved!

The medical personnel at Bikur Cholim were astounded. What had made this one doctor so focused on saving a limb? Why had he persisted so adamantly, forcing his colleagues to rethink their initial diagnosis? The answer Dr. Kook gave is both powerful and instructive:

"My great-uncle was the great *tzaddik* and *ohev Yisrael*, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, who shared a message that I carry with me each time I treat a patient in surgery. When I entered the field of medicine, my holy uncle implored me to always bear in mind that just as Klal Yisrael is one nation, and no individual Jew can be cut off from their people, a surgeon must do everything within his power to ensure that a person is given a chance to stay whole.

"My uncle spent his life reaching beyond his limits to maintain a *kesher* with Jews whom many considered to be far away, refusing to allow them to be 'cut off' from *K'nesset Yisrael*. He spent his precious time traveling to the *moshavim* across Eretz Yisrael to connect with Jews of different walks of life, and in doing so subjected himself to intense opposition, criticism and shaming.

Nonetheless, he adamantly insisted that no Jew would be ‘amputated’ from his people.

“When faced with the dilemma of whether to do or not do an emergency amputation, I am guided by my uncle’s insistence on never giving up hope, neither spiritually nor physically.”

וַיִּחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹגַד הָהָר

“Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain.”

(Shemos, 19:2)

The word *vayichan*, “encamped,” unexpectedly appears in the singular, as if to say, ‘And “he”, Am Yisrael, encamped there....’ Rashi notes that it implies the whole nation was אחד בלב אחד — “...as one person with one heart”. Rebbe Leibele Eiger of Lublin teaches that the word *vayichan* is a term of *chein*, ‘grace’: at Mount Sinai we all saw each other’s good points and found grace in each other’s eyes, we were unified in receiving the Torah.

“And you shall love your friend, ‘the other,’ as you instinctively love and seek benefit for yourself; this Divine commandment is the *klal gadol baTorah*.” Here, Rashi quotes a Midrash, saying that not just *one* of the most important elements, but *the* central value, the fundamental principle and goal of Torah. Indeed, the ability to truly love others is the highest spiritual attainment, and the most God-like activity that we can engage in.

While Chazal place our religious experience in the context of an exclusive, intimate relationship with the Ribbono Shel Olam, the One God, the litmus test to measure our closeness with Hashem is our *avodah* of *וְאָהַבְתָּ*, to truly love our fellow Jew. And this

is arguably the most omnipresent of mitzvos, since in every encounter with another person we have an opportunity to uphold and fulfill this *yesod*, or foundational principle of *kol haTorah kulah*, the entire Torah.

Shavuot celebrates the fact that *Uba’u kulam b’vris yachad*; ‘*Naaseh v’nishma amru k’echad*’ — “We all came together in the Covenant of the Torah, declaring *as one* that we will perform it and understand it.” We all have different entry points into *Yiddishkeit*, and there are infinite pathways to draw near to our Creator, but the Torah and closeness with Hashem belong to all, equally, *as one*. Therefore, we must adamantly insist that no Jew be separated from his or her People. Each and every *Yid* is a vital limb of the Shechinah.

Each Shavuot we are called upon to renew our dedication to the charge and privilege of living with the responsibility and obligation of *V’ahavta*. May this Yom Tov of *Matan Torah* strengthen our awareness that we are indeed one person, with one collective heart, responsible for one another. May we never give up hope in keeping our communal body whole and unified, *Peila chad lakavel chad*, “a oneness below paralleling the Oneness Above....” ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

SHAVUOT

Torah Will Revolutionize Human Consciousness

Har Sinai was an epic moment in religious history. For close to 2500 years humanity was lost in theological confusion, unable to conceive of One G-d responsible for all creation. Hashem appeared to His nation, delivered His Torah and, finally, there was a human community to represent Him on Earth.

For some odd reason the dramatic story of Matan Torah is prefaced by the journey of Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, who arrives in the desert with Moshe's wife and children. During the tense faceoff between Moshe and Pharo, Moshe's family had been safely sequestered in Midyan, out of harm's way. They had been sidelined in Midyan for their own safety, but, currently, they must be reunited with Moshe so that Har Sinai can commence.

Judaism doesn't celebrate celibacy and it is therefore crucial that Moshe stand atop the mountain and receive the word of Hashem as a married man, and as a father. Until the

family reconvenes, Matan Torah cannot proceed.

Yet, the Torah doesn't merely describe the arrival of Moshe's family. The Torah elaborately details Yitro's meal with Moshe and Aharon, as well as his advice to Moshe about delegating judicial responsibilities to lower courts. Evidently, there is deeper symbolism to Yitro's visit, beyond the practical function of transporting Moshe's family. Yitro symbolizes a larger aspect of Matan Torah.

PRIVATE OR INTERNATIONAL?

Har Sinai was a legal delivery of 613 mitzvot. At this mountain we transformed into a summoned people, tasked with living a life of commitment and commandment. Additionally, Har Sinai was a private rendezvous between Hashem and his chosen bride. In Shir Hashirim (3:4, 8:2) the bride romanticizes about a private meeting with her husband in her mother's home:

עד שהבאתי אל בית אמי ואל חדר הורתי

According to Chazal (Shir Hashirim Rabbah parsha 2) the term **בית אמי** or "mother's home" refers to Har Sinai

עד שהבאתי אל בית אמי, זה הר סיני

In the private precincts of our "home", Hashem delivered His Torah to his chosen people, and enshrined His covenant with His



Mazal Tov to



Cyril & Golda Simkins and family
on the birth of their
great grandson

beloved bride.

Ideally though, Matan Torah was meant to be a broader international event. In addition to our private embrace of Torah, Hashem also desired that other nations accept some form of His Torah. Presumably, this international version of Torah would be different from ours and their registry of mitzvot would be less extensive than our detailed list of 613. Yet, Hashem did offer some version of Torah to other nations as well.

Parshat Vezot Habrachta depicts Hashem's arrival at Har Sinai

וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֵק מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ
מֵהָר פָּאֲרָן

implying that He first visited both Se'ir and the mountain of Paran, before finally arriving at Sinai. Chazal interpret these pre-Sinai visits as divine invitations to the children of Yishma'el, who resided in Paran and the descendants of Eisav who had settled in Se'ir. Prior to Har Sinai they were each offered a version of Torah. Unfortunately, neither accepted the divine invitation, leaving our people as the only nation willing to embrace the Torah. What was first intended as an international experience contracted into an exclusively private audience between Hashem and His chosen people.

