

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIOT BAMIDBAR-NASO-SHAVUOT · VOL. 10 NO. 33

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR IS READ ON 29 IYAR (MAY 31) PARSHAT NASO IS READ ON 7 SIVAN (JUNE 7) IN ISRAEL AND ON 14 SIVAN (JUNE 14) OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL

PARSHA INSIGHTS

BAMIDBAR

BEYOND THE WORLD

“...and everyone contaminated by a human corpse.” (5:2)

The idea of spiritual impurity is a difficult concept for the Western mind. There have been far too many Hollywood Biblical epics with flocks of extras littering the set intoning “Unclean! Unclean!” for us to approach the subject with anything like a “clean” slate.

Why does a human corpse contaminate a person? More, why is it the greatest source of contamination?

The Torah is not a medical handbook nor a guide to public hygiene. The contamination of which the Torah speaks is not a physical contagion; it is something much more subtle.

The word the Torah uses to express the contamination of death is *tuma*. *Tuma* is connected to the word *satomb*, which means “sealed” (from which derives the English word “tomb”).

What is the connection between contamination and being sealed?

All impurity results from disconnection, from being sealed off: *Lashon harah* – damaging speech that disconnects people – is inherently impure, and during Biblical times produced visible leprous-like lesions requiring quarantine and ritual purification.

Whenever a male or female human seed is discharged

separately, instead of coming together to form a new unity, there is *tuma*. And, when body and soul part, this disconnection causes *tuma*.

Death is the greatest source of *tuma*, of separation. When we look at someone who has passed away, we seem to be looking at The End. Our perceptions are sealed. We perceive no continuation, nothing beyond this apparent final point.

The terrifying and overpowering feeling that life has come to a full stop is the greatest source of spiritual impurity because it disconnects us from a belief in something beyond, from a belief in a merciful and omnipotent G-d.

A dead body seems such an undeniable statement. It seems like the ultimate wall beyond which there can be nothing.

We believe that there is a life beyond. We believe that this world is no more than a corridor, an antechamber in which we prepare to enter a great palace of light.

This is the reason why the word *chaim* — “life” — is a plural noun in Hebrew, to indicate that there are two lives: a life in this world, and beyond the *tuma* of death — a life beyond.

Beyond the world.

• Thanks to Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen

PARSHA OVERVIEW

BAMIDBAR

The Book of Bamidbar — “In the desert” — begins with G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The *levi'im* are counted separately later, because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the *Mishkan* and its furnishings and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the *Mishkan* in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp. A formal transfer is made between the

first born and the *levi'im*, whereby the *levi'im* take over the role the firstborn would have had serving in the *Mishkan* if not for the sin of the Golden Calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed *levi'im* from one month old and up. Only *levi'im* between 30 and 50 will work in the *Mishkan*. The remaining firstborn sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our firstborn today. The sons of Levi are divided in three main families, Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the *kohanim* — the special division from Kehat’s family). The family of Kehat carried the *menorah*, the table, the altar and the holy ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the ark and the altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the *levi'im* prepare them for travel.

Bamidbar

WHO COUNTS?

The fourth of the five *Chumashim* begins with the *Parshat Bamidbar* which will be read this Shabbat. It begins with a divine command to conduct a census, the third counting of the Children of Israel in little more than the space of a year.

What is the need for so much counting of Jews?

“Because of His great love for them,” Rashi quotes our Sages, “He continuously counts them. When they went out of Egypt He counted them. After they suffered losses because of the sin of the Golden Calf He counted them in order to determine how many survived. And when He came to have His divine presence dwell in the Sanctuary they erected for Him he counted them once again.”

Hashem loves His chosen people and expresses this love in the repeated counting of their number. There is an important lesson here for all Jews but especially those whom des-

tiny has placed at the head of the Jewish State.

Following the Holocaust which decimated the world Jewish population the State of Israel was born with only 600,000 Jews living in it. Even the secular leaders of the newborn state realized the need for encouraging large families and the aliya of Jews from abroad in order to develop a truly solid Jewish state. Half a century later these ideals seem to have vanished. Sharp cuts in maternity benefits and child allowances are aimed at discouraging large families because this increases the charedi percentage of the population and every effort is made to encourage the immigration to Israel of non-Jews and those whose Jewishness is not recognized by Torah law.

So who counts in the future of Israel? Israel needs more real Jews and the government must change its policy if we wish to insure Israel forever.

Naso

ALL THE SAME.. AND YET?

The longest parsha in the entire Torah is the one which will be read this Shabbat in Eretz Yisrael. (Outside of Eretz Yisrael, where this day is celebrated as the second day of Shavuot, it will be read only next week in order to allow for the special Festival reading on this day.)

It has 176 passages, which corresponds to the number of passages in the longest psalm in *Tehillim* (119) and the number of pages in the longest volume of the Talmud (*Bava Batra*).

