

SHABBAT PARSHIOT NASSO-BEHA'ALOTCHA · 9-16 SIVAN 5773 - MAY 18-25, 2013 · VOL. 20 NO. 35

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Parshat Naso

All In The Family

"Any man whose wife shall go astray..." (5:12)

A hundred years ago in a brilliant Jewish mind, an exciting idea was born. It went something like this: Man is separated from his neighbor by a huge division, an unbridgeable gulf called individual property. If I own something, it means you can't have it. In a sense, my owning something 'steals' it from you. Property is theft. If we could make a society in which everyone owned everything, then no one would be jealous of anyone else. What we need to do is to redeem capital from the hands of the ruling elite and return it to the people.

The Communist ideal spawned several social engineering experiments. The most notable of these was the collective farm. All property was owned by the collective. Everyone ate in a communal dining room. Every member of the collective gave what he could and only took what he needed.

Probably the most famous and successful application of the commune concept was the kibbutz movement in Israel. However, there were other countries where the idea also took root. It must have seemed at the time like a Utopian dream.

What happened to the dream? The last vestiges of the collective farm have either become Capitalist enterprises or are moribund. Why did such a noble-sounding idea fail?

One inevitable aspect of collective living was a re-evaluation of the role of the family. Rather than sleeping under the same roof as their parents, children now slept in dormitories. One wonders who would answer a small child who might wake in the middle of the night and cry, "Mommy! I

want a glass of water!" How successful a mother-substitute could a dormitory supervisor be?

There's something very strange about this week's Torah portion.

Right in the middle of the description of the organization of the *Machane*, the Jewish encampment, there is a seemingly illogical interruption in which the Torah presents, amongst other *mitzvot*, the mitzvah of the *Sota*. The *Sota* is a wife whose behavior has provoked her husband to suspect her of infidelity. The Torah prescribes a miraculous process by which, if proved innocent, will restore her completely to her husband's trust. But what does the *Sota* have to do with the Jewish encampment?

The *Machane* was the paradigm of the future social structure of the Jewish People. Not only did it mandate the placement of each individual tribe, but the *Machane* represented Jewish Society as it was to be lived throughout the generations. The Torah puts the mitzvah of *Sota* in the middle of the description of the *Machane* to teach us that the harmony of society at large is predicated on the united and happy family.

The family is the basic building block of society. When you tamper with its delicate balance, when you try and 'engineer' it to conform to man-made concepts of Utopian life, inevitably those experiments will be short-lived and eventually founder.

- Sources: Ramban; Rabbi Moshe Eismann, as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Nasso

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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

GRAPE – THE FRUIT OF JOY

When Yotam presented his parable to the people of Shechem who had abandoned him and crowned his rival Avimelech as their ruler, he described the efforts of the trees to find one amongst them who would consent to be their king. The grapevine's refusal was based on a reluctance to give up its traditional role of supplying the wine which "gladdens G-d and men." (*Shoftim* 9:13)

Our Talmudic Sages (*Berachot* 35a) ask: "That wine gladdens men is understood, but how does it gladden G-d?"

Their answer is that the Levites in the Beit Hamikdash only offered their praise to G-d in music and song when the wine libations accompanying the sacrifices were poured on

the altar.

Although there is a general blessing praising G-d as the Creator of fruit which is made before consuming any fruit, even of the seven species, a special blessing is made before drinking wine. The reason, say our Sages (*ibid. 35b*), is because wine is unique in its ability to both satiate and gladden.

Caution must be exercised, however, as to how much gladdening wine, with its alcoholic element, should one be allowed to imbibe. "There is nothing which brings so much sorrow to man," say our Sages (*Sanhedrin 70b*), "as does wine." This is a stern warning against intoxication induced by something with a capacity for bringing joy when used in moderation.



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PARSHA Q&A ?

Nasso

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 Nasso'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.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Beha'lotcha

STREET HEATER

"Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman that he had married." (12:1)

Imagine a Native American who has spent all his life on the reserve in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, finding himself on the East Side of New York City around 29th and Lex. He walks down the street and stops. His attention is riveted on a nearby window. Straddling the window is a rectangular metal box about three feet long by eighteen inches high. It blasts out hot air, chugging away in a relentless mechanical symphony. He lifts his eyes. Brownstone apartments rear upwards to the sky. And in each and every window he sees the same metal boxes. Hundreds of them. All are belching out hot air into the humid Manhattan sky.

He thinks to himself, "These white men must sure love the heat. It must be 102° and they still put these contraptions in their windows to heat the street!"

Sometimes an air conditioner can look like a street heater.

