

# OHRNET

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BAMIDBAR AND NASO OUTSIDE ISRAEL - SAVE THIS FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Naso

#### To Be Like the Stars

*“He counted them at the word of Hashem...” (4:49)*

The first Rashi in the Book of Bamidbar describes that Hashem commanded Moshe to count the Jewish People for the third time. Rashi points out that when something is dear to you, you count it. When something is dear to you, you give it a name. Interestingly the first Rashi in the Book of Shemot is very similar, “Even though He counted them in their lifetimes with their names, again He counts them in their deaths, to show their dearness, that they are like the stars, that Hashem brings them out and in by their number and name.

Why is the fact that the Jewish People are dear to Hashem because we are like the stars?

At the beginning of the Torah it says, “And Hashem made the two great luminaries, the greater luminary to rule the day and the lesser luminary to rule the night – and the stars.” Rashi says, “They were created equal in size, but the moon was reduced in size because it complained and said, ‘It is impossible for two kings to use the same crown.’”

According to the Midrash, the words “and the stars” in the verse mean that “...because He (Hashem) reduced the size of the moon, He made its hosts (the stars) many, to conciliate it.”

In other words, the entire purpose of the creation of the stars was to conciliate the moon, to ‘make it feel better,’ as it were.

The Midrash is telling us that just as the entire creation of the stars was to ‘be there’ for the Moon, so the creation of each one of us is ‘to be there’ for each other. We are dear in Hashem’s eyes when we are “like the stars;” when our entire focus is to raise the spirits of our fellow man.

## Beha'alotcha & Shavuot

### The 'Afluenza' Pandemic

*"We are contaminated by a human corpse – why should we be diminished by not bringing Hashem's offering in its appointed time? (9:7)*

**H**ow was your Shavuot?

I'm writing these words a few days before Shavuot, and I always approach the Chagim and specially Shavuot with a certain amount of trepidation.

The stakes are high. Hashem will give us the Torah again. I should be filled with great joy and expectation, as it says in the *sefarim*, waiting for that day of the 'marriage' of Hashem and us, the Jewish People.

But what if I fail to make that emotional, spiritual leap to the top of Sinai?

*"We are contaminated by a human corpse..."*

Many of us in this generation are contaminated by the 'human corpse' – by the desires fanned by the (anti-) social media, by a world so filled with affluence. The world is 'sick' with 'afluenza.' That is the real pandemic that is still raging.

A man goes into a shop to buy a watch. His eye settles on the glint of gold and he takes an interest in a fake Rolex. The owner of the shop says, "Don't take that thing – it's cheap. In six months, it's going to be asking you the time. Take this one instead. True, it doesn't look like much on the outside, but it will last for more than a lifetime."

But the buyer insists on purchasing the fake Rolex, and so the store owner says, "Okay, if that's what you *really* want – take it!"

What a person truly desires, Hashem gives.

One of the ways that Hashem interfaces with His creation is the characteristic called *Hod*. The week of the counting of the *Omer* that contains Pesach Sheini is the week of *hod*. *Hod* is connected to the verb *l'hodot*, "to admit," meaning that Hashem "admits" to what is in the heart of a person, that Hashem will grant what a person really wants – if his desire is authentic.

The Avnei Nezer asks why Amalek deserved the punishment of total obliteration. He answers that Amalek truly desired, in his heart of hearts, the removal of the Jewish People from existence. So, Hashem said, "Fine, you don't want the Jewish People to exist, so I will behave toward you as if they don't exist. And since the entire creation was for the purpose of the Jewish People to observe the Torah, there is no reason for creation to exist – in which case, you don't exist!"

*“We are contaminated by a human corpse – why should we be diminished by not bringing Hashem’s offering in its appointed time?”*

There’s something strange about this verse. The people who complain about not being able to bring the Pesach offering say that the reason they were unable to do so was because they were contaminated. So why then do they ask, “Why should we be diminished?” This means that they were asking, “Why should we be left out?” Didn’t they already answer their own question – that it was because they were contaminated?

The answer is that their question was not a question at all, but was rather a cry from the heart. And through this cry from the heart, an entire section of the Torah that had not been given at Mount Sinai was written into the Torah: the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, a second chance to bring the *korban* Pesach.

The *middah* of *hod* is both frightening and empowering. It is frightening because it means that if our minds and hearts are full of ‘afluenza,’ Hashem will let us buy that fake Rolex.

And it is empowering because if we really want Torah, then like those people who missed out on the *korban* Pesach, Hashem will turn the world over for us and fill our hearts with His love.

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## PEREK SHIRA

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

### THE SONG OF THE ORDINARY STALKS

*The other stalks say: “It [the meadow] will be clothed with sheep, and the valleys cloaked with grain – they trumpet and even sing.” (Tehillim 65:14)*

**W**heat and barley are offered in the Beit Hamikdash, but other grains, such as oats, rye, and spelt, apparently lack any connection to holiness. Nonetheless, they too provide sustenance for Hashem’s creatures – a no less essential role. When their stalks ripen and harden, “They trumpet and even sing” as the wind blows against them.

In the same way that grain-types vary in their refinement and capacity for holiness, people differ in their status in society, wealth, Torah knowledge and role in life. Some are so devoted to the Torah that they live in poverty. For others, their primary attachment to Hashem is by supporting poor Torah scholars with their wealth. Some dedicate their lives to projects of kindness and of mitzvahs, while the circumstances of others lead them to pursuits that are more mundane. Yet, everyone fills a unique purpose of some sort in Hashem’s universe. Their song rises equally, in a symphony orchestra to the Creator.