Of these 176 passages 77 are dedicated to describing the gifts made by the heads of each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel to the establishment of the *Mishkan* sanctuary. Even a cursory reading of this section reveals that each head offered exactly the same as every other one. One wonders why the Torah, whose every letter and even every crown of a letter has significance, went to the trouble of writing the same details twelve times, rather than just reporting that the other eleven gave the exact same gift as the first one.

In his commentary, Ramban offers two insights regarding this question, which we can apply to our situation in Israel.

One is that Hashem wished to pay equal tribute to each head of a tribe for his gift. Had the gift of only the first been spelled out in detail and the others appeared only with ditto marks the impression could mistakenly be gained that theirs

were of lesser importance. If this lesson could be learned by those who fail to appreciate the contribution which the yeshivot and kolelim make to the security of the nation through their Torah study there would be none of the friction which results from the delegitimization of Torah students by anti-religious elements as shirkers of responsibility.

The second insight is that although many leaders may be offering the same gift each of them is capable of doing so with a different intention according to his particular responsibility. If the tribe of Yehuda was the source of kings then all the gifts made by the head of this tribe symbolized a service to Hashem, which would grant that tribe the ability to provide leadership. So too in the case of the tribes of Yissachar and Zevulun who formed a pacesetting partnership in which the former dedicated itself to the study of Torah while the latter supported it financially. The gifts, which the head of these tribes gave, were identical but each sought to gain from this contribution to the *Mishkan* the power to fulfill its particular destiny.

How wonderful it would be if the leaders of today could also grasp the importance and uniqueness of the contribution made by every “tribe” in our multifaceted society which all combine to ensure the security and prosperity of Israel forever.

A HAIR OF A DIFFERENCE

There is more than a hair of difference between one hair and another when it comes to the *nazir*. Our *mishna* lists the hair of a *nazir* as one of the items which are forbidden to derive any benefit from, and which retain their prohibited state even when they are only a tiny fraction of a mixture. Rashi cites as the source for this the passage which states that upon completing his period of *nezirut* and shaving his head the *nazir* “must take the hair of his *nezirut* and place it in the fire beneath (the pot in which is being cooked) the *shelamim* sacrifice.” (*Bamidbar* 6:18)

This is true of the *nazir* who successfully completes his period of *nezirut* and brings the sacrifices required of him. But what about the hair which is shaved from the head of a *nazir* whose *nezirut* is interrupted because of his contact with the dead, and must also cut his hair and bring sacrifices before starting his *nezirus* over again?

The *mishna* in *Mesechta Temurah* (33b) lists the hair of such a *nazir* as one of those items which must be buried because they are forbidden for benefit. The source for this, writes *Radvaz* in his commentary on *Rambam*, is the passage which refers to that *nazir* “sanctifying his head on that day” (*ibid.* 6:11).

While both hairs are forbidden for benefit, there is a difference between them. When the hair which the Torah commanded to burn turns into ashes we consider the mitzvah as having been completed and those ashes are no longer forbidden for use. In the case of the other hair which must be buried the ban is still in effect on any benefit and even if it is burned its ashes must be buried.

• *Avoda Zara* 74a

WHEN MOST IS NOT ENOUGH

“May all of wickedness in its entirety vanish like smoke.” “Our L-d, and G-d of our fathers, reign over all the world in its entirety in Your glory.”

These prayers from our Rosh Hashana services seem to contain an element of redundancy. The explanation for the double terminology has its roots in our *gemara*.

Two passages are cited in our *gemara* which use the term *entire*. One of them is in regard to the central topic of this section of the Talmud which is the atonement sacrifice which must be brought when the Sanhedrin mistakenly misleads a majority of the nation into committing a sin. The opening words in the Torah chapter dealing with this issue are “And if the entire congregation shall err.”

The other passage mentions “the entire nation” (*Malachi* 3:9) and serves as the basis for the rule that the Sages do not

issue a decree unless they are certain that a majority of the nation is capable of abiding by it.

The conclusion of the *gemara* is that in regard to both cases we consider the majority as equivalent to the entirety. For a communal atonement to apply it is not necessary for the entire court to err since a majority is sufficient. Neither is it necessary to consider the ability of the entire nation to abide by a decree, only a majority of it.

Maharsha points out that in the latter case the use of the term “entire nation” when indeed only a majority is required was intended to teach us the rule of majority being equivalent to entirety which is applied to many halachic areas. This lesson was unnecessary, however, in regard to a ruling of the court where the rule of majority is explicitly stated by the Torah in *Shmot* 23:3. An alternative explanation therefore had to be found for the use of the term “entire congregation” in regard to the erroneous judgment of the Sanhedrin. The thesis proposed by Rabbi Yonatan that a unanimous erroneous judgment was required to make the atonement necessary was rejected and the conclusion was that the entire Sanhedrin must be involved in making the ruling, but only a majority misjudging is needed for applying the law of atonement.

