



# Parshas Nasso

For the week ending 9 Sivan 5757  
13 & 14 June 1997

## Overview

**T**he 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 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!

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## WORLDS UNITE

### **“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*, *Chatas* and *Shlamim*. The *Olah* corrects faults in the thought; *Chatas*, 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 supplicant. Thus, the *Shlamim* unified all the parts of the service of the *Beis Hamikdash*, 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*.

## **Haftorah: Shoftim 13:2-25**

*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 Iturei Torah  
*Armored Blessings* - Midrash Tanchuma Nasso 10, Rabbeinu Bachya;  
*World's Unite* - Shem MiShmuel  
*Identity Papers* - One of the Gedolei HaMussar in Mayana shel Torah

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

*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 Israelite 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.

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