▪ Sources: Radak; Perek B'Shir

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

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# Q & A - NASO

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## Questions

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 Leviim is referred to in this Parsha?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are tameim (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?

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

## Answers

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of Leviim 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 nesiim should offer gifts.

# Q & A - Beha'alotcha

## Questions

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'nufot" (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. Whom 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?

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

## Answers

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 nes'i'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.

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## THE AMIDAH (PART 13) – BLESSING OF INGATHERING OF EXILES

*“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life.”*

(Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer)

The tenth blessing reads: “Sound the great *shofar* for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people, Israel.”

The next series of blessings in the *Amidah* all focus, in one way or another, on the redemption that we so anxiously await. The first of the blessings is the Ingathering of the Exiles. It opens with a plea for Hashem to “sound the great *shofar*.” Yeshayahu (27:13) prophesizes that the final redemption will be heralded in by the sound of a “great *shofar*” and it will begin with the Jews all around the world returning to the Land of Israel. In the Midrash (*Pirkei d’Rebbi Eliezer*), the *shofar* is identified as being one of the horns of the ram that Avraham offered in place of his son Yitzchak at the *Akeidah*. The Midrash relates that the first horn was blown at Mount Sinai as the Torah was being given to the Jewish Nation; and the second will be blown at the onset of the final redemption.

Why is the Ingathering of the Exiles the tenth blessing? The number ten signifies the concept of completeness. The *Zohar HaKadosh* teaches that any number multiplied by ten is the totality of that number. The Land of Israel is the holiest place in the world. Maimonides writes that there are ten levels of sanctity within the Land of Israel. In keeping with the connection to the Hebrew alphabet, the tenth letter is *yod*. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out that the letter *yod* is the smallest letter because it represents maximal spirituality with as little physicality as possible. For example, when ten men

come together to pray, they together achieve a level of sanctity that individuals cannot reach. Kaddish is recited, the *Amidah* is repeated and the Torah is read. None of this can be done if there are less than ten men present. Therefore, it is apt that the tenth blessing of the *Amidah* focuses on the ingathering of the exiles and the unity that that will ensue. Our blessing thus says, “Gather us *together*,” to emphasize that we will all serve Hashem – with our diversity and different customs – together in unified harmony.

“Blessed are You, Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people, Israel.” The Hebrew word for dispersed is “*nidchei*,” which also means rejected or gone astray. It is absolutely heartbreaking to ponder the large number of Jews in our generation who have chosen a path without an authentic relationship with Hashem. But the conclusion of our blessing is stirring and uplifting. It is full of confidence that at the auspicious moment when the *shofar* blast will be heard throughout the entire world, every Jew, even the most disenfranchised one in any location, will experience the reawakening of their soul and rush to join their greater Jewish family in the Land of Israel. Due to our absolute certainty that the forthcoming redemption is almost upon us and that it will include everyone, the blessing is written in the present tense and not in the future tense as might be expected. As if we feel it happening right now.

Many years ago, a friend of mine told me the most enchanting story. On Fridays here in Israel there is a delightful custom for sirens to sound at candle-lighting time to inform everyone it will soon be

Shabbat and it is time to finish up any last minute preparations. One Tuesday in his neighborhood at seven o'clock in the morning, there was a malfunction and the Shabbat sirens went off. He said that his six-year-old daughter was woken up by the sound of the sirens. Jumping out of bed, she immediately washed her hands and came running to the kitchen, overcome with excitement. "Did you hear that?" she shouted. "That is the Mashiach's *shofar*! He is finally here!" And she danced around the kitchen in absolute ecstasy. Afterwards, my friend

told me that he did not know what was more troublesome: having to explain to his daughter that it was not the Mashiach's *shofar* after all, or wondering to himself why *his* longing for the Mashiach wasn't as spontaneous and as innocent as his daughter's.

It is my heartfelt yearning that we all merit to hear the "great *shofar*" – that most anticipated and precious sound – reverberating throughout the entire world, very, very soon.

*To be continued...*

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## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### More Cheese Please

**M**any Jews have a tradition of eating cheese and other milky products on the Holiday of Shavuot. What do these dairy delicacies have to do with the day that celebrates receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai? The great Kabbalist Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli (d. 1648) explains that these foods are associated with Shavuot because an alternate name for Mount Sinai is Mount Gavnunim (see Ps. 68:16-17), and the name Gavnunim is related to the Hebrew word *gvinah* ("cheese"). The truth is that there are actually *three* Hebrew terms for "cheese" in the Bible (*gvinah*, *charitz*, and *shfot*), and each one appears only once. This essay explores the respective etymologies of the three words in question, and shows the nuances between them.

The Midrash (*Shemot Rabbah* 2:4) assumes that the name Mount Gavnunim somehow relates to *gvinah* and cheese-production. Cheese is produced by separating the most pristine curds of milk from any impurities (i.e., whey). In the same way, the Midrash expounds on the name Mount Gavnunim as referring to the fact that of all the possible mountains on which Hashem could have given the Torah, He chose Mount Sinai because it was clean and pure from idolatry, just like cheese is clean and pure. Moreover, the Midrash relates that just as cheese represents a dross-less substance, so were the Jewish

People at Mount Sinai in their purest, most pristine state such that all dross-like physical blemishes were miraculously healed. Interestingly, Rabbi Yosef Nissim Ben-Adahan (1846-1926) adds that the *gematria* of the word *gvinah* is seventy, alluding to the seventy planes of interpretation that apply to every aspect of Torah.