Now that we see how universal is the law of majority being equivalent to entirety we can appreciate the explanation given by *Turei Zahav* [*Shulchan Aruch Orech Chaim* 582(3)] for our Rosh Hashana prayers. We are not content with only a majority of the evil in the world vanishing — we wish to see it all go up in smoke. And we will not be satisfied with only a majority of the world recognizing the Kingdom of Heaven — we pray that G-d’s reign is recognized by the entire universe.

• *Horayot* 3b

WHO IS A TRIBE?

What is the criterion for being considered one of the Twelve Tribes? This issue is relevant to the main topic of the first *perek* of our *mesechta*. If the Sanhedrin misled the nation with an erroneous ruling, and a majority of the nation subsequently transgressed, it is incumbent on the court to offer a bullock as an atonement sacrifice. A majority may consist of a majority of the people even if they all belong to only one tribe, or of a majority of the Twelve Tribes even if their total population is less than the majority of the entire nation.

The main focus of this issue is whether the Tribe of Levi is considered as one of the Twelve Tribes despite the fact that it has no portion in Eretz Yisrael, and whether the tribes of Menashe and Ephraim are considered as two separate tribes.

When Yaakov told his son Yosef that his sons “Ephraim

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Bamidbar

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
3. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
4. What is the difference between an “ot” and a “degel”?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed “*techum Shabbat*” - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 *amot* on *Shabbat*?
6. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
7. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
8. Why are Aharon’s sons called “sons of Aharon and Moshe?”
9. Who was Nadav’s oldest son?
10. Which two people from the Book of Esther does Rashi mention in this week’s Parsha?
11. Why did the *levi'im* receive *ma'aser rishon*?
12. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
13. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.
14. Who assisted Moshe in counting the *levi'im*?
15. Why did so many people from the tribe of Reuven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
16. Why did so many people from the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
17. In verse 3:39 the Torah states that the total number of *levi'im* was 22,000. The actual number was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 *levi'im*?
18. The firstborn males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five *shekalim*. Why five *shekalim*?
19. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
20. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the *Mishkan* in preparation for transport?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Bamidbar’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - They are very dear to G-d.
2. 1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.
3. 2:2 - Each tribe’s flag was the color of that tribe’s stone in the breastplate of the *kohen gadol*.
4. 2:2 - An “ot” is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A *degel* is a flagpole.
5. 2:2 - G-d commanded them to camp no more than 2,000 *amot* from the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the *Ohel Mo'ed* on *Shabbat*.
6. 2:9 - The cloud over the *Ohel Mo'ed* departed and the *kohanim* sounded the trumpets.
7. 2:32 - 603,550.
8. 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it’s as if he gave birth to them.
9. 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
10. 3:7 - Bigtan and Teresh.
11. 3:8 - Since the *levi'im* served in the *Mishkan* in place of everyone else, they received tithes as “payment.”
12. 3:15, 40 - The *levi'im*, and the firstborn of *B'nei Yisrael*.
13. 3:15 - Levi’s daughter Yocheved was born while the Jewish People were entering Egypt. She is counted as one of the 70 people who entered Egypt.
14. 3:16 - G-d.
15. 3:29 - The tribe of Reuven was encamped near Korach, and were therefore influenced for the worse. This teaches that one should avoid living near the wicked.
16. 3:38 - The tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun were encamped near Moshe, and were therefore influenced for the good. This teaches that one should seek to live near the righteous.
17. 3:39 - Each *levi* served to redeem a first born of the Jewish People. Since 300 *levi'im* were themselves first born, they themselves needed to be redeemed, and could therefore not redeem others.
18. 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel’s firstborn, who was sold by his brothers for five *shekalim* (20 pieces of silver.)
19. 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50.
20. 4:5 - The *kohanim*.

Bamidbar

THE LITTERBUG BOOMERANG

Question: I recently hired a contractor to build an extension of my house. Some neighbors warned me that this fellow has a reputation of littering the street with the rubble resulting from such construction. Is this something that I should be concerned about?

Answer: The Talmud tells a story about a fellow who was throwing rocks from his private field into the public thoroughfare. A righteous passerby reprimanded him with a puzzling challenge. "Reckless one, why do you throw rocks from an area which does not belong to you into an area which does?" (*Mesechta Bava Kama 50b*)

Failing to comprehend the logic of this reprimand the rock-thrower laughed it off and continued his activity. Time went by and he came upon hard times which compelled him to sell that field. As he walked by it one day on the public thoroughfare he tripped over one of the rocks he had thrown there. Only then did he realize the wisdom of the

reproof he had earlier received – the field he thought was his forever was no longer his, while the street he littered belonged to him and everyone else!