Yitro's visit symbolizes the narrowing of Matan Torah. A philosopher who has studied various world religions, ultimately, Yitro discovered Hashem while acknowledging divine miracles

וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ בְּרוּךְ יְקֹנֵק אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד
מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד פְּרַעֲהַ אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֶת הָעָם מִתַּחַת יַד
מִצְרַיִם:

In theory, Yitro should be the perfect candidate to attend Har Sinai, receive some version of Hashem's word and pass it along to

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a broader audience. He even displays moral sensitivity in helping Moshe construct an efficient legal system. Though the broader populations of Eisav and Yishma'el rejected a divine invitation perhaps Yitro could still serve as an ambassador of Torah.

Yet, despite this potential, Yitro departs Har Sinai before Matan Torah, canceling any possibility for an international dissemination of Hashem's word. The delivery of Hashem's word to a broader international audience would be deferred to a later point in history.

A MESSIANIC VISION OF TORAH

Our Nevi'im portray that Messianic future, in which an entire world is exposed to the word of Hashem. Yeshayahu (perek 2) envisions the final assembly of nations in Yerushalayim as they crave Torah inspiration: וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים כִּכּוֹן יְהוָה הָרַב בֵּית יְקֹנֵק

בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים וְנִשְׂא מִגְּבֻעוֹת וְנָהְרוּ אֵלָיו כָּל
הַגּוֹיִם: (ג) וְהָלְכוּ עִמָּם רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֵה אֶל
הַר יִקְוֶה אֶל בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיִרְנוּ מִדְּרָכָיו וְנִלְכֶה
בְּאַרְחֻתָּיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה וּדְבַר יִקְוֶה מִירוּשָׁלַם:

Similarly, in perek 11 he describes an end-of-days scenario in which the entire planet is blanketed with the knowledge of Hashem:

כִּי מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַה אֶת יִקְוֶה כַּמִּים לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

Though the international community refused to embrace the word of Hashem in the Sinai desert, they will, one day, access His will through the people who embraced it 3300 years ago and preserved it throughout the travails of history. Hashem's original plan to extend parts of Torah to a broader audience, will, one day, materialize.

A REVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

We are living through a difficult and confusing period. A deranged world is enraged with hatred against our people. Ignorant of even the basic facts of the region, they blindly support murderers and rapists. All communication has broken down, as we are baselessly accused of false crimes. It has become more and more difficult to believe in humanity and to preserve hope that an ignorant and angry generation will ever awaken to the facts and recover moral conscience. It appears as if humanity has fallen into a moral abyss and there is little we can do to retrieve them.

How will they be repaired and how will their moral conscience be restored? What can possibly heal this lunacy of lies and hatred? How can we preserve our faith in humanity?

One answer is to believe in the capacity of the word of Hashem to change hearts and shift attitudes. The mishnah in Avot D'Rebbe Natan (perek 3) records a debate between Shammai and Hillel regarding teaching Torah to unsuitable students. Shammai refused to

teach Torah to anyone who wasn't humble, smart, wealthy, and pedigreed. Shammai's conservative position, though harsh, is compelling. In the absence of financial capacity, Torah may be exploited for profit. Unintelligent students may misrepresent Torah's wisdoms while arrogant talmidim will use Torah study to self-aggrandize. By limiting Torah instruction only to "suitable" talmidim, Shammai aimed to protect Torah from distortion.

Hillel disagreed and extended Torah study to every student. He trusted in the power of the divine word to reform unfit students and to infuse them with moral character. Even those who were not initially suited for Torah study would be morally uplifted by their encounter with the word of Hashem. He trusted the transformative impact of Torah.

In the spirit of Hillel, we must also trust the transformative power of Hashem's word. Through us, one day, all of humanity will be exposed to the word of Hashem. Their confusion will dissipate, their hatred will vanish, and their sanity will return. As bleak as the current landscape seems, we must believe in the power of the word of Hashem to revolutionize human consciousness.

Belief in the eternity of Torah demands that we trust its ability to transform humanity. Minds will change and hearts will turn. The word of Hashem will re-landscape our world. Torah is that powerful. ■

Rabbi Taragin's new book about the war in Israel 'Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below' is now available in bookstores, or at:



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Stop and Smell the Flowers...and Reexperience Matan Torah

If you stop anyone in the street and ask them why we celebrate Shavuot, they will immediately tell you that Shavuot is זמן מתן תורה – it is the day that we celebrate receiving the Torah at Har Sinai. And yet, the facts about Matan Torah, as well as its connection to Shavuot, are very vague when you look in the actual sources.

DATE: Firstly, unlike the rest of the holidays, the Torah does not give us a date for Shavuot. We are merely told that it is seven weeks after “ממחרת השבת” (the 2nd day of Pesach). In fact, there is a debate in Gemara Shabbat about the actual date of Matan Torah – it is unclear if it is on the 6th or 7th of Sivan.

LOCATION: The exact location of Har Sinai is not given in the Torah and we have lost the Mesorah (tradition) of where it is.

THEME: Though Chazal tell us that Shavuot is זמן מתן תורתנו, the Torah itself is very ambiguous regarding what the theme of the day is. The Torah never refers to Shavuot as זמן מתן תורתנו. Rather, it is referred to in the

Torah as:

חג הקציר – The day we brought the שתי הלחם offering from recently harvested wheat
יום הביכורים - The first time one can bring ביכורים/first fruits of the Shivat haminim to the Beit Hamikdash

חג השבועות - Seven weeks of counting from the day we brought the עומר קרבן

Why is there so much ambiguity regarding Shavuot?

The answer is found in the following pasuk that we say every day in the Shema –

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי (Devarim 11:13)
מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם

If you listen to the Mitzvot that I command you today

Rashi asks - Why does the pasuk say we received all of the mitzvot *today*? Matan Torah was thousands of years ago! He answers שיהיו עליכם חדשים, כאלו שמעתם בו ביום – that the mitzvot should always feel like they are new, that we just heard them for the first time today!

We are not given an exact date or place for Matan Torah, nor an explicit holiday to celebrate it, because as my 8th grade teacher used to say – “Every day is Torah day”. It shouldn’t be a one-time experience, but

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rather, we should feel like every day we are re-experiencing Matan Torah.

What does it mean to re-experience Matan Torah? The event of Matan Torah wasn't just about the content, about the fact that we received the Torah, but about the entire awe-inspiring experience as a whole. There was גילוי שכינה - direct encounter with HaKadosh Baruch Hu! It was an unbelievable, spiritual experience, which literally took the people's breath away, and resulted in an undeniable Emunah in Hashem. This event was complete proof of Hashem's existence, as He spoke to the entire nation face to face.

