Overview

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the sons of Gershon, Kohas, 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 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.

Insights

More Of A Good Thing

Parshas Nasso is the longest Parsha of the year. It contains 176 verses. Interestingly, that’s also the number of verses in the longest Parsha in Nach (the Prophets and Writings). It is also the number of pages in the longest Tractate in the Babylonian Talmud - Bava Basra - 176 pages. Parshas Nasso also is the subject of a vast number of Midrashim, and is dealt with at great length in the Zohar. More than any other of the weekly portions.

What is the reason for this great expansiveness?

Parshas Nasso almost always falls out the Shabbos after Shavuos, the time of the giving of the Torah. And so the week after we receive the Torah, our Sages embodied the feelings of great enthusiasm and love that its giving engenders by enlarging and broadening the Parsha which follows its giving.

Armored Blessings

“Hashem should bless you and keep you.” (6:24)

Once there was a king who had a beloved friend who lived in Syria. The king wished to honor his friend and so he summoned him to his palace in Rome. The king feted his friend in royal style and gave him a hundred pieces of pure gold to take back home with him. On the way home, the king’s friend was beset by bandits who stole not only the hundred pieces of gold, but also everything else he possessed. A king of flesh and blood can give extravagant presents, but he has no means of guaranteeing that his blessings will remain with the recipient. When Hashem blesses us, however, He has the power not only to bless us, but to guard the blessing so that it will stay with us. It’s burglar-proof. That is the simple meaning of this verse: “May Hashem bless you and guard that blessing from all loss.” There’s no ‘Brink’s’ van in the world that can guarantee you that!
“A man or a woman who will take a nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem…” (6:2)

Three worlds. Thought, Action and Speech.

Three worlds that can be blemished.

This week’s Parsha deals with the Nazir. The Nazir, who seeks to purify himself and come close to Hashem, separates himself from three things: Cutting the hair, drinking wine, and becoming tameh (ritually impure through contact with the dead).

These three separations correct blemishes in the three worlds of Thought, Action and Speech.

**Thought**: Hair grows from the head, the seat of thought.

Thus, cutting the hair represents correcting imperfections in the sphere of thought.

**Action**: Tumah corresponds to the sphere of action. The principal source of Tumah results from contact with a dead body, for before its passing, the body was the epitome of life and action.

**Speech**: Wine represents the function of speech. Hence the saying: “Enter the wine - exit the secret.” Secrets are communicated by words. By speech. Correction in the sphere of speech is effected by abstinence from wine.

Corresponding to these three worlds are the three korbanos (offerings): Olah, Chitas and Shlamim. The Olah corrects faults in the thought; Chitas, in action and Shlamim, in speech.

Speech combines both thought and action, soul and body. Speech is a synthesis of the non-physical and the physical.

For without thought there can be no speech, and without the movement and shaping of the lips, there can be no issue of words.

Let’s take a look at Shlamim:

The word Shlamim is from the same root as shalom, which means wholeness. Wholeness is the unification of all parts into one.

Just as speech is a unification of thought and action, so too Shlamim unified the three elements of the offering:

1. The mizbe’ach (the altar)
2. The Kohen who offers the sacrifice, and
3. The person who brings the offering.

How did Shlamim unify these three elements?

Part of the Shlamim offering was placed on the mizbe’ach. Part was eaten by the kohen, and part was eaten by the suppliant. Thus, the Shlamim unified all the parts of the service of the Beis Hamidkash, just as speech unifies thought and action.

It is interesting to note that of the three avos (Patriarchs), only Yaakov brought Shlamim. Why? Yaakov is the synthesis of Avraham and Yitzchak. Just as Shlamim correspond to speech which is a synthesis of thought and action, so too Yaakov was a synthesis of the his two predecessors. And interestingly enough, the Midrash tells us that Yaakov never uttered a wasted word. He epitomizes the attribute of speech, and necessarily, he brought shalom between Israel and their Father in Heaven.

Similarly, we see that Shlamim were not brought until after the Torah was given, for it was only through the Ten Commandments (or literally the ten utterances of speech) that we were given the ability to bring Shlamim.

Shimshon (Samson) was 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 Shimson.

**IDENTITY PAPERS**

“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 what his name is, the more elusive and hidden he becomes.

However, when Yaakov asked the angel of Esav — the epitome of the yetzer hara (the evil inclination) — what was his name, he also answered “Why is it that you ask my name?”

The difference between these two instances is that the angel of holiness has a name but it is hidden, whereas the yetzer hara has no name, for the yetzer hara has substance only when we don’t seek to know who and what he really is.

However, if a person will examine the ‘identity papers’ of the yetzer hara even for a second, he will realize that it has no real substance whatsoever, and thus no name.

Sources:

- More Of A Good Thing - Chidushei HaRim in Ibrew Torah
- Armored Blessings - Midrash Tanchuma Nasso 10, Rabbeinu Bachya
- World’s Unite - Shem MiShmuel
- Identity Papers - O ne of the Gedolei HaMussar in Mayana shel Torah

**Fatherly Advice** - tidbits from the Ethics of the Fathers traditionally studied on Summer Sabbaths

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There are four categories of human character. One who is easily angered but easily appeased - his gain is surpassed by his loss. One who is brought to anger with difficulty, but is also appeased with difficulty - his loss is surpassed by his gain. If it is difficult to bring him to anger and easy to appease him, he is a righteous man. If it is easy to bring him to anger and difficult to appease him, he is a wicked man.

(Avos 5:11)

Even the righteous man is capable of anger, but only an extreme situation will provoke him to such a reaction. The classic example is Moshe Rabbeinu whom the Torah describes (Bamidbar 31:14) as becoming angry with the officers of the Israeliite army. They had failed to carry out the Divine command to annihilate the Midianite women whose licentious behavior had brought spiritual and physical tragedy upon the nation.

To be completely devoid of anger is not human, and is therefore not even listed as a category of human character.