Littering a public area is a sin and a crime because of safety, ecological and esthetic reasons. When you or your agent casts rubble into the street – even for a while – you are guilty not only of causing certain harm to others but of possibly causing damage to yourself. This is why righteous people disposed of their unwanted thorns and broken glass in a manner which could not possibly affect others in the most remote ways (*ibid. 30a*).

Littering is a terrible thing regardless of whether it is using the street as a dump for discarded bricks or as a repository for candy wrappers or cigarette butts. It also makes little difference if it is litter thrown from a car or bus or if it is the garbage carelessly spilled near a public bin. If you can't convince your contractor to provide for immediate removal of the litter he creates get yourself another builder.

SAVING A PLACE IN LINE

Naso

Question: A friend of mine is traveling on the same flight as me but will be arriving at the airport a little later. In order to avoid waiting for a long time in the rather lengthy check-in line he has asked me to hold a place for him in my line so that he can save time. Is it proper for me to cooperate with such a maneuver and for him to benefit from it?

Answer: The question of doing someone a favor at the expense of others has already been dealt with in the Talmud in issues ranging from collecting a debt to taking possession of an abandoned object. The general rule laid down by our Sages is that you cannot be a nice guy when it is *chav leacheirim* – at the expense of others. Why should passengers who took the trouble, like yourself, to come early to the airport wait longer in line to accommodate your late arriving friend?

This issue is not limited to airline check-in lines. It extends to all sorts of situation, from queues in super-

market check-out lanes to lines in government offices. Another example is that of boarding a very crowded bus or train and saving a seat next to you for a friend arriving a little later and thus forcing an earlier arrival to remain standing throughout the ride.

One possible exception to this rule is a common situation where you are standing in line already and wish to leave for a few minutes to take care of some urgent personal matter and ask the party next to you to reserve your place in line. This seems to be fair because there is a general consensus among people waiting in line to allow for such an arrangement since it does not really affect them in any way. If there are people behind you in that line it is a good idea to announce to them that you are only going out for a while so that they will not suspect you of being a late arrival whose place in line has been saved.

In conclusion, such situations should be handled by following the counsel of the Sage Hillel: "Don't do to others what you would not want done to you."

YESHIVA

From Stacey Roth in Boston, MA

Dear Rabbi,

Recently I have become interested in Judaism and have made a lot of progress by reading on my own and talking to religious people. Someone suggested that I learn in a yeshiva for women. How important is this?

Dear Stacy,

It sounds like you're off to a wonderful start. It's very important to benefit from a yeshiva experience for whatever time you can manage for a number of reasons. I'll mention just a few of them here.

Yeshivot and seminaries offer the opportunity for total immersion in a Torah way of life, in Torah study, in an environment where everyone is striving to improve their knowledge and observance of Torah together. In a secular environment ba'alei teshuvah and many observant Jews feel like outsiders, and may be defensive regarding religious issues. It is healthy to live in surroundings that are in consonance with one's lifestyle and beliefs; a yeshiva provides a community where being an observant Jew is mainstream and perhaps even trendy. This type of experience can have an impact on even a short-term visitor to the yeshiva or seminary, and give one a needed injection of enthusiasm and confidence.

The yeshiva also provides much-needed support during the initially difficult period of the newly observant. "No man is an island entirely of itself, every man is a part of the continent, a piece of the main" (John Donne). Any change in the familiar patterns of life is difficult, especially when this change is accompanied by the acceptance of a vast and complex new system of living. Transition is made easier when one is "in transit" with others. People who have undergone similar experiences compare notes and learn from each other's successes and mistakes and can identify with each other's trials. "One who seeks advice, increases understanding" (Pirkei Avot 2:8).

Being part of a yeshiva or seminary also means being part of a community. Members of a community celebrate happy occasions together, and provide comfort and support in times of distress. Non-observant Jews are usually very impressed and moved by the extent to which people entertain the bride and groom at an orthodox wedding. Stereotypes (and sometimes even the rabbis from the yeshiva) go crashing to the ground when the men begin

juggling, somersaulting, and performing handstands in order to contribute to the happiness of the occasion. These events enhance one's sense of belonging to a cohesive, caring community.

The yeshiva helps one establish important contacts in the religious community. Visiting observant families on Shabbat and Festivals is an enjoyable way for the ba'al teshuvah to learn about Shabbat and family life, and to actually see much that he has learned put into practice. Do you want to spend a Shabbat with a family from Atlanta, Georgia, or perhaps Georgia of the former Soviet Union? Do you like Sephardi food or macrobiotic? Would you like to be with a large family? Chassidic, Lithuanian, or Yemenite? Jerusalem, Tzefat, or Bnei Brak? Do you want to meet a religious artist, author, physicist, doctor, or investment banker? Someone in the yeshiva or seminary is able to direct any student to people who share his personal interests.