That moment of clarity and exhilaration and connection is what we need to re-experience every day. It shouldn't be something that happened one time and never again. We need to live our lives, feeling Hashem's presence, the same way we felt it then. This is indeed a difficult task and one we need to work on every Shavuot. We need to think about how we can bring Hashem more closely into our lives. One way to do so is by looking at nature more and by focusing on Hashem's intricate creations, so that we really see and feel directly Hashem's hand in the world.

There is a widespread minhag to decorate our shuls and homes with flowers on Shavuot. Many reasons are given for this practice, including the fact that Har Sinai was covered in flowers and the idea that Shavuot is the day of judgement for fruit trees. But perhaps another reason we surround ourselves with flowers is to enable us to really focus on Hashem's beautiful creations and feel that He is there with us.

A story is told of a man taking an international flight and, as morning approached, he

saw the most amazing thing: from his vantage point high above the clouds, he watched as the morning sun rose fiery in the eastern sky. The man felt for a moment that he had glimpsed a part of the universe that few people ever see, and at that moment he felt profoundly close to G-d. Upon his return home, this man spoke with his rabbi, who was a very great man, and described the awe he felt at seeing the sun rise at 30,000 feet. The rabbi listened, then commented—"I know just what you mean: that's precisely how I feel each time I look at a daisy!" (Chabad.org)

This is a true story, and it shows us that if we focus even on the seemingly simple things in nature, it can allow us to connect with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Each time we go outside and notice the trees or the flowers, we are connecting with Hashem and re-experiencing (on a smaller scale) the event of Matan Torah. ■

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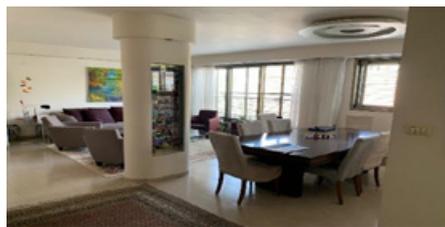
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RABBI ELIYAHU SAFRAN

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

SHAVUOT

Humility is not Weakness

In the delightful book, “The Little Prince” by Antonine de Saint-Exuperyt there is a scene in which the Little Prince takes credit for the sunrise itself, glorying in his work in bringing about the new day. We find this scene charming because we recognize in the Little Prince the innocence and astonishment of childhood. The delight in “causing the sun to rise” is wonderful in a child but it is tiresome and troubling when adults behave similarly.

* * *

As we near the holiday of Shavuot, celebrating the crowning event in the annals of our Peoplehood, the Giving of the Torah, we cannot help but think of Torah as spiritually uplifting and inspiring. After all, Torah is the medium through which God communicates with mortal man. It stands to reason that the more Torah we learn, know and understand, the more intimate our relationship with God; the more we study, the more uplifted and inspired.

And yet, Rav Chanan seems to turn this thinking on its head in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 26b), “why is Torah referred to as *toshiya*? Because it *mateshes kocho shel adam* – Torah wears man out, it weakens man’s strength.”

What? Poll serious Torah learners and they will undoubtedly report that long

sessions of learning leave them *upbeat* and exhilarated. Hardly “weakened”. They are exuberant, not *toshiya*.

What is Rav Chanan saying? His comment has been troubling scholars for decades upon decades. Over 90 years ago, a R’ Moshe Frankel from New York took pen to paper and wrote to my grandfather, HaGaon Rav Bezalel Zev Shafran *z’l* asking him to *please* explain to him what Rav Chanan meant by his astonishing statement. R’ Frankel could not imagine how Torah could be exhausting. He could not understand how the labor of learning – unlike physical labor – could be anything but pleasant and wholesome.

In response, my grandfather offered a novel interpretation of the comment. I present it here with the fervent prayer that his Torah continues to be passed down and learned by my children, grandchildren and beyond.

His response to R’ Frankel begins with a citation of the *Chavos Da’as* on the verse in Bereishit (18:4) in which Abraham greets the three “guests” who came to visit soon after his *bris*. As the visitors approached, Abraham extends every lavish courtesy to them, establishing our understanding of *Hachnasas Orchim*. He says to them, *yukach nah meat mayim v’rachatzu ragleichem* – let water be brought and wash your feet.

The Talmud (Bava Metzia) quotes the

guests, “Do you suspect that we are Arabs who worship the dust of their feet – *ragleichem*?” The Chavos Da’as reminds us that Rambam argues that the word *regel* used in Torah does not denote “foot/feet” but “cause” as in the verse where Yaakov speaks directly and honestly to Laban, telling him not to exaggerate his worth and accomplishments, because what he has is because God blessed you *l’ragli* – because of me. Here it is clear that “*regel*” is the cause; God is saying “I am the *regel*”, I am the cause for your abundance.

Similarly, the *Arviim* believed that their *parnasa*, their material accomplishments, came about because of their *ragleiem* – they believed that *they* were the cause for all they had and accomplished. Like the Little Prince, they believed that the sun rose by their smarts, toil, strength and hard work. But Abraham set them straight. He tells them to “wash your *ragleichem*”. He tells them to cleanse themselves of the foolishness of bowing down and worshipping the dust of your own doings! Never think, even for a moment, that all you have is a result of your doing! For the one who fails to recognize that all s/he has emanates from the First Cause has toiled for naught.

My grandfather teaches that now we can well understand Rav Chanan. Whether through the innocence of youth or the arrogance of age, most who experience success claim responsibility for that success. Without shame they declare, “*kochi v’otzem yadi asah li et kol ha’chayil ha’zeh* – It’s my doing; my strength and prowess has allowed me to accumulate all of this wealth....”

“It’s all me!” So, they believe, never giving a thought that were it not for the will of God

their toil and effort would be in vain. They remain blind to the truth that success and failure, like the rising and falling of the sun, is a turning wheel. One invariably follows the other.

But the one endowed with the wisdom of Torah, the spirit of God and *yiras shomayim*, the one who knows that it is God who grants him the *koach la’asos chayil*, the strength to succeed, he is the one rooted in truth. It is *this* man who readily admits and proclaims that Torah is *toshiya*. Why? Because it *mateshes* his strength. He knows it is not Torah learning that saps his strength or beats him down. Rather, as we learn from Abraham’s lesson to his guests, Torah teaches us not to attribute our success to our own strength. Therefore, the Torah’s outlook about *parnasa* detracts from/is *mateshes* one’s strength, meaning one’s belief that his strength is the cause for his success.

Yes, Torah beats down on me (*mateshes*). Why? So that I do not attribute my success to my own doing. To the student of Torah, “*koach*” does not mean strength (*kochi v’otzem yadi* - my strength) but to one’s sense of self. A student immersed in Torah will ultimately come to the realization that his entire existence and being depends solely on God.

As my grandfather concludes, “the holy ones among Israel believe in the First Cause, the Master Lord God, blessed be His name...”