The word *gvinah* only appears once in the Bible – in a candid admission of Hashem's role in creating man: "Is it not like milk that You have poured me, and like cheese [*gvinah*] that You have solidified me?" (Iyov 10:10). As Gersonides and others clarify, this refers to Hashem taking the liquid/viscous human egg and causing it, after fertilization, to solidify into a full-fledged human being. Although *gvinah* only appears once in the Bible, it is the standard word for "cheese" in the Mishna (see *Brachot* 6:3, *Shabbat* 17:2, *Nedarim* 6:5, *Eduyot* 5:2, *Avodah Zarah* 2:4-5, and *Chullin* 8:1-3). This word was so popular in the ancient world that it was borrowed into Akkadian as *gubnatu* (although Assyriologists argue that *gvinah* is originally Aramaic, not Hebrew).

We can safely assume that *gvinah* derives from the triliteral root GIMMEL-BET-NUN. Yet, there is another Hebrew word that is also derived from that root – *giben* (Lev. 21:20), which is a blemish that

disqualifies a Kohen from service in the Temple. According to some commentators (like Rabbi Saadia Gaon, Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim*, and Abarbanel to Lev. 21:20), *giben* refers to a “humpback,” while the Mishna (*Bechorot* 7:2) explains that *giben* refers to somebody with abnormally long eyebrows. Modern Hebrew follows the former approach in using *giben* to mean “hunchback/humpback.” Either way, some explain the aforementioned Midrash about the name Mount Gavnunim as teaching that even blemishes like *giben* were healed at the Sinaitic Event.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) reduces the trilateral root GIMMEL-BET-NUN to its core biliteral root GIMMEL-BET, which he defines as referring to a “bulge” or something else that sticks out and is plainly visible. The simplest word that derives from this root is *gav* (“backside/top”), which refers to the exterior of a vessel or of one’s hand/body. This word also refers to one’s eyebrows (Lev. 14:9), because that patch of hair is plainly visible on one’s face.

Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *giben* either refers to one whose *gav* (“back”) is hunched, or to one whose other *gav* (“eyebrow”) is otherwise abnormal. Rabbi Pappenheim adds that the word *gavnunim* refers “bulgy mountains” that protrude upwards and are quite conspicuous. He connects this to *gvinah* in the sense of “cheese,” because that substance is likewise “mountainous” in its composition. Other words that Rabbi Pappenheim sees as derived from this biliteral root include *gavoah* (“high,” which is something that stands out and is especially visible from far away), *negev* (“highlands, south, dry”), *geveh* (“pools of water” that are located on the surface of the earth, which are “higher” than underground springs), *govai* (“grasshoppers,” which frequent the *geveh*), and *yogvim* (“trappers,” who are trained in catching *govai*).

In a slight variation on this theme, Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) traces the root GIMMEL-BET-NUN to the biliteral root GIMMEL-BET (which, in turn, he argues is ultimately derived from the monoliteral root GIMMEL). He sees the core meaning of this biliteral root to be “heights/upwards.” The most obvious derivative of this root is the Hebrew word *gavoah* (“high/height”). Rabbi Marcus also sees the word *gibbor* (“hero/warrior”) as deriving from this root, because

the *gibbor* bests his enemies and overpowers, thus rising “above” them. He also explains that the word *gabachat* (Lev. 13:41-42) said about a hairless patch of skin actually refers to the top part of one’s forehead which does not grow hair. That part of the body is obviously the highest point of one’s face, so it too relates to the core meaning of GIMMEL-BET.

Additionally, Rabbi Marcus notes that the Arabic word *jabal* (“mountain”) – from which the Hebrew word *gvul* (“border”) possibly derives – also stems from this root, because it is a topographical feature that extends upwards. The same is true of the Hebrew word *givah* (“hill”), which similarly extends upwards and contains the GIMMEL-BET string. Moreover, Rabbi Marcus sees the word *el-gavish* (Yechezkel 13:11, 13:13, 38:22) for “hail” as related to GIMMEL-BET, because such balls of ice fall from the Heavens, located “all the way up.” Interestingly, Alexander Kohut (1842-1894) in his *Aruch HaShalem* suggests connecting *gavnunim* with *jabal/gvul* via the interchangeability of NUN and LAMMED, so that *gavnunim* just means “mountainous/hilly.”

Finally, Rabbi Marcus notes that the root GIMMEL-BET-NUN also derives from the core meaning of GIMMEL-BET because it denotes some sort of hump or lump. It is unclear whether Rabbi Marcus was discussing GIMMEL-BET-NUN in the sense of “cheese” or *giben* in the sense of the blemish that disqualifies a Kohen.

Rabbi Avi Kobernick sees a connection between the root GIMMEL-BET-NUN and its metathesized forms GIMMEL-NUN-BET (“stealing”) and NUN-GIMMEL-BET (“drying”). In all three cases, an integral ingredient from the equation is “removed” from its proper place. In other words, when something is “stolen,” the thief takes an item from its proper location (in the possession of its true owner) and moves it elsewhere. When something “dries,” its moisture/liquid has been “removed” from within it. Similarly, when milk curdles and transforms into cheese, there is likewise a process whereby the liquid is “removed” and only the curds remain, thus leaving a more solid substance than previously existed.

In the book of Samuel, the story is told of Jesse sending his son David to bring ten *charitzei he'chalav* to a local warlord (I Shmuel 17:18). Targum Yonatan renders this term in Aramaic as *gwnin d'chalva* (literally, “cheese of milk”) as does Rashi and



*Machberet Menachem*. Therefore, we have a second term for “cheese” in Biblical Hebrew. The Talmud (*Bechorot* 6b), in fact, adduces this passage as one of two sources to the notion that milk and its byproducts are permitted to be consumed (i.e., they are not considered like eating a limb off a live animal).