Finally, anyone interested in getting married will generally have more opportunities if he or she is part of a yeshiva. Rabbis, rebbetzins, and married couples associated with an institution of learning introduce people and help with shidduchim. Teachers and rabbis provide references for their students, and usually have the connections to be able to investigate the references of a prospective shidduch. Many yeshivot and seminaries not only help their students get married, they also assist the married couple in finding housing, financial assistance, and with any advice they might seek.

Most people cannot afford to spend long periods of time at yeshiva, and certainly cannot devote most of their life to the study of Torah. It is especially important for them to take time out to study so that they can improve their skills in the language and analysis of classical Hebrew and Aramaic texts. When they leave yeshiva they will be more independent in their studies, will have a wider choice of classes to attend, and will be more proficient in their prayers and blessings.

It is human nature to put off until tomorrow (or next month, year, or decade) anything that requires effort. Laziness has a surprising amount of strength for something so slow moving. "Hillel used to say...If not now, when?" (Pirkei Avot 1:14). "Do not say, 'When I have free time I will study,' for you may never have free time" (Pirkei Avot 2:5).

Sources:

• *Recommended reading: After The Return, Mordechai Becher & Moshe Newman, Feldheim Publishers*

THE CLOSEST RELATIVE

“And if a man or woman sins against his fellow man, thus being untrue to G-d...” (5:6).

Righteous converts deserve an extra measure of respect, since they made a great “sacrifice.” They have forsaken friends, family, and familiar traditions in order to come and be a part of the Jewish People. Our Sages explain that the “sin against his fellow man” in this verse refers to “stealing something from a convert.” Since the convert does not have any Jewish relatives, the Torah refers to afflicting him as “being untrue to G-d.” This is as if to say that G-d is his closest relative.

The convert is dear to G-d since he came to Judaism based on his idealism. We must avoid fogging his keen perception and embittering his attitude towards G-d’s Torah and His people, lest we drive him back to his non-Jewish practices.

• Based on the *Sforno*

DRINK AND BE HAPPY!

“And the kohen shall make one as a sin offering and one as a burnt offering, and it will atone for him for his sin against his soul” (6:11).

Our Sages teach that if one unnecessarily fasts longer than the Law requires, he is considered to be a “sinner.” Similarly, if one’s fast is pointless, and did not lead to any spiritual progress, then he afflicted himself with a purpose and is therefore considered a “sinner.”

This is despite the fact that he is fulfilling the technical let-

ter of the Law with the fast. The Torah encourages us to improve spiritually by partaking from this world, and not by aimless suffering in life. The Nazir’s sin is that he afflicted himself by abstaining from wine when he could have been using that wine for loftier purposes; for example, as Kiddush-wine on Shabbat.

• Adapted from the *Ktav Sofer*

INDIVIDUALLY ME

“G-d said to Moshe: ‘Each day, a different Prince from the Tribes should present his donation’.” (7:11)

Whenever a person performs a mitzvah he has a personal emphasis and feeling that he inserts. This is even though all of us perform the same identical act (for example waving a lulav on Succot) for the same reason (to fulfill the commandment). Within the framework of *mitzvot* there is plenty of room for individual creative expression.

The Torah counts and recounts 12 times in great detail how each of the 12 Princes brought the exact same gift at the dedication ceremony for the Mishkan. The Midrash explains that although each Prince brought the same physical objects, he did it from his own unique and individual vantage point. We should not worry about trying to publicly overshadow the mitzvah of another person. Rather, we should concentrate on the endless levels of improvement in our personal relationship to each mitzvah, how we perform it and how we allow it to improve our relationship with G-d.

• Adapted from *Ralbag*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

NASO

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor’s property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*. In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor

and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-d’s Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nisan* in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Naso

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's Parsha?
2. Besides transporting the Mishkan, what other service performed by the *levi'im* is referred to in this Parsha?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *teme'im* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of G-d is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart." What word in the parsha conveys this idea of "a full heart?"
18. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May G-d bless you and guard you?"
19. What is the meaning of the blessing, "May G-d lift up His countenance upon you?"
20. The tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Naso's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *levi'im* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the Mishkan was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the Shechina was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of Yisrael.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of Yisrael but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the Shechina.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* is deserving of eventually bringing his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of G-d is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "Amor."
18. 6:24 - "May G-d bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea that the *nesi'im* should offer gifts.

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and Menashe will be for me like Reuven and Shimon” (*Bereishet* 48:5), it is understood by the Sage Abaye that he was granting tribe status to both of these two grandchildren in all matters. They would therefore replace their father Yosef and Levi in the calculation of the Twelve Tribes. According to this approach the tribe of Levi would not be considered a tribe. The rationale for this was supplied by Rabbi Acha Bar Yacov who cited an earlier passage (*ibid.* 48:4) which links tribe status to a share in Eretz Yisrael.