The innocent and arrogant believe in themselves. The wise and the holy believe in God. ■

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran spent many years in the rabbinate as well as in educational leadership positions. He also served as Vice President of Communications and Marketing of OU Kosher. His most recent volume is “Something Old, Something New - Pearls From the Torah”



RABBI BARUCH TAUB

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SHAVUOT

Where is Har Sinai?

On Shabbat we read Parshat Bamidbar and on Wednesday we celebrate Shavuot. Mount Sinai takes center stage. There is one problem. We have no idea of its actual location. To be sure maps record Jabal Musa in Egypt as the mountain. But that is totally an archaeological “guess”.

We have absolutely no mesorah concerning its placement. We know with certainty the location of a myriad of Biblical experiences but have no idea of the location of the mountain which hosted the central motif of the Jewish People, Kabbalat Hatorah. Clearly this is not by accident but by design.

The Ramban in his introduction to Bamidbar writes that the Torah will now deal at length with the Mishkan, our temporary spiritual center in the desert. Of all the information he could have given in this short introduction, strangely he chooses to compare the Mishkan to Har Sinai and to inform us of the similar relationship the people are to have with both the Mishkan and the mountain. This comparison is a calculated commitment. The Ramban is answering our question by presenting an important nuance.

The Mishkan is the new Har Sinai. We are done with the mountain. What was important was **not the place of Har Sinai** but **what took place on Har Sinai**. Indeed, the Ramban posits that “remembering **Ma’amad Har**

Sinai, the **event** that took place on the mountain which is primarily, not the geographical location. (Especially since it was not Eretz Yisrael, a topic for another discussion.)

The Mishkan served as the centerpiece of a Torah society on the move. A **portable** Har Sinai. What is astounding is that the life and times of the Mishkan takes up an inordinate amount of space in the Torah (ten parshiyot in Sefer Bamidbar!) and yet it too suddenly disappears. There will be “other Har Sinai” the two Batei Hamikdash, Batei Knesset, the Bayit Hayehudi and ultimately **Bayit Shlishi**.

It might surprise you to know that Mark Twain understood this. In the eighteen hundreds the Boston Globe advertised a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the grand finale being to scale Mt Sinai and read the 10 Commandments atop of the mountain. The price of this sea-mission was exorbitant and could only attract the rich and famous. Nonetheless the paper attracted many potential participants.

Twain wrote a letter to the Globe which put a sudden end to the expedition. He wrote, *“Instead of spending a fortune on this trip to climb Mt Sinai and recite the 10 Commandments on the mountain’s peak I have a better idea. Save your money, stay home and keep the Commandments in Boston”*. *Chochma bagoyim ta’amin*. Mark Twain got it, and we have it. (the Torah I mean!)

May we all enjoy a meaningful Kabbalah HaTorah this Shavuot by renewing our commitment to learning and living Torah wherever we are! ■



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT NASO



1ST ALIYA (BAMIDBAR 4:21-37)

A census of the family of **Gershon** (son of Levi) is done. The family of Gershon is responsible for the textiles of the Mishkan: the curtains and the covers of the Mishkan. They are to function under the supervision of Aharon and his sons; in their case, under Itamar. The census of the family of **Merari** is taken. Their responsibility is the structure of the Mishkan: boards, sockets, wall braces. Their tasks are assigned by name, supervised by Itamar. The census, aged 30 – 50, of the family of Kehat is 2,750.

These first 2 aliyot conclude the description of the jobs of the Leviim in managing and transporting the Mishkan. And of their census. The Leviim encamp around the Mishkan. The other 12 tribes encamp around them.



2ND ALIYA (4:38-49)

The census of Gershon, 2,630, and Merari, 3,200. The total of those who will serve and carry the Mishkan is 8,580.

With the conclusion of the assigning of roles and of the census of the Leviim, the detailed description of the Jewish camp is complete. In the description of the jobs, the names, and the numbers, we begin to see the Jewish nation as a nation. It is real people, with real names and real populations. And this nation is to march with G-d in our midst and to encamp with Him in our midst. With

the destination: the Land of Israel.

But. We who know how the rest of the book will unfold, with rebellions and disputes, recognize this detailed order as foreshadowing. Oh, that our national life would be so neat and tidy. You here, you here. You doing your task, you doing yours. All of us recognizing G-d in our midst. This is a lovely description of how we *ought* to live and how we *ought* to travel on into the Land of Israel. But the book of Bamidbar is the meeting of the ideal with the real. Instructions and descriptions of what ought to be are great; how they actually are lived in this less than neat and tidy world gets messy.



3RD ALIYA (5:1-10)

Command the people to send those, male or female, with Tzarat, or who are Zavim or Tamei out of the camp. The people did so. A man or woman who steals, swears denying the theft and then admits, shall repay the principal plus one fifth to the owner. If the owner has died leaving no heirs, the payment is paid to the kohen. The kohen's portions fully belong to him.

These 2 aliyot are also foreshadowing. Now that the march to the Land of Israel is about to become a reality, don't ignore the foibles of people in society. Keep the camp tahor – both in the details of the laws and in a metaphoric sense. Know that people will steal. And not only steal, but lie to cover it up. Stealing and lying are paradigmatic failures of people trying to live together in society. In the book of Bamidbar, when we make the shift

from theory to practice, from instructions to marching, coalescing as a nation, human failures are inevitable. Stealing and lying. The Torah never portrays the Jewish people as perfect, pristine. We are a real-life people with all of our shortcomings. A holy people; but a holy people that is real, not fairy tales.



4TH ALIYA (5:11-6:27)

The **Sotah**: If a married woman is suspected by her husband of being unfaithful with a particular man and he warns her to not be alone with that man, and she nonetheless spends time alone with that man, then she is brought to the kohen. She brings a simple offering. The kohen places water and dust in a container. She swears that she is innocent (of adultery). The kohen writes in a scroll that should she be guilty, the water she will drink will cause fatal internal damage. These words are put in the water. Her offering is brought; the water is drunk by her. If she is guilty, this will be fatal. If innocent, this will prove it. The **Nazir**: When a person vows to be a Nazir, they may not drink wine or any product from a grape, may not cut their hair and may not come in contact with the dead, including closest relatives. If the Nazir does come in contact with the dead before the conclusion of his Nazir status, then he must bring an offering of 2 birds, one for a chatat and one for an olah. At the final end of his Nazir status he brings animals for a chatat, an olah and a shlamim. He cuts his hair and burns it. **Birkat Kohanim**: Tell Aharon that he shall bless the Jewish people with Birkat Kohanim: in so doing they place My name on the people and I bless them.