On the other hand, the Midrash (*Midrash Shmuel* 20:4) does not explain that *charitzei he'chalav* refers to “cheese,” but instead interprets it as referring to young kids who had not yet been weaned from their mother’s milk (*Mahari Cohen*, *Eitz Yosef*, and *Radal*) or had just recently been weaned (*Yefeh Nof*). Such young goats or sheep were apparently considered something of a delicacy. Similarly, Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach in *Sefer HaShorashim* entertains the possibility that *charitzei he'chalav* does not mean actual “cheese,” but rather refers to thick, coagulated milk found in an animal’s utters.

Interestingly, Rabbi Avraham Maskileison (1778-1848) explains that the Talmud cited the verse about *charitzei he'chalav* only as a *possible* proof-text to the permissibility of consuming milk, but did not see it as a *conclusive* proof-text, because the Talmud took into consideration the possibility cited by the Midrash that *charitzei he'chalav* refers to young animals (or Ibn Janach’s explanation that it refers to leftover milk in the udders), not to their cheesetastic byproducts.

Several explanations have been offered to account for how the word *charitzei* relates to the trilateral CHET-REISH-TZADI in relation to “cheese”:

- Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* and the Yemenite commentator Rabbi Avraham ben Shlomo explains that *charitzei he'chalav* refers to “pieces of fresh cheese.” They note that the cheese-making process somehow involves shaking the cheese, which resemble the shaking movement of one who threshes. Therefore, since the “threshing process” is called *charutz* (see Isa. 10:22, 28:27), “cheese” came to be called *charitz*.
- Rabbi Yosef Kara (to I Shmuel 17:18) explains that because cheese was often collected in *charitzim* (“ditches”) that were dug into the ground (see Daniel 9:25, *Eruvin* 7:3, *Bava Kamma* 5:5, *Mikvaot* 5:6), the word

*charitz* came to be associated with “cheese” itself.

- The *Metzudat Tzion* (to I Shmuel 17:18) suggests that perhaps it was the accepted practice to “cut” cheese to specific measurements while it was still being processed, so because *charitz* means “to cut” (like in Iyov 14:5), that word also came to mean “cheese.”
- The Italian scholar Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Tedeschi-Ashkenazi (1821-1898) in his work *Hoil Moshe* (to II Shmuel 17:29) writes that cheese is called *charitz* (“sharp”) in reference to a specific form of cheese that is made from fermented milk that has a tarty/tangy/sharp flavor.
- Rabbi David Luria (1798-1855) writes that if *charitzei he'chalav* refers to animals that were *still nursing*, then the term derives from the word *charutz* (“diligent”), in the sense that someone diligently (i.e. quickly) separated these kids from their mothers while they were still quite young and tender.
- Rabbi Shmuel Yaffe-Ashkenazi (1525-1595) notes that if the term refers to young animals that were *recently weaned* from their mother’s milk, then *charitz* relates to “cutting” in the sense that they were “cut off” from their mother’s milk supply.

Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1520-1572), in his glosses to the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 89:4) records that in order to avoid using the same utensils for milk and meat, a custom developed to maintain two separate knives – one for dairy foodstuff and one for meaty foodstuff. He also notes that the prevailing custom is to somehow mark the dairy knife (ostensibly leaving the meaty one unmarked). Rabbi Yosef Teomim-Frankel (1727-1792) in his *Pri Megadim* (*Mishbetzot Zahav*, *Yoreh Deah* 89:7) finds an allusion to this last detail in the above-cited verse which juxtaposes the word *charitz* (“ditch/digging”) to *chalav* (“milk”), thus hinting to the notion that the utensils used for dairy foods should have a special indentation to mark them as dairy equipment.

In a later passage in the Book of Shmuel, King David was supplied with various foods during his travels in the midst of Absalom’s rebellion. One of those foods was *shfot bakar* (II Sam. 17:29). Targum Yonatan renders this term in Aramaic as *guvvin d'chalav*

(literally, “cheese of milk”). This gives us our third cheeselicious word.

As Midrash *Shocher Tov* (to Ps. 3) clarifies, *shfot bakar* does not refer to any ordinary cheese. It refers specifically to cheese made from bovine milk that was so slippery/fatty that flies could not stick to it, but would rather slip off. Rabbi Chaim Dov Rabinowitz (1909-2001) in *Daat Sofrim* (to II Shmuel 17:29) takes this to mean that *shfot bakar* was a type of cheese that was loaded with preservatives (salt?) to protect it from flies, so that the cheese can serve as provisions for long-term travel. (See responsa *Chatam Sofer* vol. 6, 22 who discusses why the Talmud in *Bechorot* 6b did not adduce the permissibility of milk/cheese from the verse that mentions *shfot bakar*.)

Radak and *Metzudat Tzion* explain that the word *shfot* is related to other verbs derived from the SHIN-PEH root, which mean “massaging/rubbing” as in *Iyov* 33:21 (see also Radak’s *Sefer HaShorashim*). Rabbi Pappenheim sees the core meaning of the biliteral SHIN-PEH as referring to a “rubbing-like movement” (*shifshuf*), whereby something moves from its place without being lifted up. In the case of “cheese,” he explains that *shfot bakar* refers to “soft cheese,” which can easily be spread onto one’s bread with a rubbing-like movement.

