

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT NASSO · VOL. 16 NO. 31

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 7 SIVAN - MAY 30 IN ISRAEL AND 14 SIVAN - JUNE 6 OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### READ ALL ABOUT IT!

*"A man or woman who will take the vow of a Nazir for the sake of G-d...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 spectacular \$5,000,000 diamond heist were finally sentenced today to a total of 427 years in prison...”

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

In order to restore a husband’s trust in his wife after she has behaved in a way that 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 she is blessed with children who will be scholars, but if not, she dies a spectacular and miraculous death. Her stomach swells until she dies.

The Torah immediately follows this with the mitzvah of the Nazir. A Nazir is a person who takes upon himself additional stringencies such as refraining from wine and all grape derivatives. Rashi explains 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 — shouldn’t the spectacle of the grisly end of the Sotah, 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 got away with it!” The spectacle of punishment enforces the idea of the feasibility of sin more than the danger of getting caught.

“The implication here is that *we are more attracted by the crime than deterred by the punishment.*”

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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 spe-

cial 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.

## ISRAEL Forever

### THE SECRET OF UNITY

Were there any "secular Jews" at Mount Sinai? As the Festival of the Giving of our Torah is celebrated this Shavuot let us take a look at how the Torah answers this question.

"The entire people responded together and said 'Everything that G-d has spoken we shall do.'" (*Shemot* 19:8)

This was the ultimate expression of national unity when all Jews were "like one man with one heart".

Only a commitment to Torah could unite a people then and only such a commitment can achieve this today. All the conflicts based on political divisiveness and ethnical differences that cause such disunity in our day would disappear if all Jews would be prepared to echo the proud declaration of our ancestors to obey whatever is commanded by G-d.

A unity based on commitment to Torah is what is necessary to secure Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND- THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### TSEFAT – SYNAGOGUE OF THE HOLY ALSHECH

Visitors to Tsefat are familiar with the synagogue of Rabbi Moshe Alshech. Located next to the Abuhav Synagogue, it is the only one that survived the two earthquakes that virtually destroyed the northern city in 1759 and 1837.

Born in Turkey in 1508, Rabbi Alshech lived most of his life in Tsefat and is buried there. He is best known



for his monumental commentary on Torah that he called *Torat Moshe* but which is popularly known as *Ha-Alshech Ha-Kadosh* (the holy Alshech).

His most famous disciple was Rabbi Chaim Vital who studied with the Ari Zal and disseminated his Kabbalistic teachings.

לע"נ  
הרה"ח ר' דוד בן ר' אהרון ז"ל  
מרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

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 this week'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.

- Mysteries of who was the victim of an admitted theft and who gave the larger sum for safekeeping
- Dealing with doubt in monetary matters
- Guardian of fruits on verge of rotting
- Caring for property of someone in captivity or otherwise incapable of managing it
- The unrecognized brother
- Calculating how much loss can be claimed by guardian of produce, wine or oil
- Honesty in selling oil
- Guardian's responsibility for breakage during moving
- When a guardian assumes total responsibility by making unauthorized use of item in his custody
- What is considered proper care of money given for safekeeping
- Which sort of guardian may use money given for safekeeping
- What is considered unauthorized use by guardian

## RECOGNIZING A BROTHER

A stranger from Bei Chazai came before Mari bar Issak claiming that he was his brother and entitled to a share of his inheritance. Mari replied that he did not recognize him. When the case came before Rabbi Chisda he cited a historical precedent for a person not being able to recognize his own brother.

When the brothers of Yosef came to Egypt to purchase food and were brought before Yosef, the Torah (*Bereishet* 42:8) relates that he recognized them but they did not recognize him. The explanation for this is that when Yosef left his brothers he was only seventeen and had no beard, while now he had a full beard.

This explanation assumes that Yosef was able to recognize his brothers because they already had beards when he left them. The difficulty with this is that Yisachar and Zevulun were only slightly older than Yosef and probably had no beards when they parted.

In his commentary on Chumash, RaMbaN offers two resolutions. One is that since he recognized the older brothers who already had beards at that time he was able to recognize the younger ones as well. Another approach is that Yosef expected his brothers to arrive in Egypt in search of food for their famine stricken families, whereas the brothers could not imagine that the youngster they had sold into slavery had become a ruler of Egypt.

• *Bava Metzia 39b*

## What the SAGES Say

"A man prefers one kav of his own produce to nine kavim of another's."

• *Rabbi Cahana - Bava Metzia 38a*

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## HEED THE CALL

**From: Hernando**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I have come to love the Torah so much and want to keep all the mitzvot that I can, but I feel that I need to go to a yeshiva with rabbis and people like myself in order to be totally immersed in the Torah and the religious life. The problem is that my parents are very much against this and we are having many arguments about this. Please, rabbi, tell me what I should do.*

Dear Hernando,

I am very inspired to hear your heartfelt desire to learn Torah and fulfill the mitzvot. G-d should help you realize your heart's desires with joy, and with the joy of your family.