The 2 quite dramatic mitzvot in this aliya express the theme of this book of Bamidbar:

the tricky business of living the ideal in this complicated world of the imperfect. The ideal has been the topic of Shemot and Vayikra: living a life with G-d in our midst, a holy life, a noble and sanctified life walking with our G-d in our midst. But stuff happens in life. That ideal has to be lived by real live people, who, well, get in the way.

The 2 elaborate mitzvot mentioned here, Sotah and Nazir, are breaches in communal life in particular. Sefer Bamidbar, as the book of the march to the Land of Israel, is both the transition from the ideal life of camping at Mt. Sinai, to the rough and tumble of real people living real lives. And it is the maturing of the Jewish people in our communal, national expression. Sotah and Nazir are breaches in communal life. The Sotah, the wife suspected of adultery, is a breakdown in the holiness of family life. The Nazir is a breach in the reach for super holiness; as if to say the Torah isn't enough, isn't holy enough for me. Insufficient holiness is a breach, but no less a breach is super holiness.

In the mitzvah of the Nazir, left unsaid is what prompts this person to swear off wine, contact with the dead and cutting their hair. Something is going on in their life so that they need to restrict themselves. Vows of restriction of this sort could be a desire to live an even more rarified and holy life than the rest of us. In fact, these laws are echoes of the laws of the Kohen Gadol. Does the Nazir want to become a kind of Kohen Gadol, a super holy man? That may be a noble desire; or it may be distorted. When the Nazir has failed himself and wants to rectify his weaknesses by swearing off wine, that would appear positive. But if the Nazir ascribes to himself a holier than thou position, that the Torah is fine for you,

but not for me, then this is a breach not of erosion but of hubris, of condescension.



5TH ALIYA (7:1-41)

On the day Moshe completed, anointed and sanctified the Mishkan and all it contains, the leaders of the tribes brought a contribution. They brought 6 wagons and 12 oxen for the transport of the Mishkan: 2 wagons and 4 oxen were given to Gershon, 4 wagons and 8 oxen to Merari. Kehat did not receive any for they carried the vessels of the Mishkan on their shoulders. The leaders of each of the 12 tribes brought offerings as an inauguration of the Mishkan. Each day the leader of the tribe is named and his offering brought. Each leader's offering is identical.

Our parsha is the longest parsha in the Torah due to these last 3 aliyot. In fact, these 3 aliyot are only one chapter but a chapter of 89 verses, longer than many full parshiot.



6TH ALIYA (7:42-71)

The description of the leader's offerings continues, outlining days 6 to 10.

Each day a different Nasi, head of the tribe brought an offering, though the offering was identical each day. This repetition engages the commentators. Perhaps this relates to the nature of leadership itself. Jonathan Sacks, z"l, occupied himself extensively with the notion of leadership. One of his dominant themes was the theme of service versus power. Jewish leadership is service, not power. The leader serves his people. And serves his G-d. Not himself. This is hammered home by the offerings of the Nasi. In offering to G-d, the Nasi is expressing that he is a servant of G-d and a servant of His people. The march to the land will be demanding of these leaders. They

need to affirm from the outset that they serve not themselves but their G-d and their people.



7TH ALIYA (7:72-89)

The description of the leader's offerings continues, with days 11 and 12. The Torah enumerates the totals of each of the offerings brought by the leaders. These served as inauguration of the anointed altar. When Moshe entered the Ohel Moed to speak with G-d, he heard the Voice emanate from upon the kaporet, the covering of the Aron, from between the angels and He spoke with him.

The Parsha concludes with a repetition that G-d spoke to Moshe from above the Aron. Whereas the emphasis previously was on the magic of the meeting of G-d and man, here the emphasis is on the content: Moshe acts on Divine instruction, not his own personal power and pride.



STATS

35th of 54 sedras; 2nd of 10 in Bamidbar. Written on 311 lines in a Sefer Torah. That's a record breaking 7.4 columns 26 parshiyot; 18 open, 8 closed. Only 4 sedras have more parshiyot. 176 pesukim, 2264 words, 8632 letters. Indisputably the longest sedra in the Torah, however you count length. Naso is well below average, though, in length of pesukim, but not enough to affect its first place ranking.



MITZVOT

18 mitzvot; 7 positive, 11 prohibitions - the most of Bamidbar's 10 sedras. 18 might not seem to be that many mitzvot, but only 9 sedras in the Torah (of 54) have more mitzvot than Naso.

HAFTORAH NASO SHOFTIM 13:2-25

This week's *haftorah* describes the birth of Shimshon, a lifetime nazirite.

Manoah and his wife, members of the Tribe of Dan, were childless. One day an angel appeared to Manoah's wife, informing her that she will give birth to a child. This child, the angel instructed, was to be a lifetime Nazirite. In addition, the angel instructed her to abstain from all foods forbidden to a Nazirite - such as wine or ritually impure foods - from the moment she would conceive. The angel further informed the woman that her son will save the Jewish people from the Philistine

oppression they were enduring at that time.

The soon-to-be-mother told her husband the good news. He entreated Hashem to send His messenger again — they were unaware at the time that the messenger was an angel. Hashem sent the angel again, and he repeated his instructions. Manoah and his wife then invited the angel to partake of a special meal they would prepare, but he declined. Instead he encouraged Manoah to offer the goat he wished to slaughter for the meal as a sacrifice to Hashem. The angel then ascended to the heavens in the flame that devoured the sacrifice.

The *haftorah* ends with the birth of Shimshon: "And the lad grew, and G-d blessed him." ■

	NASO			BEHA'ALOTCHA		
	CANDLES	EARLY	HAVDALA	CANDLES	EARLY	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:10	6:17	8:29	7:12	6:19	8:31
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:27	6:19	8:31	7:29	6:21	8:32
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:29	6:18	8:30	7:31	6:20	8:32
Alon Shvut	7:25	6:17	8:29	7:27	6:19	8:31
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	7:28	6:19	8:32	7:30	6:21	8:34
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:26	6:18	8:30	7:28	6:20	8:32
Netanya	7:28	6:20	8:32	7:30	6:21	8:34
Be'er Sheva	7:26	6:18	8:29	7:28	6:20	8:31
Rehovot	7:27	6:19	8:31	7:29	6:21	8:33
Petach Tikva	7:10	6:19	8:31	7:12	6:21	8:33
Ginot Shomron	7:27	6:18	8:31	7:29	6:20	8:33
Haifa / Zichron	7:19	6:20	8:33	7:21	6:22	8:35
Gush Shiloh	7:26	6:17	8:30	7:28	6:19	8:31
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	7:28	6:19	8:32	7:30	6:21	8:34
Givat Zeev	7:30	6:17	8:29	7:32	6:19	8:31
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:25	6:17	8:29	7:27	6:19	8:31
Ashkelon	7:30	6:17	8:29	7:32	6:19	8:31
Yad Binyamin	7:27	6:19	8:31	7:29	6:21	8:32
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	7:22	6:18	8:32	7:24	6:20	8:34
Golan	7:26	6:17	8:30	7:28	6:19	8:32
Nahariya/Maalot	7:28	6:20	8:34	7:30	6:22	8:35
Afula	7:27	6:18	8:31	7:29	6:20	8:33

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Naso 9:03 PM • Beha'alotcha 9:05 PM



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NASO

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HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arie'el zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

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The Pursuit of Peace

The *parsha* of Naso seems, on the face of it, to be a heterogeneous collection of utterly unrelated items. First there is the account of the Levitical families of Gershon and Merari and their tasks in carrying parts of the Tabernacle when the Israelites journeyed. Then, after two brief laws about removing unclean people from the camp and about restitution, there comes the strange ordeal of the Sotah, the woman suspected by her husband of adultery.