Rabbi Tedeschi-Ashkenazi in *Hoil Moshe* (to Ps. 127:5, II Shmuel 17:29, and *Yechezkel* 40:43) explains that *shfot bakar* is related to the homonymous *shfot* (the “act of placing a pot on a stovetop” next to the fire, see II Kings 4:38). He sees the shared meaning of both words to be the idea of “bringing things closer or joining them together.” In terms of the pot, *shfot* refers to bringing the pot

closer to the fire, so they can join together in the cooking process. In terms of cheese, *shfot* refers to the coming together of the cheesy particles within the milk to become one joined glob. He also sees *ashpah* (“bin/container” for arrows) and *shifshuf* (“rubbing”) as related to this word. (As an aside, Josephus mentions an area in Jerusalem called *Tyropoeon*, also known as “the Valley of the Cheesemakers.” Some scholars have identified this spot as *Shaar HaAshpah* because of the connection between *ashpah* and *shfot*.)

Alternatively, Rabbi Tedeschi-Ashkenazi suggests that *shfot* refers to the “wicker baskets” used to filter the fermenting milk by separating the curds from the dregs/whey.

Nonetheless, not all commentators explain that *shfot bakar* refers to “cheese.” Just like Ibn Janach wrote in *Sefer HaShorashim* that *charitzei he'chalav* might refer to the milk found in an animal’s utters, so does he mention the same explanation regarding *shfot bakar*. Moreover, Radak suggests that *shfot bakar* refers to the udders themselves. Finally, Rabbi Avraham ben Shlomo writes that *shfot bakar* refers to “butter,” not “cheese” (although this is difficult because “butter” is already mentioned in II Shmuel 17:29 with the word *chemah*, “butter”).

Postscript: According to tradition, King David died on the Holiday of Shavuot (see Jerusalem Talmud *Chagigah* 2:3, *Ruth Rabbah* 3:2). Perhaps because most instances of “cheese” in the Bible relate to King David, we have a custom to eat cheese on that holiday. Alternatively, because the permissibility of eating dairy is derived from a story concerning King David, as mentioned above, we honor his memory on the day he died by eating milk products.

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# SHAVOUT SPECIAL FEATURE

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## MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

**W**e have finally reached the end of the forty-nine days that connect Pesach to Shavuot. The Torah commands us to count each day, and the fiftieth day is designated as the festival of Shavuot. Fascinatingly enough, most festivals are named for the miracles that occurred on them – but not Shavuot. For example, Pesach means that Hashem had compassion for the Jewish People and “passed over” their homes during the final plague. Why, then, is Shavuot – which means “weeks” – called Shavuot? Why is it not named “Matan Torah” after the most consequential event to ever occur in world history, the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai? More than that, the name Shavuot refers to the seven weeks that *preceded* the giving of the Torah. It does not seem to be referencing the actual giving of the Torah at all!

Rabbi Moshe from Kobrin, Belarus (1783-1858), explained this seeming dichotomy with a delightful parable. A king hired four artists to decorate the throne room of his palace, assigning a different wall to each artist. The king explained to them that he wanted the room to reflect the opulence of his sovereignty, and also to be as elegant as possible. The four chosen artists should do whatever was necessary to make the king’s dream come true, sparing no money in the process. The goal was to turn the room into a beautiful and graceful space befitting of the king’s stature. Three of the artists invested all their artistic talents into the task. They worked hard for weeks, and each one created a stunning masterpiece. The fourth artist, however, didn’t come to the palace at all. In fact, he was so busy with other his other projects that he ignored the palace entirely. The three artists often wondered about the foolish behavior of their fourth “colleague.” It wasn’t just that he nothing to show the king, there was also the fact that, when the time came, he would surely be severely punished for neglecting his royal duties. On the day before the royal inspection, the fourth artist appeared at the palace. It was time for him to begin his work. The other three artists watched in amazement as the fourth artist covered his wall with a wall-to-wall mirror. On completion, it was clear that his wall was even more beautiful than the other three, because it reflected the collective beauty of the other three walls.

When the king arrived, he admired the workmanship of the three artists, but he was absolutely dazzled by the beauty of the fourth wall. He called for the fourth artist to praise him and to ask him where he got the idea from. The artist explained to the king that he could have decorated the wall just like his three colleagues, but he knew that a mirror would be even more stunning because it would reflect the beauty of the other three walls. And that he put up the mirror so that the king would always be able to enjoy the beauty of his throne room.

Rabbi Moshe from Kobrin explained that Shavuot is like the mirror in his parable. The seven weeks that lead up to Shavuot are given to us expressly to focus on ourselves and to identify those aspects within us that require improvement. And not just to recognize them but to work on them as well. As we reach the climax of our seven-week long journey, Shavuot lets us step back and marvel at the reflection of all the stunning improvements we have made. Each day that we count during the Omer represents another moment of spiritual development. Each week that accumulates is another week spent on introspection and on inner growth. Each week attests to our desire to strive to reach higher and higher in the spiritual realms.

Rabbi Moshe from Kobrin teaches us that one of the aspects of Shavuot that makes it so incredibly precious is the seven-weeks of preparation and self-improvement. Receiving the Torah is not something that can be done without any prior growth. Receiving the Torah requires focus and dedication *before* the actual moment when we are given the Torah. And this is why Shavuot is called Shavuot and not Matan Torah. To call the festival

Matan Torah would leave us with the mistaken impression that we are commemorating only the moment when we stood at Mount Sinai and Hashem gave us His Torah. But nothing could be further from the truth. We are celebrating the giving of the Torah because *for seven weeks* we invested in our spiritual growth. For seven weeks we have worked on our relationship with Hashem *and* on our relationships with those around us. We have spent seven weeks in self-introspection and self-growth and now we are ready to receive Hashem's pure Torah.

