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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON NASO - 5762

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From: National Council of Young Israel [YI\_Torah@lb.bcentral.com]  
Parshat Naso - Rabbi Steven Pruzansky Parshat Naso 14 Sivan 5762  
Daf Yomi: Baba Batra 66  
Guest Rabbi: RABBI STEVEN PRUZANSKY Assoc. Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

It is axiomatic that the Torah contains no superfluous words, and that every letter holds the infinite wisdom of HaShem - all of which makes the long, repetitive account of the offerings of the Nesi'im (the tribal princes) that much more difficult to understand. For twelve consecutive days, the princes brought their dedication offerings to the Mishkan, and each day's identical offerings are exhaustively and precisely detailed. Why? Why couldn't the Torah simply say that such-and-such were the offerings of the Nesi'im every day, and then mention each of the Nesi'im by name? Elsewhere the Torah uses such a phrase - "dvar yom b'yomo" - "each on its own day"? Why was it necessary to state that each day, each Nasi brought this and this and this...all identical? And how indeed was it possible that each Nasi brought the identical korban? And if the Torah itself says: "Vayakrivu es korbanam" - "they brought their offerings" (Bamidbar 4:10), why were they actually offered on consecutive days? Why not do it all at once? And how can HaShem be praised if the exact offering is brought day after day?

Don Yitzchak Abarbanel suggests an answer that is interesting in its own right and because it seemingly conflicts with a Midrash that he himself quotes. Don Abarbanel writes that the Nesi'im gathered in advance and agreed to bring identical offerings. As they were inducted as the tribal heads, each one wanted to ensure that there would be no religious one-upsmanship, competition, jealousy or strife among them. They did not wish to compete with each other as to who would bring what korban, in what quantity, at what expense, and in what order. Each wanted to invoke HaShem's blessings on his tribe. So they resolved to bring the same offering, and all at the same time. "And the princes brought their offerings before the altar" (ibid).

At this point, HaShem intervened: "One Nasi per day, one Nasi per day will bring their offerings" (ibid 11), not all at once. If all the korbanos were brought together, people would not know that each Nasi was bringing an individual korban. They would merely think it was a general communal offering. Nor would the onlookers know that everyone was bringing the same offering, in the excitement and commotion of all the offerings. HaShem decreed that each Nasi would receive the appropriate honor, and that the identical korbanos would be offered in the order of the masa'os, as the tribes marched in formation. And so each day's korban was punctuated by "Zeh" - this - no tribe's offering was greater than that of another.

Yet, Don Abarbanel also quotes the Midrash that each Nasi brought his korban on his own initiative, and each had its own symbolism and meaning. Each Nasi was making a statement about his tribe by focusing on the essential tribal designation that emerged through the blessings of Yaakov, or on some defining moment in the tribe's existence. Yehuda brought his korbanos to symbolize his royalty, Yissachar to express his profound connection to Torah, Zevulun corresponding to his partnership in Torah with Yissachar, Reuven in commemoration of his dramatic but incomplete rescue of Yosef, and on and on.

Chazal expounded each entity and its unique symbolism for that tribe - the silver plate, the silver basin, the golden pan, every korban, etc. Each Nasi then brought the same thing, on his own, but with a different kavana - a different mindset, with a different set of experiences, perspective and motivation.

But how can both ideas be correct? Either all the Nesi'im acted in concert and intentionally brought the same offering, or each one acted on his own initiative - leaving the potential for religious competition unabated?

The answer is that, indeed, both ideas are correct - because two people can do what appear to be identical acts, and yet those acts are not at all alike or even similar. Isn't that the reality of Jewish life? Of halacha? We all do what appears to be, on the surface, the same things: we daven the same words, we make the same brachos, we learn the same Daf in Daf Yomi, we men wear identical pairs of tefillin. And yet, in Tefila, one person's soul can be communing with HaShem, another person's mind can contemplate the abstruse ideas of prayer, another's spirits can be lifted by the experience, and still another is eager to finish mouthing the words so he can return to the conversation he is having with his neighbor.

It all sounds the same and looks the same - but in fact it is completely different, worlds apart, night and day in its essence. The effort, sincerity, commitment and substance that we put into each mitzva is what makes the crucial difference in our lives - what makes the Torah for some the elixir of life and for others (G-d forbid) a lifeless, spiritless, insipid shell.