Next comes the law of the Nazirite, the person who voluntarily (and usually for a fixed period) took upon himself special holiness restrictions, among them the renunciation of wine and grape products, of haircuts, and of defilement by contact with a dead body.

This is followed, again seemingly with no connection, by one of the oldest prayers in the world still in continuous use: the priestly blessings. Then, with inexplicable repetitiousness, comes the account of the gifts brought by the princes of each tribe at the dedication of the Tabernacle, a series

of long paragraphs repeated no less than twelve times, since each prince brought an identical offering.

Why does the Torah spend so much time describing an event that could have been stated far more briefly by naming the princes and then simply telling us generically that each brought a silver dish, a silver basin and so on? The question that overshadows all others, though, is: what is the logic of this apparently disconnected series?

The answer lies in the last word of the priestly blessing: *shalom*, peace. In a long analysis, the 15th century Spanish Jewish commentator Rabbi Isaac Arama explains that *shalom* does not mean merely the absence of war or strife. It means completeness, perfection, the harmonious working of a complex system, integrated diversity, a state in which everything is in its proper place and all is at one with the physical and ethical laws governing the universe.

“Peace is the thread of grace issuing from Him, may He be exalted, stringing together all beings, supernal, intermediate, and lower. It underlies and sustains the reality and unique existence of each.” (*Akeidat Yitzhak*, ch. 74)

Similarly, Isaac Abarbanel writes:

“That is why God is called peace, because

it is He who binds the world together and orders all things according to their particular character and posture. For when things are in their proper order, peace will reign.” (*Abarbanel, Commentary to Avot 2:12*)

This is a concept of peace heavily dependent on the vision of Genesis 1, in which God brings order out of *tohu va-vohu*, chaos, creating a world in which each object and life form has its place. Peace exists where each element in the system is valued as a vital part of the system as a whole and where there is no discord between them. The various provisions of *parshat Naso* are all about bringing peace in this sense.

The most obvious case is that of the Sotah, the woman suspected by her husband of adultery. What struck the Sages most forcibly about the ritual of the Sotah is the fact that it involved obliterating the name of God, something strictly forbidden under other circumstances. The officiating priest recited a curse including God’s name, wrote it on a parchment scroll, and then dissolved the writing into specially prepared water. The Sages inferred from this that God was willing to renounce His own honour, allowing His name to be effaced, “in order to make peace between husband and wife” by clearing an innocent woman from suspicion. Though the ordeal was eventually abolished by Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai after the destruction of the Second Temple, the law served as a reminder as to how important domestic peace is in the Jewish scale of values.

The passage relating to the Levitical families of Gershon and Merari signals that they were given a role of honour in transporting items of the Tabernacle during the people’s journeys through the wilderness. Evidently

they were satisfied with this honour, unlike the family of Kehat detailed at the end of last week’s *parsha*, one of whose number, Korach, eventually instigated a rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Likewise, the long account of the offerings of the princes of the twelve tribes is a dramatic way of indicating that each was considered important enough to merit its own passage in the Torah. People will do destructive things if they feel slighted, and not given their due role and recognition. Again the case of Korach and his allies is the proof of this. By giving the Levitical families and the princes of the tribes their share of honour and attention, the Torah is telling us how important it is to preserve the harmony of the nation by honouring all.

The case of the Nazirite is in some ways the most interesting. There is an internal conflict within Judaism between, on the one hand, a strong emphasis on the equal dignity of everyone in the eyes of God, and the existence of a religious elite in the form of the tribe of Levi in general and the Kohanim, the priests, in particular. It seems that the law of the Nazirite was a way of opening up the possibility to non-Kohanim of a special sanctity close to, though not precisely identical with, that of the Kohanim themselves. This too is a way of avoiding the damaging resentments that can occur when people find themselves excluded by birth from certain forms of status within the community.

If this analysis is correct, then a single theme binds the laws and narrative of this *parsha*: the theme of making special efforts to preserve or restore peace between people.

Peace is easily damaged and hard to repair. Much of the rest of the book of

Bamidbar is a set of variations on the theme of internal dissension and strife. So has Jewish history been as a whole. Naso tells us that we have to go the extra mile in bringing peace between husband and wife, between leaders of the community, and among lay-people who aspire to a more-than-usual state of sanctity.

It is no accident therefore that the priestly blessings included in Naso end – as do the vast majority of Jewish prayers – with a prayer for peace. Peace, said the rabbis, is one of the names of God Himself, and Maimonides writes that the whole Torah was given “to make peace in the world” (Laws of Chanukah 4:14). Naso is a series of practical lessons in how to ensure, as far as possible, that everyone feels recognised and respected, and that suspicion is defused and dissolved.

We have to work for peace as well as pray for it. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
Program Director, OU Israel Center

NASO

The Chasidic Masters refer to this *Shabbat* following *Shavuot* as *Shabbes Noch Shvuiss-Shabbat that is still Shavuot*. On this *Shabbat* following *Shavuot*, we must continue to channel that renewed spiritual inspiration we felt on *Shavuot*, as we recalled the wondrous event of *Kabbalat HaTorah*.

Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, the Ohalei Yaakov of Husiyatin/Tel Aviv zy'a, lovingly referred to as the Zionist Admor of Tel Aviv was one of the great unheralded religious personalities of the pre-State *Yishuv* and early years of *Medinat Yisrael*.

In a beautiful teaching he shared on *Shabbat Naso* of 1938, the *Ohalei Yaakov* cites numerous *Maamarei Chazal*, that liken the *yom tov* of *Shavuot* to the proverbial wedding day between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and *Am Yisrael*. Indeed, in certain communities among the *Eidot HaMizrach*, there is a *Ketuba* that is traditionally recited on *Shavuot* morning before *Kriat HaTorah*.