This position is challenged by the Sage Rava who cites a later passage (*ibid.* 48:6) which limits the tribe status of Menashe and Ephraim to inheritance of separate portions in Eretz Yisrael. Although this approach rules out counting these two as separate tribes for calculating the above-mentioned majority and reinstates the tribe of Levi for this purpose, we do find a couple of places where they were related to as two tribes. In the camping and marching order of the tribes in the wilderness (*Bamidbar* 2:18-20) they appear as separate tribes. The explanation offered by Rava for this was that it was done in order to honor the order which Yaakov had dictated for the bearing of his coffin by ten of his sons and two grandsons. (See Rashi in *Bereishet* 50:13 why Levi and Yosef were excluded.)

The other place was the offerings brought by the heads of the tribes for the inauguration of the Mishkan (*Bamidbar* 7:48, 54). Here too, this is not considered evidence of their status as separate tribes but rather an honor accorded to the heads of the tribes who voluntarily came forward with this generous initiative.

• *Horayot* 6b

A QUESTION OF MOTIVE

“One should always study Torah and perform *mitzvot* even if his intention is not for the sake of the mitzvah itself because this will eventually result in the mitzvah being performed for the right purpose.”

This statement by Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Rav is supported by what happened when the Moabite King Balak invited the evil prophet Bilam to curse the Israelites in the wilderness whom he feared as a threat to his nation’s security. At Bilam’s request Balak erected three altars upon which he offered 42 sacrifices to gain heavenly support for his curse (*Bamidbar* 23:1-30). Even though Balak’s motivation was a selfish one he was rewarded with a great-great-granddaughter by the name of Ruth, the saintly convert from whom the kings David and Shlomo were descended.

Maharsha raises a problem with the proof brought from Balak. Tosefot (*Nazir* 23b) distinguishes between two categories of a mitzvah performed with an improper motive.

Where the motive is self-aggrandizement such as gaining honor it still contains the positive element mentioned in our opening statement. However, if the purpose of the Torah study or the mitzvah is to make trouble for others, the person performing it, say our Sages (*Berachot* 17a), would have been better off not being born. Since Balak offered these sacrifices in order to harm the Israelites, asks Maharsha, why is this considered an example of the positive performance which can eventually lead to the mitzvah being performed for the right reason?

The resolution he offers is that Balak’s action must be viewed as self-defense against what he considered a serious threat to his nation. This then comes under the category of self-aggrandizement and not spiteful harm. Even though the sacrifices he offered were not motivated by a genuine desire to serve G-d, his action was rewarded with his descendant Ruth establishing a family including David and Shlomo, who offered many sacrifices with the proper intention.

An interesting lesson arises from this *gemara*. The concept of a mitzvah performed with a selfish motive does not necessarily lead to the performer eventually performing with the proper motive, as we have no record of Balak himself reaching such a level. It can, however, plant the seed for future generations as we see this effect in the lives of Ruth, David and Shlomo.

• *Horayot* 10b

READ MY FACE

In this selection, which is the final one for the entire Order of *Nezikim*, we encounter some important advice for those who wish to properly learn *gemara*. In the counsel which Rabbi Mesharshia gave to his sons he urged them to carefully study the *mishna* before they enter the *gemara shiur* of their teacher so that they will have the informational background necessary for understanding the analysis in depth. He also pointed out the need for looking upon the face of their teacher, quoting the passage “Your eyes shall see your teacher” (*Yeshayahu* 30:20).

Why is it so important to see the teacher’s face in addition to hearing his words?

Maharsha, a master teacher for generations of students of *gemara* and the early commentaries, offers us an answer which is a vital lesson in pedagogy.

Words can sometimes be understood in more than one way. The proper way to understand the real meaning of the teacher’s words can often be discerned by watching his facial expressions. For this reason we find (*Horayot* 13b) that the young sons of a Torah scholar who has been appointed the spiritual leader of his community are seated directly before

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their father when he is lecturing even though their backs are to the rest of the audience. Since these youngsters are already capable of understanding the lecture it is important for them to be able to see the face of their father.

This “**Weekly DAFootnote**” column of “Ohrnet” is intended as an appetizer to real *gemara* learning and not as a substitute for hearing a regular *shiur* in which one has the opportunity of seeing the face of his teacher and fully understanding his words.

• *Horayot 12a*

THE HOW OF A VOW

“**Y**ou shall keep and perform what has gone forth from your mouth, according to what you have (*neder*) vowed to Hashem, your G-d, the (*nedava*) freewill offering which you promised with your mouth.” (*Devarim 23:24*) One can make a vow to offer an animal as a sacrifice in one of two ways. He can make a *neder*, which means that he obligates himself to bring an animal without designating a particular one. Or he can make a *nedava*, which means that he obligates himself to offer a particular animal. The crucial difference between the two is that in the first case should he set aside, after making his vow, an animal for fulfilling his promise, and that animal dies or gets lost, he has an obligation to offer another in its place. In the second case his obligation is limited to the particular animal which he promised, and if it is no longer available he bears no responsibility to replace it.