The Nesi'im to their credit did agree on the details of their individual offerings. But each offering is repeated in totality to remind us that no two avodos are the same, and no two people are identical, and no one's relationship with HaShem is akin to another's. Each korban in its every particular was wholly unlike any other in what most counted - the intention of the giver - and so this idea had to be recorded by the Torah for posterity.

One would think that every Bar Mitzva is also the same - usually, the boy puts on tefillin, reads the Torah and haftara, offers a Dvar Torah, receives presents, etc. But one who thinks that each one is identical because the external form appears the same is gravely mistaken. Each person is unique, and will in his life accentuate a different aspect of Torah and Avoda - just like each tribe did. Each child will grow to make a unique contribution to Jewish life that only he or she can. Every person's Divine service is distinctive and inimitable. Each day - each moment in time - has its Nasi, and the measure of our success is seizing that moment for the glory of our Creator, His Torah, and for the benefit of Klal Yisrael.

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This Dvar Torah was written in honor of Ari Pruzansky, whose Bar Mitzva is being celebrated today.

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand [ryfrand@torah.org] "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Nasso

Taking The Sin Of Sotah Back To Its Original Source

The laws concerning the Nazir [a person who vows not to drink wine] are written immediately following the laws concerning the Sotah [the unfaithful wife]. The Rabbis comment that the purpose of the juxtaposition of these two parshios is to teach us that anyone who sees the disgrace of a Sotah should (immediately) take a vow to abstain from wine [Sotah 2a].

The Jerusalem Talmud [Nedarim 29a] states that, in general, it is not an admirable practice to accept prohibitions beyond those that the Torah mandated. However, the exception to that rule is a person who accepts the restrictions of a Nazirite upon himself after having seen a woman go through the Sotah process.

The question may be asked, why is accepting Nazirus the appropriate response to seeing a Sotah? Apparently there is some kind of

connection between wine and infidelity. What is the nature of this relationship?

The Zohar addresses this connection. The Zohar begins by asking the following question: Why is a Nazir forbidden, not only to drink wine, but also to eat grapes? There are a number of similarities between the laws of the Priesthood and the laws of the Nazirites. A Kohen is prohibited to participate in the Service of the Bais Hamikdash [Temple] after he drank wine. However, the Kohen is not in any way restricted after having consumed grapes. The Nazir on the other hand, is restricted, not only from wine but from grapes as well. Why the difference?

The Zohar answers that the reason why a Nazir cannot eat grapes is because grapes were the food that Adam ate when he consumed the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. There are various opinions in the Talmud as to the nature of this "Etz HaDa'as". Some say it was an olive tree; some say it was wheat; one opinion was that it was a grapevine. The Zohar follows this last opinion. The Zohar explains that the reason why a person must declare himself a Nazir and abstain from wine and grapes after seeing what happens to a Sotah is because he thereby "corrects" the sin of Adam who violated G-d's command and ate grapes from the Tree of Knowledge.

Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995), in his sefer "Mayan Beis Ha'Shoevah" helps us to explain this Zohar. Rav Schwab says that when Adam ate from the Etz HaDa'as, he diminished his "Tzelem Elokim" [Image of G-d] to a large extent. Human beings are created in the "Image of G-d". The essence of being "G-d - like" is that man controls his passions and not vice versa.

Rav Ruderman, zt"l, (1901-1987) used the following verse to illustrate this concept. The pasuk says, "And the superiority of man over the animal is nothing (ayin)..." [Koheles 3:19]. Rav Ruderman always used to interpret this pasuk (which classically is interpreted as meaning there is no difference between man and animal) to mean that the superiority of man over animal is the former's ability to say "ayin" (No!)

If one leaves his picnic basket unattended on a farm for a few moments, inevitably, the cow or the goat will be poking its head in the basket and eating the food. But, we may ask - how can he do that? The food is not his! The answer is that when an animal sees food or smells food, it wants the food and it eats food. It does not ask any questions. This is the nature of animals. Their passions and instincts control them. On a very basic level, human beings must know that not everything is theirs to take. Forgetting for a moment the issue of the laws of Kashrus [Kosher Food laws], a person can not just take food that looks appealing, if the food does not belong to him! That level of inhibition separates man from beast. Man can say, "Yes I know that I am hungry and I would like the food very much but I can't take it because it's not mine."

As Jews, we have many more restrictions. However, the ability of all people to abstain and say "No" distinguishes them from animals. That represents being created in G-d's Image. Man's awareness that certain things are morally "off-limits" for him is what defines him as a G-d - like creature.