When Miriam found out that Moshe had separated from his wife, she thought that he had become conceited. She thought that Moshe viewed himself as being so close to G-d that he had risen beyond a normal marital relationship. She thought that this self-imposed monasticism was a product of an inflated ego. Of course, what would be considered conceit in Moshe would to us appear humility beyond anything we have ever seen or experienced. We have no parameters to equate our concepts of conceit and humility to Moshe. But, on that exalted level, Miriam thought that Moshe had

succumbed to pride.

But how could Miriam have thought that Moshe was acting out of pride? The Torah itself calls Moshe the "humblest of all men." Surely Miriam knew the Torah's evaluation of Moshe. How could Miriam have even suspected his motives?

Moshe may have been the humblest of all men, but he wasn't a shlepper. Being humble doesn't mean walking around with a hunched back and a miserable look on your face. Moshe knew that he was the king. But he also knew that compared to G-d, he was nothing. His humility lay in understanding, like no man before or since, exactly how small he was compared to G-d. It was because Moshe worked on himself to this point that G-d concretized his awareness by speaking to him 'face to face.' Then Moshe's humility became visceral. He could 'see' how small he was.

Humility is not something you can judge from the outside. Sometimes someone may seem very humble, but inside they are watching everyone watching them being humble. They are starring in their own mental movie called: "A Life of Total Humility." On the other hand, a king may appear to behave in a rather grand fashion, whereas inside he genuinely sees himself as totally unworthy.

Sometimes things aren't quite the way they seem. Sometimes a cool air conditioner can look like a street heater blasting out its own hot air.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Beha'lotcha

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban Pesach*. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of *Pesach Sheini*, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban Pesach* one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined

the Jewish People in the Exodus — some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Beha'alotcha

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *Levi'im* by sprinkling on them "mei chatat." What is "mei chatat"?
4. Which three "t'nuhot" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *Levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-

Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?

12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Beha'alotcha's Questions!

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

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the avoda; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.

12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

ERUVIN 72 - 85

“The strength of permitting is better.”

This rule is taught on our *daf* to explain why a *Tana* chose to teach in one manner rather than another. Our *gemara* states that he chose the manner that emphasized the opinion of the lenient opinion, since that is “better”.

Why is this so? Rashi elsewhere (*Beitza 2b*) explains that one who permits and is lenient has learned this with certainty from his teachers, and therefore has no qualms about ruling leniently. To rule strictly, however, does not require reliance upon what he heard from his teachers, and he may be strict even when something is permitted.

• Eruvin 72b

“This”, and there is no need to say “that”, is how he taught it.

This somewhat enigmatic statement is how the *gemara* explains why two cases are taught in a *beraita* on our *daf* even though teaching one case would suffice to know the ruling in the second case as well. (The topic in the *beraita* is if the height of a window in a wall between two courtyards affects the *halachot* of *eruvei chatzerot* there.)

If one case would be enough, why indeed is the second case taught? One explanation of the *Shelah Hakadosh* (Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi Horowitz, 16th century, Prague) is that the *Tana* heard both cases, taught at separate times, each one from a different *Tana*. In order to preserve the integrity of the Torah teachings he had learned, he taught them both.

• Eruvin 76a

Although a person is traditionally identified by his name and the name of his father, we find an exception to this practice in our gemara.

“Rabbi Zeira said to Rabbi Yaakov the son of the daughter of Yaakov”, to make a detour during his travel to Eretz Yisrael to pose a question to a certain Amora there regarding *eruvei techumin*. Rabbi Yaakov’s father name is not mentioned in connection with his own name, explains Rashi, since his father was not good and proper.

• Eruvin 80a

“Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘Giving money for something (movable) acquires it according to Torah Law; so why did the Rabbis say that meshicha – pulling and taking possession — is needed for acquiring? This is a gezera (Rabbinical decree) so that the seller will not say, ‘Your wheat burnt up in my attic.’”

Rashi explains that this was enacted to protect the buyer in the event a fire near the wheat (or any movable item) occurs after the money was given but before the wheat was moved from the seller’s domain. If we would rule that the money already bought the wheat, the seller would have no incentive to make great efforts to save the wheat he sold, since he already received payment and the wheat isn’t his. However, now that the Rabbis decreed that *meshicha* is needed for the sale, the buyer will not be in this predicament, since it will now be in his domain where he can care for it.

• Eruvin 81b

No Nose Job

From: Melissa

Dear Rabbi,

Let's say I know someone who wants to have a nose job because she feels she has too much of a "Jewish nose" and she feels self-conscious about it and she says it affects her confidence and she's not happy because of it. Would that be an acceptable reason to do it? And is there anything wrong with it from a Jewish point of view anyway?