Please realize though, dear Hernando, that I cannot possibly tell you what to do in this situation because I do not know enough about you, your family and your options. I can only give you some general ideas that I hope will help you in your decision.

Every Jew is required to learn Torah and observe the mitzvot. This applies to your parents as well. However, their obligation is even greater than yours in a way because not only are they obligated themselves, they are obligated to encourage you to do so as well. And even though a person is required to honor his parents' wishes, if they tell him not to fulfill his religious duties he may not listen to them, since not only are they required to be observant, they are also prohibited from causing their child to transgress.

That being said, in most cases as these, the parents aren't against Torah per se, but rather are concerned that the child will become too extreme, not pursue secular education or neglect attaining a profession and the like. From the parents' point of view, these are all valid concerns, and depending on a person's stage in life, one should try to find a healthy balance between his need to study Torah and do mitzvot and fulfill his parents' wishes, which are ultimately good for most people. This can be done by taking advantage of local Jewish opportunities and postponing yeshiva study; or study in yeshiva can precede other plans if they can be postponed so that one has a firm base in Torah knowledge and observance before

following other pursuits.

Of course, financial considerations play a major role here, since all yeshivot have great costs and most require travel expenses, tuition and room and board in some measure.

I hope the following example will be a source of inspiration for you and your family:

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkanos of the Talmud was initially a Jewishly uneducated youth who worked his wealthy father's fields every day from morning till evening. Because of his great strength his father had him work even harder than his other brothers: while they plowed the soft valley lands he plowed the rocky slopes.

One day his father saw him sitting and crying in the middle of his daily work. "Eliezer, why are you crying? Is it because you work so much harder than your brothers?" The next day Hurkanos sent Eliezer to plow the lowlands. Yet, he found him crying as the day before. "Why are you crying?" his father asked. "Father, I want to learn Torah in the yeshiva." "That's ridiculous, you're nearly the age where you'll have sons who could learn and you don't even know how to read! Do something important like the extra work I'm now giving you and forget about this learning idea."

Eliezer woke early the next day, finished his regular and extra work, and then set off for Jerusalem to learn in yeshiva against his father's wishes. His coarseness and lack of education made him stand out from all the other students of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, who nevertheless was impressed by his sincerity and effort. One day while learning, the rabbi noticed that Eliezer hadn't eaten for what turned out to be eight days because of his poverty. The rabbi took him in as one of his own household and from that day on took special interest in Eliezer's studies.

Eventually, Hurkanos found out where his son had gone and arrived to take him home. Rabbi Yochanan agreed, but asked him to give a Torah dissertation before leaving. When his father heard Eliezer's discourse, and saw how much his fellow Torah scholars admired and appreciated his teachings, Hurkanos was so moved that he changed his mind and not only agreed that his son continue in the yeshiva, but offered to fully support him.

It was of this Eliezer that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai used to say: If all the Sages of Israel were on one pan of a balance-scale, and Eliezer ben Hurkanos were on the other, he would outweigh them all (Pirkei Avot 2:12).

## AVOIDING INDIRECT PARTNERSHIP

**Question:** I live next door to a Jew who does not observe the Shabbat. When I asked him if he would allow me to build my succah on the area between our homes where he parks his car he generously consented. It then occurred to me that giving up his private parking space would necessitate his driving on Shabbat and the Holiday an additional distance in order to find a parking space. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** The response given to this question by Rabbi

Yitzchak Zilberstein, the rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak, serves as a guideline for situations such as this. He ruled that it was certainly wrong to accept his neighbor's offer if this would cause him to increase his violation of the holy days. He suggested that he try to convince the neighbor to refrain from driving on those days so that his generosity would not backfire into making his observant neighbor an indirect partner in his disrespect for Shabbat and Holiday.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE SAVING SIREN

Participation in a Daf Yomi shiur in Talmud was an indispensable part of the daily schedule of a respected London philanthropist. When extraordinary circumstances compelled him one day to miss this beloved session, he decided to take along with him in his auto a recording of the page of Talmud learned that day so that he could listen to it while driving.

On the highway outside of London he found himself behind a huge truck moving at a very slow pace. As he began to make a move to bypass the truck he heard a police siren. Assuming that a police car was interested in passing the slow truck before him he quickly returned to his lane and waited to see the police car pass by. But no police car appeared nor did he see in his side mirror any of the blinking lights of a

police vehicle. Seconds later he saw a big semi-trailer coming from the other direction and realized that it was the siren that had saved his life.

Failing to sight any police car he realized that his near-death experience had some mystical element. But since the momentary lapse in listening to the tape caused him to lose track of the subject studied, he decided to rewind the tape a few minutes back. Then he heard the siren again. This time, however, he realized that the siren was part of the tape and that when the recording was made 25 years earlier in a small Beit Midrash in Jerusalem, a police siren could be heard outside.

Thus was a siren orchestrated by Heaven to save the life of a Jew devoted to Torah study.

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