On that fateful day, when the first man ate from the Tree of Knowledge, he diminished his Image of G-d. G-d told him "do not eat". The snake came and said "but it looks so enticing and it tastes so wonderful". The snake convinced Adam and he ate from the Tree of Knowledge. He let his passions, to a certain extent, control him. Those grapes that he ate diminished his "Tzelem Elokim".

Likewise, this Sotah - if she has in fact done what she was accused of - has also lost her "Tzelem Elokim". A woman who has been unfaithful to her husband, who has given in to her passions, has, in effect, lost the ability to say "No". She has again altered the "Tzelem Elokim". That is why the Sotah ritual - uncharacteristic of virtually any other halacha - consists of purposely humiliating the woman. In general, even when a Jewish Court administers the death penalty or lashes to an individual, the halacha is very specific about "choosing a compassionate form of death". Beis Din [Jewish Court of Law] is consistently warned to remember the admonishment of "Love your neighbor as yourself" when administering punishments.

The exception to this rule is the Sotah. Imagine the scene. She comes into court. Her hair covering is ripped off. Her hair is purposely messed up. Her clothing is torn and made to hang on her. She is literally publicly humiliated.

There is a message here. We do not usually humiliate people. Why? They are "Tzelem Elokim". But this woman has diminished her "Tzelem Elokim". She has brought this upon herself. She has humiliated herself! Beis Din is just bringing out into the open the humiliation that she has already brought upon herself in private. She is the one who has given into her passions and her lusts, thereby humiliating the "Tzelem Elokim" within her. The Court is merely administering "tokenism" vis a vis what she has already done to herself. [Note: Even if she in fact did not commit adultery, she would at least be guilty of secluding herself (Yichud) with another man and of violating her husband's specific warning (Kinui) not to allow herself to be in the private company of that individual.]

The potential Nazir sees all of this. He sees a woman who has diminished the "Tzelem Elokim". He sees this amazing scene of the court humiliating her to emphasize the diminishment that she has caused to the "Tzelem Elokim". The Sages therefore advise him "take a vow to abstain from wine" - go back to the source of the problem. Go back to the original sin and stop eating grapes and wine, because that is where it all started. It all started with the first man, when Adam gave in to his desires. The correction of the problem of the diminution of the Image of G-d amongst mankind lies in reversing Adam's original sin.

#### The Way To Raise a Nazir Is To Be A Nazir

Rav Schwab also provides a tremendously novel interpretation of certain pasukim in this week's Haftorah. We learn of the famous story of Shimshon [Samson]. An angel told Manoach and his wife that they would have a child. This was to be a special child who would be a Nazir for life. Even during her pregnancy, Manoach's wife was forbidden to consume wine or grapes. The child was to be a Nazir literally from the time of conception.

Later in the chapter, Manoach prayed to G-d that the angel should return to him and his wife because "I have to know how I am to raise this child". The question can be asked, what was Manoach really asking for here? The angel already conveyed the basic information that was necessary to know: The child will be a nazir and the mother should not drink wine or eat grapes even during her pregnancy. What more is there to know?

It is unlikely to suppose that Manoach was asking for information about the laws of being a nazir. For that information one does not need an angel. Manoach should simply go to his Rabbi or Judge and study the laws of Nezirus.

Nevertheless, the angel did return. What did he tell Manoach in response to his request? "From everything that I warned your wife, guard (tishamer). Do not consume that which comes from the grape of the vine, etc." [Shoftim 13:13-14]. So what in fact is new in the angel's answer? He just seems to be repeating what he already told Manoach's wife!

Rav Schwab explains that Manoach did not have a question regarding the laws of being a Nazir (a 'Nezirus shaylah'). He was asking a question regarding the laws of raising children (a 'Chinuch shaylah'). "How," asked Manoach, "can I raise a Nazir, if I myself am not a Nazir?" He was asking how one can raise a child to do something if the father himself does not do those same things.

According to Rav Schwab, the angel responded, "Yes, in fact, you must also observe these laws yourself". This is an elementary principle in child raising, but it is a tremendously novel interpretation of the pasuk in Shoftim. In Hebrew grammar, the verb "Tishamer," which appears in the angel's instructions to Manoach can be interpreted in one of two ways. The standard interpretation is "SHE should guard HERself" (third person, referring to Manoach's wife). Rav Schwab interprets the word in accordance with the second possible translation: "YOU should guard YOURself" (second person, referring to Manoach).