Together with Pesach and Succot, Shavuot is one of the three times of the year when we are commanded to come to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Rabbis ask which part of the process was most beloved by Hashem. Was it the process of traveling, when one constantly needed to strengthen oneself with faith and belief? Or was it when they were actually standing in courtyard of the Holy Temple, basking in the unparalleled delight of being in the domain of the Divine Presence? Our Sages cite a verse in Shir Hashirim (7:2), "How beautiful are your feet in your shoes," and they explain that it is the moments when the Jewish Nation is "travelling" – while we are still "wearing our shoes" – and battling the negative inclinations. This part of the process is most beloved by Hashem. The preparation and the struggle are truly beloved by Him.

Perhaps this idea can explain another seeming anomaly. If one counts, there are a total of twenty-six verses in Sefer Shemot (19:1) that describe the Jewish nation's arrival at Mount Sinai, and all of the preparations that took place until the Ten Commandments were given. Then there are only thirteen verses dedicated to the Ten Commandments. Parenthetically, Kabbalistic sources point out that twenty-six is the numerical total of the Ineffable four-letter Name of Hashem, and that the number thirteen equals the word *echad* – one." These two numbers hint to fact that it is Hashem alone Who is One. The Rabbis posit that the fact that there are twice as many verses describing the *preparations* for the giving of the Torah as there are for actual of the Torah suggests that preparing for that sublime moment might be an even more elevated plane than the moment itself.

As we approach the glorious and beloved festival of Shavuot, we have a time to look back at the seven weeks that we have just travelled. A time to reflect (pun intended) on what we have achieved. To look back and see the magnificent reflection that is seven *shavuot* of drawing closer to Hashem.

May we all be blessed with an uplifting and inspiring Shavuot. May it be a Shavuot that reflects our true desire to be able to continue growing closer to our Father in Heaven throughout the entire year – day by day and week by week.

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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## Naso

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 more than 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 must pay an additional fifth of the baseprice 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 Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her, but, rather, it brings her 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 Nissan 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 offering.

## Beha'alotcha

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the Menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning through 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, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the korban Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini – allowing them 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. Hashem 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. Hashem 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. Hashem 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 Miriam to be healed, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

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# PARSHA PONDERERS

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by Rabbi Rafi Wolfe

## Shavuot

### Torah is a Gift, Not a Burden

“Hashem, our G-d, with love give us festivals of happiness, holidays and times of joy, this holiday of Shavuot, the time of the giving of our Torah” (*from the Festival Shmoneh Esrei and the evening Kiddush prayers*)

In our calendar, Shavuot always occurs on the sixth day of the month of Sivan. Something not mentioned explicitly in the Torah is the event that Shavuot commemorates. As noted in our prayers, Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This is why we read the Ten Commandments on Shavuot morning. There is actually a disagreement in the Talmud about on what day the Torah was given (*Shabbat* 86b). The *Chachamim* say that the Torah was given on the sixth of Sivan, whereas Rabbi Yossi says that it was given on the seventh of Sivan. Due to the underlying basis of their disagreement, we actually rule like Rabbi Yossi (*Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* 494:1). If so, how can we say that the Torah was given on the sixth, when the ruling is that it was given on the seventh?

On Seder night we recite the questions of the four children. The “wise son” asks: “What are the laws and statutes that Hashem commanded us?” It’s interesting that he’s called “wise” if he doesn’t know the basics of Judaism. Therefore, some explain his question as follows: Other nations have only seven commandments that they are required to follow, yet we have 613. Why were we given this apparent burden? An answer: “Hashem gave us all of these commandments *for our good*.” (Ibn Ezra to Deuteronomy 6:20) They are in fact *not* a burden. Our Sages say that Hashem gave us an abundance of mitzvahs *lezakot et Yisrael*. This is usually translated as “in order to give us merit,” but it can also be read to mean “to purify us.” Our soul is so great that it’s like a diamond, which needs more polishing than the average precious stone. That’s why we have so many mitzvahs.

The Talmud recounts a fascinating drama that occurred when Moshe went to Heaven to receive the Torah. The angels wouldn’t let him take it since they wanted it for themselves. Moshe then showed them how the mitzvahs in the Torah apply only to humans. (*Shabbat* 88b-89a) If so, what were the angels thinking? They wanted to give Moshe a message: If the Torah would indeed be applicable to them, they would jump at the opportunity to get it. It may seem daunting, but it is not a burden. The Torah is actually an opportunity.

We are taught that Hashem offered the Torah to the entire world. He went to each nation and offered it to them, but they all rejected it. He offered it to the Eisav, and Eisav asked what was in it. Hashem gave an example: “Don’t murder.” They responded that we had already received a blessing that “By your sword you shall live.” (Genesis 24:40) Therefore, the Torah is incompatible with us. Hashem then offered it to Yishmael and they asked what was in it. Hashem said, “Don’t steal.” They responded that a prophecy was said about them that, “Our hands will be in everything and everyone’s hands will be in us.” (Genesis 16:12) This meant that they were suited for theft and they therefore likewise rejected the Torah. Hashem eventually offered it to the Jewish People, who gladly accepted it. (*Sifrei Devarim* 343)

What’s confusing about this story is why Hashem did not explain to them that there was really no contradiction? True, Eisav was destined for killing. However, there are permitted ways to kill. Perhaps they’ll be hired as soldiers to protect the Jewish People. Yishmael interpreted “Our hands will be in everything and everyone’s hands will be in us” to mean they were suited for theft. Another explanation

is that they would be dependent on everyone, and everyone will be dependent on them (Targum Onkelos). No need for theft.

