



Parshas Naso

For the week ending 7 Sivan 5756 (14 Sivan 5756)*
 24 & 25 May 1996 (31 May & June 1 1996)*
 *week ending dates for locations outside of Israel

Summary

The Torah assigns the exact *Mishkan*-related tasks to be performed by the sons of Gershon, Kehas, and Merari, the *Bnei Levi*. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those who are ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments. If a person confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property after having sworn to the contrary in court, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object, and bring a guilt offering to atone for his transgression. In the event that 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 his wife, a *Sotah*, to a *Kohen*. The *Kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with a certain dust and a special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is indeed innocent, the potion does not harm her — in fact it brings a blessing of children. However, if she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. A *Nazir* is someone who voluntarily vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He is obliged to abstain from all grape products, let his hair grow, and avoid all contact with corpses. At the end of this period, he shaves his head and brings special offerings in the Temple before returning to normal life. If he fails to successfully complete his count, he needs to begin the count anew after shaving his head and bringing an offering in the Temple. The *Kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The *Mishkan* is completed and dedicated on the first day of *Nissan* in the second year after the Exodus. The Princes of each Tribe make a communal gift to help transport the *Mishkan*, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

Commentaries

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

“A man or woman who will take the vow of a Nazir for the sake of Hashem...from new or aged wine...shall he abstain” (6:2).

“Good evening! And here is the nine o'clock news. The perpetrators of last year's spectacularly daring \$5,000,000 diamond heist were finally sentenced today, to life in prison...”

David leaned forward and turned off the TV, and then sinking back in his armchair he mused to himself “\$5,000,000! Their only mistake was they weren't careful enough...if that had been me, I would have gotten away with it!”

In order to restore a husband's trust in his wife after she has behaved in a way which indicates that she may have been unfaithful to him, the Torah provides a means of verifying her innocence. This is called the *mitzvah* of *Sotah*. If she is innocent her childbearing is blessed, but if not, she dies a spectacular and miraculous death. The Torah immediately follows this with the *mitzvah* of the *Nazir*: A person who takes upon himself additional stringencies such as refraining from wine and all grape derivatives. Rashi explains that the connection of the two sections is to teach us that someone who sees the terrifying demise of the *Sotah* should understand that indulgence in wine leads to adultery, and distance himself from anything to do with wine.

But the question remains, surely the spectacle of the grisly end of the *Sotah* should, in itself, be more than adequate warning! The implication here is that **we are more attracted by the crime than deterred by the punishment**: A person can always rationalize and say to himself: *“They weren't careful enough — I would have gotten away with it!”* The spectacle of punishment enforces the idea of the feasibility of sin more than the danger of getting caught.

“ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? OVER.”

“May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you... ” (2:22)

You can have the largest radio transmitter in town, blasting out 50,000 watts of power, but if the radio at the other end isn't turned on, you won't hear a thing.

In the above verse, *‘Be(ing) gracious’* means finding grace in the eyes of others. But the question arises — if Hashem illuminates his countenance for us, surely there can be no question that we will find favor in the eyes of others. So what can the additional *bracha* of Hashem being gracious — of giving us favor in the eyes of others — mean?

We can have all the best qualities but they can still go unrecognized. Our good qualities can live like a princess locked in the top of a castle with nobody recognizing our true selves. When Yosef was in prison in Egypt, Hashem gave Yosef grace in the eyes of the prison guard. Yosef is called Yosef HaTzadik — Yosef the righteous — not Yosef a tzadik, but Yosef *the* tzadik. Yosef was the essence of righteousness, and yet Hashem still had to give him favor in the eyes of the prison guard.

There are some people who are unable to see the true virtue of a person, very often they perceive them as being the opposite of their true selves. It needs a special *bracha* for a person's virtues to be recognized by the world. That's the *bracha* of finding favor in the eyes of others — that their receiver will be turned on to us.

(Based on Degel Machane Ephraim)

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HEARING AID

“When Moshe arrived at the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him (Hashem), he heard the Voice speaking to him from atop the Cover that was on the Ark of Testimony between the two Cherubim.” (7:89)

The whole world proclaims the presence of Hashem! Every blade of grass, every bird singing, every plant growing, every nebula and star system being born on the fringes of space — everything is saying in a loud voice “Hashem is G-d!”

How come people find it so hard to hear the Voice? How come to some people the universe looks like a self-replicating absurdity or a cosmic bad joke? Why don't they hear the Voice?

Rashi explains the above verse to mean that Moshe would go into the Tent of Meeting and there he would hear the Voice coming from on top of the Cover of the Ark of Testimony. What is this verse telling us? Surely Moshe could hear the Voice in all of nature, for everything sings the praises of Hashem, for nothing can exist outside of the Will of Hashem.

The Voice is everywhere, but if we want to *hear* it, we must do what Moshe did. First we must go into the Tent of Meeting, the *Beis Midrash* (study-hall) where the Voice emanates from the interior spiritual world of the Torah. Then, when we are filled with the wisdom and the clarity that comes from learning the Torah with single-minded application and dedication, and we have refined our character and behavior, then, only then, can we go outside and hear the Voice in the world at large.

This verse is hinting to that message: Moshe is to tell Israel that Hashem speaks to them from on top of the Cover within, and that Voice reaches to our ears and to our hearts which are outside the veil of the Holy of Holies.

(Based on Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l)

Haftorah: Shoftim 13:2-25

Shimshon (Samson) is the most famous *Nazir* in Tanach, and thus this week's Parsha, which describes the laws of the *Nazir*, is complemented by the story of the birth of Shimshon.

“The angel of Hashem said to him, ‘Why is it that you ask for my name? It is hidden’” (13:18).

The more you seek the essence of the angel of holiness — to ask his ‘name’ — the more elusive and hidden he becomes. But when Yaakov asked the angel of Esav, the representative of the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination), what was his name, he *also* said “Why is it that you ask my name?” However, there is a difference: The angel of holiness has a name but it is *hidden*, whereas the *yetzer hara* has *no name* — *The yetzer hara has substance only when we don't seek to know who and what he really is.* If a person will examine the “identity papers” of the *yetzer hara*, even for a second, he will realize that he has no substance whatsoever, and thus no name...

(One of the Gedolei HaMussar in Mayana Shel Torah)



Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Dror Yikra - trehrus
“Freedom Shall He Proclaim..”

“And we shall open wide our mouths and we shall fill them.”

נִרְחִיב פֶּה וְנִמְלֵאנָה
v'narchiv peh unmalenah

This is a variation of the words of King David in *Tehillim* (81:11) in which he issues the Divine invitation “I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt; open wide your mouth and I shall fill it.”

In *Mesechta Brachos* we are taught to be humble when requesting something from Heaven in the manner that a beggar at the door keeps his requests down to a minimum. When this lesson is challenged from the above-mentioned invitation to open wide our mouths and ask for a lot the response is that when it comes to asking for assistance in spiritual matters of Torah the sky is the limit.

It may be suggested that when we sing about opening our mouths wide on Shabbos we are also referring to our prayers for the opportunity to spiritually grow through filling our mouths with the spiritual sustenance of Shabbos food.

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