Dear Melissa,

The Torah prohibits mutilating the body in any way. Therefore a person is not allowed to cut, scratch or gash the body, whether directly himself, or by having another person do so. In times of old, people would do this as an expression of mourning, or for spiritual elevation, or to seal a pact, or for any other number of reasons. Despite the fact that doing so might be for some significant or meaningful reason, it's still forbidden because it damages the integrity of the body. All the more so it's prohibited as an act of self-affliction, even if done for temporary alleviation, as in the case of what's become unfortunately too common nowadays - "cutting".

However, for the purpose of adorning the body, it is permitted to cut or pierce. The reason for this is that the person's intention is not to destroy the body, but rather to beautify it. So earrings are permitted for this reason, and the Torah also mentions the use of nose rings and other piercings that were practiced even by our Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Although this expression of beautifying and adorning is subjective and a function of cultural norms, much of today's piercings which are done to be cool by being

shocking and grotesque probably fit under the first category of forbidden mutilation. Tattoos would be another example of forbidden cutting or piercing, despite it being done to beautify or adorn the body (and a specific Torah prohibition against tattoos).

Similarly, not only is it permitted to cut the body in order to adorn it; it's also permitted to do so in order to remove harmful or even unattractive blemishes. So surgery to remove some harmful situation, or correct some harmful defect is certainly permitted. And even cosmetic surgery to remove or cover some conspicuous and embarrassing blemish like a mole, birthmark, scar etc. is also allowed. This is so even if the person's embarrassment seems exaggerated or unnecessary. Nevertheless, since he or she is sensitive enough about it to the point of wanting to remove it, they are permitted to do so.

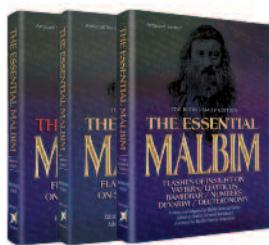
The question is, "Where does removing a 'Jewish nose' fit into this discussion"? On the one hand, it clearly can't be considered mutilation since it's being done to "enhance" one's appearance. On the other hand, it's clearly problematic to compare it to the removal of a mole or birthmark. If the surgery was needed to aid in breathing or to eliminate chronic congestion, for example, that would be corrective and permitted. And even if the person simply felt embarrassed by an oversized nose looking ugly or unattractive, that might also be acceptable.

However, it sounds like in the case of your friend, and that's certainly true in many cases, the only reason for having a nose job is to remove the "blemish" or "defect" of being and/or looking Jewish. This form of extreme, "neurotic assimilationism" is certainly unacceptable. The person would be better off learning to be proud of her Jewishness and working to acquire the level of maturity and inner peace to be happy with being and looking Jewish.

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NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT

Question: If I am learning Torah and hear a nearby person sneeze, should I interrupt my study in order to wish him the traditional blessing of "labriyut"?

Answer: Whether it is the modern "labriyut" or the old-fashioned "gezuntheit", it is a hallowed tradition to wish one good health when we hear him sneeze. Whether one should do so even at the expense of a breach in his study of Torah was already discussed in the Talmud (*Mesechta Brachot* 53a). In the *beit midrash* of Rabban Gamliel they did not interrupt their study to wish "marpei" — the original form of the blessing to one who sneezed.

Although this is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 246:17), there is a question raised by later authorities as to whether this also applies to our times when people interrupt their learning for other matters as well. There is a difference of opinion on this point between the *Prisha* and the *Turei Zahav*. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (*ibid.* 246:33) cites only the opinion of the *Prisha* that the restraint practiced in the *beit midrash* of Rabban Gamliel applies only to previous generations who never lifted their heads out of their *sefarim*, and that it is therefore quite in order for you to interrupt your learning to say "labriyut".

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A SEUDAT MITZVAH ANYWAY

Hundreds of guests in a hall in Herzliya anxiously waited for the *brit mila* to begin. Imagine their shock when the *mohel* emerged from his final pre-circumcision examination and announced that the baby was slightly jaundiced and the *brit* had to be postponed because it presented a danger to life.

What would now happen with the hundreds of portions prepared for this *seudat mitzvah*?

To the good fortune of all concerned the rabbi of the city,

Rabbi Yacobowitz, was present. He invited everyone to sit down and partake of the meal that he ruled was a *seudat mitzvah* despite the fact that the *brit mila* did not take place. His reasoning was that the postponement of the *brit mila* was a demonstration of our commitment to the halachic ruling that consideration of danger to life is placed above performance of this mitzvah. This alone was something to be celebrated with a *seudat mitzvah*.

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