We can say that Hashem knew that the other nations had the wrong attitude about what Torah really is. As a result, there was no convincing them. If someone asks you to do them a favor, no matter how giving you are, you'll ask what it is. The other nations thought Hashem was asking them to do Him a favor, and accept His Torah. They thought He had this burden called 613 mitzvahs, and that He "needed" someone to observe them.

In contrast, when someone offers you a present, you don't ask what it is. The Jewish People knew that the Torah was a present and therefore accepted it without asking.

One problem with this approach would seem to be a comment made by Rashi. He describes the Torah as a yoke on our necks. We are also taught to toil in Torah (Rashi to Leviticus 26:3), and that there are harsh consequences if we don't. This would make the Torah to sound more like a burden and not like a present. In fact, however, this is not really a question. If someone were to offer us a treasure map, which would require traveling the globe and excavating

deeply into the Earth, would we call it a burden? It sure would not be easy, but the immense treasure at the end would provide tremendous joy. The Torah isn't always easy, but it's so sweet that it's well worth it. It's a "burden" for our sake, for our betterment. And that provides true joy!

And now, let's head back to our initial question. Even according to Rabbi Yossi, the Torah was meant to be given on the sixth of Sivan. However, Moshe realized that the Jewish People weren't ready. They needed one more day of preparation. Hashem agreed, and the Torah was given on the seventh. (Shabbat 87a) If the Torah was a burden, would Hashem really wait until we were ready? He would give it to us anyways, ready or not. But, since the Torah is for our good, Hashem pushed the date off for us. When we stress on Shavuot that it's the day of the giving of our Torah, the word *matana*, gift, is quite apropos. It may not be the day that when we received the Torah, but it's the day we realized that the Torah is a gift. Even after the Tablets were broken, we understood that the Torah is not a burden but is for our betterment. It is for our benefit.

*This essay is based on a lecture given by Rav Zev Leff*

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## TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

### Yevamot 72-78

#### King David's Halachic Status

*Rava said, "Amasa spoke up and said that he had heard from the Beit Din of Shmuel HaNavi that a Moavite woman is permitted to join the Jewish People (after conversion). He strongly added that, 'Anyone who does not accept this as halacha will be killed by the sword!'"*

In honor of the upcoming holiday of Shavuot, we will address an issue taught in our *gemara* that played a key role in determining King David's status based

on his ancestry as taught in the Megillah of Rut (4:17).

King David's great-grandmother was Rut, who was of Moavite origin and converted to Judaism. Based on this ancestry, King David's halachic status was called into question. What was the basis for this critical halachic decision?

The Torah states, “An Amoni or Moavi may not enter the assembly of Hashem – even the tenth generation may not enter the assembly of Hashem.” This teaches that it is forbidden for a Jewish person to marry a Moavi person even after conversion (Devarim 23:4 and Rashi). The Torah gives the reason for this particular intermarriage ban as being the result of the Moavites not offering bread and water to the Jewish People during their travels in the desert (Devarim 23:5).

The traditional perspective is that it was the responsibility of the men to welcome the tired strangers, so the prohibition was limited to them. Doeg argued that the men should have welcomed the men and the women should have welcomed the women – an assertion that was rejected by Shmu’el and his court.

Since Rut came from the Moavi nation, there was strong contention that her descendants – in particular, her great-grandson David – were of tainted halachic status. Based on the proper rules of analyzing the Torah, the Beit Din convincingly reasoned that the Torah forbade both the *men and the women* converts from the Moavi people to be halachically acceptable marriage partners. This was their punishment for not even minimally aiding the Jewish People with basic needs in the desert. In a modest fashion, the men from this nation should have offered provisions for the Jewish men, and the women should have come with sustenance for the Jewish women. Since neither men nor women offered food and drink, the Torah decreed that they were all forbidden to marry. Based on this, the Beit Din was ready to announce that David was not part of the Jewish People and of course not even be considered for the monarchy.

This was significant not only for David, but held enormous ramifications for the entire Jewish nation. A man named Doeg was King Shaul’s counselor and led the “movement” for the Beit Din to have David declared unfit to become king since his great-grandmother was originally a Moavi woman before her conversion to Judaism. King Shaul and his men took virtually every possible step to be rid of David, the person destined to replace King Shaul as monarch.

However, before there was a final decision on David’s status, there was a critical turning point, as the Sage Rava teaches in our *sugya*: “Amasa spoke up and said that he had heard from the Beit Din of Shmuel HaNavi that a Moavite woman is permitted to join the Jewish People (after conversion). He strongly added that, ‘Anyone who does not accept this as halacha will be killed by the sword!’”

This teaching became the accepted halacha, and David’s Jewish status was upheld without further debate. The commentaries explain that Amasa’s statement was based on Shmuel HaNavi teaching him that only the Moavi male converts were forbidden – but not the women. This teaching was what is known as a “*halacha l’Moshe m’Sinai*” – a halacha that Hashem told Moshe at the time of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This halacha had been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation and could not be disputed by any normal analytical method and was not up for debate. Shmuel HaNavi was someone of very great Torah wisdom and of the highest integrity, as was required of any true prophet.

Commentaries offer an explanation for the seemingly unusual and brutal threat made by Amasa to kill any dissident with his sword. It was the way of kings to eliminate traitors and rebels with the death penalty of being killed with the sword. Now that that David’s untainted status had been clearly established, and the pathway for his becoming the next King of Israel, anyone objector was seen as one revolting against King David, and was deserving of this particular punishment.