The Rebbe explains that if the *yom tov* of *Shavuot* is the proverbial wedding day, then so too the following *Shabbat* is like the proverbial *Shabbat Sheva Brachot*. Just as the week of *sheva brachot* is a time where family and friends continue to rejoice with the happy couple, so too the inspiration and joy that we feel on *Shavuot* should carry over into the week that follows.

Then, in one succinct and inspiring sentence, the Rebbe gives us not only a powerful glimpse at this critical period in Jewish

history, but a message which continues to reverberate as a clarion call of *chizuk* for the circumstances we are experiencing in the here and now.

'Just as we must see and experience Shavuot as the loving marriage between Hashem and Am Yisrael, we must also realize that our right to settle here in Artzeinu HaKedosha is not dependant on England or any other nation, but rather is a manifestation of the love Hashem feels for the Jewish People...'

Yehi ratzon, may the joy, inspiration, spiritual clarity, and most of all unity that we experienced on *Chag Matan Torah* carry us into this coming *Shabbat* and throughout the entire year, and may this beautiful message provide us with continued confidence, hope, clarity and faith, even in trying times. ■

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When two seemingly unrelated passages are juxtaposed in the Torah, called *semuchin* or *semichut parashiyot* in rabbinic literature, there is some lesson to be derived. *Parashat Naso* puts this principle to the test by puzzlingly placing the laws of tithes and of the *sotah*, the wife suspected of adultery, in proximity. Yet, the Sages do not fail to deliver: “Whoever does not give tithes to a Kohen will end up before a Kohen on account of his wife [for the *sotah* ritual].”¹ This reads as measure-for-measure punishment: fail to seek out a Kohen to give him his due from your bounty, and you will be forced to seek one out under less happy circumstances.

Nevertheless, the Torah couched this message in the textual seam joining specifically the passage of the priestly gifts and that of the *sotah* for a reason. Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook proposed that the Kohanim here stand in for all teachers and spiritual leaders, and the failure to give them their due is a gross display of disrespect. A person with no regard for men of spirit will not be transformed by their presence, will not absorb their Torah, will not learn to emulate their virtuous character. They will find themselves unable to temper their material wants with spiritual pursuits, and, the Torah tells us, virtue will end up by the wayside. Moral decay

1. *Berachot* 63a.

begins to eat away at the foundations of the household. The natural course of events then, rather than a divine punishment, brings such a person to the Kohen on account of partially substantiated suspicions about his spouse.²

The need to have a spiritual role model is encapsulated in the famous rabbinic imperative, “make for yourself a *rav*.”³ Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop, a confidant and disciple of Rav Kook, commented that we are to “make” a *rav* because the key is a mindset of humility, a willingness to learn from someone else.⁴ We can infer from this that a refusal to learn from men and women of spiritual distinction is evidence of insufficient humility and the prospects for achievement are poor.

For a number of years, I had the privilege of studying weekly with Rabbi Charlop’s grandson, Rabbi Zevulun Charlop zt”l, who at the time served as the dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) affiliated with Yeshiva University. We learned the lofty Torah of his grandfather from his series *Mei Marom*. No matter what we managed to cover or how much I understood, I left each meeting feeling elated and exhilarated merely spending time in the presence of a

2. *Ein Ayah, Berachot*, 9:318.

3. *Pirkei Avot*, 1:6. The word *rav* can have the sense of master, mentor, or teacher depending on context.

4. *Mei Marom—Avot*, 1:6, p. 43.

great man steeped in learning and stunning righteousness.

A core doctrine of *Chassidut*, established by the Baal Shem Tov and developed by his successors, is that of the tzaddik, the spiritual master who serves as a bridge between worlds and uplifts his adherents. The Alter Rebbe taught:

[The tzaddik] is like the ladder [in Jacob's dream], of which it is said, "ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). For just as he is able to bring down the effluence and to extend it, so he is able to cause his whole generation to ascend..."⁵

The Chassid is to make every effort to seek out the tzaddik, be in his presence, and learn from his example. For instance, it is said that the disciples of Rebbe Dov Ber, the famed Maggid of Mezeritch, would make the trek to visit him not so they could hear his Torah, but to see how he tied and untied his shoelaces.⁶ The point is that every move of such a colossus is significant. Simply being in their presence can be a transcendent experience that brings one closer to God.⁷

The tzaddikim of *Chassidut* made themselves accessible to their courts and beyond. More than that, though, they were acutely aware of the crises and dilemmas that defined their eras. Rav Kook described such men as having a "universal soul" (*neshamah kelalit*), which sensitizes them to the disharmony of the world. Agonized by this, they strive to rectify the state of affairs in their own way.⁸

Rav Kook taught us that not only does the

individual Jew need a *rav* but the Jewish people as a whole need to hold in high regard personalities that inspire and rouse us to pursue greatness. *Kelal Yisrael*, the nation as a whole, can be all too easily influenced by foreign cultures, values, and practices, so we must look to the servants of God for guidance. Our tzaddikim and Torah scholars ought to be cherished as national treasures. Let us proactively seek out these lifelong mentors. ■

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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5. Schneerson, *The Chassidic Dimension*, 105–106, a translation of *Or Torah*, sec. 15.

6. Buber, *Tales of the Chassidim*, 1:107.

7. See further *Parashat Korach*, "Korach's Sons Find a Rebbe."

8. *Orot ha-Kodesh*, 2:216–217.

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

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NASO

Individuality and Family

G-d spoke to Moses saying, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them that man or a woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence for the sake of G-d... shall abstain from wine... and a razor shall not pass over his head” (6:1-4).

The long central section of Parashat Naso includes the sections dealing with *Sotah* (the suspected unfaithful wife) and *Nazir* (taking on an additional personal status of holiness, prohibiting having a haircut or drinking wine).

The Talmud (*Sotah* 2a) brings the tradition that the reason the topic of *Nazir* follows the topic of *Sotah* is to teach that anyone who saw the harsh, degrading ordeal that the *Sotah* was put through should abstain from wine because it can bring a person to commit adultery.

The section of *Nazir* has significant characteristics. Firstly, it is long and detailed, like *Sotah* before it. Secondly, it is the concluding *mitzvah* in the section of the Torah between the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and when the Israelites left Mount Sinai (10:33). It concludes the Ten Commandments, the detailed laws governing everyday life, the construction of the Tabernacle, the laws connected to the Tabernacle, the dietary laws, and the laws concerning land and real-estate. What

might be inferred from the Torah’s giving *Nazir* that distinguished position in the text?