This distinction between a *neder* and a *nedava* is what causes the *gemara* at the very outset of the Order of *Kodashim* dealing with sacrifices to analyze the above-mentioned passage which speaks in the same breath of these two different kinds of vows in regard to the same animal. This passage, we are told, deals with a sacrifice which has been slaughtered while having in mind that it is being done for a different sort of sacrifice than the one on which the vow was made. Our opening *mishna* teaches us that in such a case the sacrifice is considered a valid sacrifice and that when its blood is subsequently applied to the altar it must be done with having in mind the type of sacrifice which the vower designated. The person who made the *neder*, however, is not considered as having fulfilled his obligation and must offer another animal.

We now understand this passage as teaching us that if the slaughtering was done with the proper sacrifice in mind it is considered as the fulfillment of the *neder*; otherwise we relate to it as a new freewill *nedava* offered by the original vower, which although it is a kosher sacrifice whose blood

must be applied with the proper thought, does not constitute fulfillment of the *neder*. It also follows that if the original vow was a *nedava* the slaughtering of it with having another type of sacrifice in mind will not obligate the vower to replace it, because this is no worse than the animal disappearing which does not obligate him to replace it.

• *Zevachim 2a*

OMISSION VS. COMMISSION

If someone unintentionally violated the Shabbat he is given an opportunity to atone for his sin by offering a *chatat* sin offering on the altar in the *Beit Hamikdash*. But what if he failed to recite the *Shema* or put on *tefillin* – is there an opportunity for him to make amends by offering a sacrifice?

The answer can be found in the phrase used by the Torah in regard to the effect of the voluntary *olah* sacrifice. “G-d will be pleased with it,” says the Torah (*Vayikra 1:4*), “to atone for him.” Rashi, both in his commentary on Chumash and here in our *gemara*, cites the conclusion of our Sages that the need to please G-d referred to here is not in regard to the transgression of any prohibition, for all such transgressions are either atoned for by capital or corporal punishment, or by a sin offering. All that is left then is a sin of omission and a transgression which is not punished by lashes (because there the Torah assigned a method of undoing the damage).

Although the *olah* thus appears to be an atonement sacrifice for such sins, it differs from the *chatat* both in obligation and in nature. One who unintentionally committed a sin for which intentional violation is punished by *karet* (extirpation) is obligated to offer a *chatat* to achieve atonement. The *olah*, however, is a voluntary sacrifice brought by one who feels the need to please G-d after failing to do His bidding.

The other difference is that the *chatat* is basically an atonement which is designed to achieve forgiveness (*Vayikra 4:31*) while the *olah* is considered a gift to G-d after the sinner has repented his sin. This distinction made by the Sage Rava (*Zevachim 7b*) receives support from what Rabbi Shimon ruled in the case of someone who is obligated to bring both an *olah* and a *chatat* sacrifice. First comes the *chatat* and then the *olah*. This is similar to one who has offended an earthly king and wishes to make amends by offering a gift. He first enlists the services of a pleader to intercede in his behalf. Only after the pleader has done his work can the contrite offender enter with his gift. Only after the *chatat* has achieved forgiveness can the *olah* gift be offered.

• *Zevachim 5b*

SHAVUOT

THE SEASON OF GIVING OF THE TORAH?

RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

In the prayers we will be saying on Shavuot we refer to this festival as the “Season of the Giving of the Torah”. This is based on the traditional assumption that the Torah was given to the Jewish people at Sinai on the sixth day of the Month of Sivan, the very day on which we are also commanded to celebrate the Festival of Shavuot.

There is, however, a little problem here in regard to chronology. The Torah does not stipulate a date for Shavuot but refers to it rather as the fiftieth day from the offering of the Omer which took place on the second day of Pesach, the 16th of the Month of Nissan. Put aside the calculation of the dates for a moment and reflect on the fact that there is a consensus that the Jews left Egypt on a Thursday and that the Torah was given on Shabbat. This means that the Torah was given on the fifty-first day following the date determined for the Omer offering. (Friday to Friday = 50th day leaving Shabbat as 51!) If Hashem gave the Torah on the fifty-first day why did our Sages institute in our prayers on Shavuot, which is on the fiftieth day following the Omer offering, a mention of “the season of the Giving of the Torah”?

This question is dealt with by one of the great Talmudic commentators, Rabbi Shmuel Eideles (Maharsha) and he offers a most innovative solution.