“*David, Melech Yisrael, Chai v’Kayam.*” King David’s was born on Shavuot and passed from this world on Shavuot. His life was truly governed by the Torah, its mitzvahs and the halacha. And, though his monarchy appears to presently be in a “fallen” state, we are promised that the Mashiach will a descendant of his, who will help protect the Jewish People from all enemies and unite the nation in the knowledge of Hashem and His Torah.

▪ *Yevamot 77a*



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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

## Naso

### Nazir: Separate & Sanctified

In this week's Torah portion we are introduced to the Nazir. When one takes the Nazirite vow, he obligates himself in three ways: (1) to abstain from wine and grapes, and all derivative products, (2) to refrain from cutting his hair, and (3) to ensure he does not become ritually impure by contact with a corpse.

The word *nazir* means to keep away from, or to separate. It is tempting to interpret *nazir* as an abstainer since he must stay far away from grapes and wine. However, this clearly cannot be the essence of a Nazir since this is only one of the three obligations he assumes and is not the distinguishing feature of *nezirut*.

In fact, none of the three, not even the sum of all three, represent the essence of a Nazir. When the Torah sums up the whole meaning of *nezirut*, it says: *All the days of his nezirut, he is holy to Hashem*. The prohibitions of *nezirut* are only outward manifestations, or consequences of his holiness. Indeed, the presence of both prophets and Nazirites in Israel's midst was considered a sign of special Divine favor.

The word *nazir* in this context also does not denote one who keeps away from others. Rather, it reflects one from whom others keep away, because he is seeking to be alone with Hashem. When the term is used in the agricultural context, it means a vine which must be left untended, to grow on its own during the Shemita and Yovel years.

The *nezer*, the crown that adorns the head of the king, puts the rest of the people at a distance from him. Similarly, the regimented striving and living of the Nazir sets him apart, and elevates him above his peers. He devotes himself to be "Holy to His G-d" with all his being and aspirations. It is as if he draws a *nezer*, a circle, around himself and Hashem, to create an isolated existence with his Maker. It is not a hermit's physical isolation, but rather a mental and spiritual isolation in the midst of the bustle of everyday life. Rav Hirsch further explains how abstention from wine, hair growth, and refraining from contact with the dead aid this process of withdrawal into one's self, so that the *nazir* may improve spiritually and morally.

When his period of *nezirut* is over, he brings a special offering. The focal point of the Nazirite offering is the ram brought as a *shelamim*, a peace offering. This animal represents the antithesis of his *nezirut*. The abstinent and withdrawn state was never meant to be permanent. Rather, the temporary withdrawal from communal life, if used properly, led to a spiritual and moral refinement, which was then rededicated to the community. Just as formerly he distinguished himself by his withdrawal and renunciation, now he is to distinguish himself and lead the people. He is an *ayil* (ram, also meaning strength) who lives at peace with Hashem (*korban shelamim*). He becomes a paragon of strength for his people, who models the blissful harmony of a life lived in the presence of Hashem.

- Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 6-1-14

# Beha'alotcha

## Timing is Everything

Certain offerings are required by the Torah to be brought *b'moado*, at their designated time. We find this term specifically in reference to the Korban Pesach (brought on the fourteenth of Nisan), and the Korban Tamid (the daily morning and afternoon offerings.) Our Sages understood the word *b'moado* as requiring the offering be brought at its designated time, even if that day falls out on Shabbat. This teaching is extended to all of the festival offerings, as similar terminology is used in their instruction. Thus, the normal restrictions of Shabbat are set aside, so that the daily Korban Tamid and the festival offerings may each be brought *b'moado*.

Rav Hirsch sheds light on the reason for this law. It appears that the factor included in the concept of *b'moado* expresses the same truths demonstrated also by the laws of Shabbat. The requirement of *b'moado* expresses these truths in such a positive manner that their realization can set aside Shabbat in the Beit Hamikdash.

The festivals are called *moadim* (*mo'ed* in the singular). As its etymology (related to *vaad* or *l'hitva'ed*) indicates a meeting, it is a time designated by Hashem for us to meet with Him. We respond to this summons with an offering to Hashem. All of these *moadim* are based on some special act of Providence, which, in turn, invested each of these times with its own special meaning for our moral elevation. Pesach commemorates our redemption from Egypt; Shavuot – the revelation at Sinai; Succot – the special protection of the clouds of glory afforded us in the desert. These *moadim* attest to the fundamental fact of Hashem's creation and guidance of the world, on the basis of the historical experience of our national development. In this way, all of the *moadim* are merely new attestations to Shabbat.

The prohibition against *melachah* – creative activity – on Shabbat is meant to instill an awareness of Hashem as Creator and Master. By refraining from creative activity, we acknowledge that the world is not ours. The *korbanot* of the *moadim* are offered on the day of remembrance of Hashem's revelation. When *melachah* is done for this purpose, it does not *desecrate* the Shabbat, but rather *sanctifies* it.

This may explain the festival offerings, but what about the Korban Tamid? Because these daily morning and afternoon offerings are also qualified with *b'moado*, we learn that they too function as a *moed*, a summons to meet with Hashem. Even the ordinary day can stand next to the unique events of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot in declaring Hashem's glory and mastery. The rising sun in the morning and the setting sun in the afternoon each become a *mo'ed*, a time that attests to Hashem's presence. At these times, we bring a *korban*, to seek his closeness at the time of His revelation. Accordingly, the time of the Korban Tamid is a revelation of Hashem in the present just as the Shabbat attests to His revelation through Creation. Again, the *melachah* done for this purpose does not desecrate the Shabbat, but sanctifies it.

- Source: Commentary, Bamidbar 9:2