In response, my father observes that within the above sequence, the opening of the book of Bamidbar stresses a new dimension: the importance of the individual and of the family. Each person has an identity. Each person has a family, where he belongs and is part of. Each family fits in to a particular position in Klal Yisrael, of which it is part of and to which it belongs. And, as Bamidbar and the earlier part of this parasha elaborate, some families have been allocated more prominent and central roles than others.

And, as my father observes, the Torah in this parasha proceeds to safeguard and reinforce the sanctity of the family by focusing on two things that can seriously threaten families.

The first is adultery: where a married woman has willful sexual intercourse with another man. The Torah states zero tolerance for such behavior as it violates the sanctity of the family as a unit. Where, after due warning, there is circumstantial, but unwitnessed evidence that adultery seems to have taken place and yet the woman denies it, the Torah describes the long and lengthy procedure on sacred territory that G-d demands so that He may ‘sort it out’. Which will only happen if her husband himself has behaved impeccably throughout his life (c.f. Rambam, *Hilchot Sotah* 2:8).

The second is the behavior demonstrably holier-than-thou-*nik*, which has its obnoxious

potential. Their non-Torah-ordained behaviors can seriously and yet unnecessarily threaten the unity of the family. Indeed, it appears to me that many of the distasteful things that the non-observant associate with the strictly Orthodox fall under this category. And yet, there are people for whom by nature meticulous observance of the Torah is not enough. They want to do it better, and also want to be seen to be doing it better. That is human nature, and the Torah concedes it. People compete in all sorts of things, and the Torah is no exception. So the Torah channels that instinct of “A man or a woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence...” to prescribe the behaviors of abstaining from wine and grapes, having a haircut, and close proximity with the dead.

Even in today’s terms, it does not look ‘cool’ to abstain from grapes, look untidy, or not attend a funeral of a close relative. There are no social fringe benefits. There is no making others feel awkward for not doing likewise. No-one is likely to associate those practices with a Torah-ordained norm. Thus being a Nazerite suits only those who are really sincere in taking on more than is required to become closer to G-d. Not the members of the holier-than-thou club.

And even so, the Torah does not give the circumscribed Nazir practice its full blessing. In bringing a prescribed Nazerite-associated offering to the Temple, “the priest effect atonement for him because he sinned against his soul” (6:11), The Talmud (Nazir 19a) brings a tradition that the actual sin was his own self-deprivation of wine, by becoming a *Nazerite* in first place... And at the end he has to bring a hefty and costly sacrifice, with no discounts for those of limited means... ■



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New Price! On The Best Street In The German Colony! A preserved and historic private house, surrounded by greenery. 600 SQM lot. **500 SQM built**, 8 bedrooms, 5 full baths, a 316 SQM garden, Large succah balconies, high ceilings, private parking, and more!

Rivka Street, Baka

New On The Market! Spacious 104 SQM Duplex apartment with a **Huge succah balcony** with stunning views facing the Old City! 3 Beds, 2.5 baths, AC, 3 exposures, 4 balconies, Sh. elevator! Asking: 4.480 NIS

Penthouse In City Center

New On The Market! 115 SQM penthouse with a 27 SQM succah balcony, open views, 4 Beds, 2 baths, large windows, great location! Contact us for more information!

Shalom Yehuda, Arnona Rental

New Rental! Oversized 2 bedrooms in a small boutique building! 80 SQM, 2nd floor, 1 bathroom, central AC, furnished, great location near Baka! Asking: 6,100 NIS

Hagilgal St, Maale Adumim

New On The Market! The last 500 SQM lot in the popular Anglo neighborhood of Mitzpe Nevo. Pending building permit for 270 SQM, 15 SQM parking, and more!

HaTe'ena Street, Te'ena Efrat

New On the Market! Beautiful garden apartment! 196 SQM all on one level plus a balcony facing the view, 6 beds, 3 baths. Excellent Condition! Asking 3,850,000 NIS

Matityahu Hacoen, Zayit

Just Listed! 185 SQM Duplex Penthouse, 8 Bedrooms, 3 Full Baths, Shabbat Elevator, 2 Succah Balconies, Spacious, Storage, 2 Parking spots! Asking: 4.390m NIS



Yaniv: 052.614.1442
Yaniv@gabairealestate.com



Elia: 052.862.9208
Eliagabai@gmail.com



Doing the Right Thing

It's after midnight. I've just finished meeting with the heads of Jewish students' groups on North American campuses and I'm finding it hard to settle down.

These student leaders have come to Israel on a mission, and in the coming week they will tour the country and meet with the President, Prime Minister, and other high-ranking officials. The Olami organization, the organizers of this mission, requested that I listen to the short speeches they prepared in order to ensure the accuracy of the messages they are hoping to convey.

Our meeting lasted about three hours. We listened to testimonies from students from 25 top-tier universities. Since October 7, campuses in the US have been turned into war zones, bastions of antisemitism, and Hamas cells. (At the same time, it's important to keep in mind that these frightening scenes do not represent the vast majority of the American public, only academic institutions.)

In brief, what we heard was the following: one student was hospitalized after being physically assaulted, another student left the dorm after someone sprayed a swastika on his door and ripped off his mezuzah; daily incidents of violence, spitting, threatening slogans, and friends who have turned into enemies. Last October, statements like: "Too bad Hitler didn't finish the job," shocked them. By now (much to our horror!) they

have gotten used to it.

At the end of the evening, I finally turned to them and asked: "Tell me, was this the most depressing evening of your lives?". The answer was: Absolutely not. In fact, they had never felt so connected. For three of the student leaders, it was their first trip to Israel. They remarked: "This trip would never have happened had it not been for October 7. It was our personal wake-up call." Three other students are planning on making Aliyah. Another four have set up organizations dedicated to educating Jews and combating antisemitism.

One student from Columbia University summed up his experiences in this poignant way:

"I look at Jews who are hiding their Jewish identity and feel ashamed for them. I've been verbally abused, argued with professors, and filed complaints of harassment with the police, but the truth is, I've never felt more alive. There is no greater feeling than knowing that you are doing exactly the right thing, at the right time." ■

Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.

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Wednesday
June, 26th



Zoom Link Provided
Upon Registration



8:00 PM - 9:30 PM



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Sadnat Shiluv thanks the 450 swimmers who participated in the 14th Annual Swim4Sadna

With your help, we raised 1,250,000 NIS toward this year's project to build and equip a new Rehabilitation Daycare Center.

Special thanks to Vivienne Glaser and Liz Pushette for their initiative and constant support and to all those who worked so hard to make this year's swim a resounding success. Your ongoing partnership is remarkable and we are very grateful! Additional donations are welcome!

See you next year!
Sadnat Shiluv

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THE Y FILES

(*YERUSHALAYIM)

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מדבר הנגב
The Negev Desert

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