When the Jews left Egypt, he states, they were not yet in a spiritual state capable of receiving the Torah. As the Sages point out in *Pirkei Avot*, only if fear of sin precedes Torah will one's Torah have permanence. In order to rise from the corrupting influences of Egyptian culture, it was necessary for these liberated slaves to go through a purifying process. The formula for such a transformation was based on the counting of days and weeks which have a mystical significance. Seven is a sacred number associated with the weekly day of rest and the *shmitta* year of giving the land a rest from agricultural labor. Seven cycles of seven culminates in a fifti-

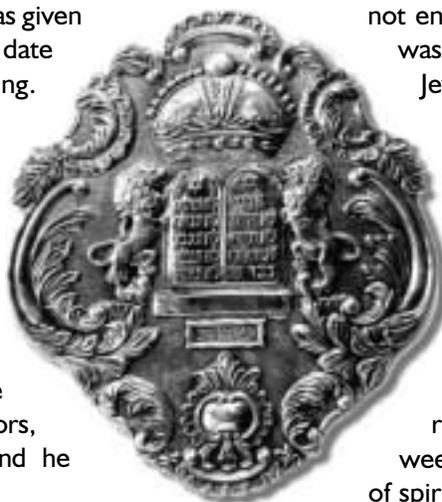
eth Jubilee year with its sacred elements of rest, return of purchased land and freeing of slaves.

Only after the Jews completed this process of spiritual growth did they reach the plateau of “fear of sin” which made them worthy of receiving the Torah and capable of guaranteeing its permanence in their lives. This took place on the fiftieth day and this was the day which Hashem designated as the Shavuot Festival to teach us that what is truly significant is not on which day the Torah was actually given to us – the fifty-first – but rather the day we reached the climax of preparation for it.

This approach of Maharsha gains another dimension when we consider that Jews in Egypt had sunk to the 49th level of spiritual corruption. It was therefore not enough to take the Jews out of Egypt; it was necessary to take Egypt out of the Jews! Counting 49 days until reaching the “fear of sin” plateau was necessary for rising each day from one of those levels of spiritual impurity.

This is the challenge in every generation for the people who were privileged to receive the Torah at Sinai over three millennia ago but who must prepare themselves every year for being worthy of receiving it again. Counting the days and weeks definitely has a mystical dimension of spiritual progress but it must be accompanied by the self-perfection implicit in the term “fear of sin”. Learning Torah is not a mere intellectual exercise. It is the ultimate instrument for developing a soul sensitivity to what must be avoided if a Jew wishes to be worthy of that connection to the divine which began at Sinai and continues till today. It also means a fear of missing the mark (the Hebrew word *chet* means both “sin” and “missing the target”) in fulfilling our human potential.

Let us use the days remaining until *Shavuot* to make sure that we are prepared for receiving the Torah in the season it was given to us.



RABBI MEIR — THE MASTER OF THE MIRACLE

Some charities in Eretz Yisrael call themselves the “Charities of Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes”. This is a reference to a story told in the Talmud about the great Sage, Rabbi Meir, who was able to ward off serious dangers to himself and others by the simple declaration of “G-d of Meir, answer me!” It is a



tradition that one who gives charity in memory of Rabbi Meir merits having his prayers answered in the merit of this great *tzaddik*.

Rabbi Meir's tomb in Tiberias is a popular site for visiting and praying to have miracles performed in the merit of this “master of the miracle”.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

SAVED BY A CELL PHONE

More than one terrorist tragedy has been averted by the ubiquitous cell phone. While all the other rescues came as a result of communication with authorities the case of Michael Tataro was of an entirely different character.

This 43-year old was one of the people who had the misfortune of being in the area of the old central bus station in Tel Aviv when two suicide bombers recently blew

themselves up, killing 23 people and wounding more than a hundred. Shrapnel from one of the blasts flew into Michael's jacket just above his waist. It entered the back of his cell phone and flew out the side, completely destroying it. “I fell to the ground in shock,” he recalled as he stood, still in shock, in Ichilov Hospital's emergency ward. “I looked in my pocket and realized that my phone had saved my life.”

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...among the dozens of books, translations and educational materials published by Ohr Somayach over the years were four highly acclaimed issues of “Shma Yisrael” Magazine.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

In our “Human Side of the Story” about “Givers and Takers” we mentioned the incident of a Jew in Israel who had contributed generously to a local food aid organization while his business was prospering, and then his receiving aid from this very organization when his business collapsed and left him with debts.

Z.R. sent us the following comment:

Thank you for this moving and inspirational story. The moral seems to be “Don't give tzedekah; if you do you'll get poor.” In order to prevent this from happening to me, I'll have to cut back my donations to Ohr Somayach.

Following is our response:

In regard to your comment about giving *tzedekah* making one poor, we refer you to the story told in *Mesechta Ketubot* 66b about Nakdemon ben Gurion. He was a fabulously wealthy Jerusalem Jew and great benefactor of the poor who lost all his wealth, leaving his children to the desperate level of poverty which compelled his daughter to subsist on the pieces of grain in the droppings of Arab animals.

When the question was raised how this could happen to someone who gave so much *tzedekah*, the answer given is that he did not give as much as he was capable of giving.

The moral of this is: Increase your donations to Ohr Somayach as an insurance policy for you and your family.