The angel was conceding Manoach's point: You are correct that if you do not observe the Nazirite laws yourself, you will never be able to succeed in raising a Nazir. Therefore, the solution to the problem is for

you to keep these laws yourself. "From everything that I warned your wife - guard yourself against, as well!" "Do as I say, not as I do" is terrible pedagogy. Rather, one must teach "Do as I do".

Again, while this is a very novel interpretation of the pasuk, it is one of the most basic principles of education. We cannot preach to children. The only way to teach is by example.

There is a famous incident told about the Rebbe of Ger. A disciple complained to the Rebbe that his son was not learning. "I've tried everything. I've tried encouragement, I've tried incentives, I've tried punishment, and I've tried taking things away. Nothing works. What should I do? I want my son to learn."

The Rebbe asked the disciple one question: "Does the boy's father learn himself?" All the speeches in the world will not make one iota of difference. Children learn by example.

This rule applies to all aspects of child raising. If one wants to raise a Nazir, he must be a Nazir himself. If one wants to raise a decent and honest Jewish person, then he himself must be a decent and honest Jewish person.

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dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 331, Must A Kallah Cover Her Hair At The Chasunah? Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org>

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2002 12:18 AM To: weekly1@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Herschel Schachter - Various Aspects of Torah Learning  
[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/special/2002/rsch\\_learning.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/special/2002/rsch_learning.html)  
RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER  
VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TORAH LEARNING

I Many have the mistaken notion that the mitzvah of Torah study applies only to students of school age. The Rambam writes explicitly (Hil Chos Talmud Torah, 1:8) that this mitzvah applies to people of all ages, single or married, and even to one who is very old and feeble. Others think that the ongoing mitzvah of Torah study only applies to rabbis or teachers of religious studies. This too is incorrect. Every day we all ask in our tefilah "v'sein chelkeinu b'Torasehca", that G-s should grant us our portion in His Torah. Every Jew has a share in the Torah.

II Many who have studied in Yeshivot in their youth are so trained in learning Talmud in depth with all the supercommentaries, that after leaving the Yeshiva they think that to study Gemorah without Rav Chaim or Rav Shimon is of no value. This is not correct. One who studies Gemorah with Rashi – even without Tosafos – has also fulfilled a marvelous level of this great mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Even mishnayos with the commentary of the Bartenura, or for that matter any other commentary, is also quite an accomplishment.

III The rabbis have told us (Seder Olam Zuta) that since the passing of the last three prophets, Chagai Zecharia and Malachi, a new period of Torah study has begun; while emphasis should be placed on the study of the Torah She'b'al Peh, the oral law, this does not mean that there is no longer a Mitzvah to study Torah She'b'ksav. As elementary as it may seem, it must be stated that even study of the twenty four books of the Tanach still constitute a fulfillment of the mitzvah of Talmud Torah.

According to the Rambam's understanding (Tosafot quotes the Geonim who had a totally different understanding), one should always see that his knowledge of Torah should be balanced. Approximately one third of his knowledge should be in Torah She'b'ksav, one third in halacha pesuka, and one third in talmud.

The term "talmud" refers to understanding of the halachot: which are biblical and which rabbinical in nature; and if biblical, what is the

derivation; what is the guiding principal, to know what would the halacha be in all the variety of cases.

IV Many feel that to study "pesak halacha" constitutes a "pegimah" in one's learning Torah l'shma. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Talmud considers studying Torah l'halacha as the highest level of talmud Torah. We believe that the Torah is not merely an abstract discipline which one studies to intellectual entertainment; but more important than that, it shows us a way of life. One's emphasis on learning l'pask halacha is an indication of this most important principle.

V Many only feel successful in learning when they are able to be "mechadesh": to come up with some sharp clever original kasheh (question), or some original interpretation, or "teirutz" (answer) on some famous kasheh. True these are aspects of learning, but nonetheless should not really be the core of our focus in our Talmud study. According to the Talmudic tradition, all of this "pilpulah shel Torah" was originally only intended to be transmitted to Moshe Rabbeinu for him to transmit only to his descendents. And Moshe Rabbeinu, out of an act of kindness and good-heartedness, gave even this aspect of the oral Torah to all of Klal Yisroel. Obviously, this aspect of "pilpulah shel Torah" was intended to serve as the icing on top of the cake.

The essence of learning is to be knowledgeable of all of the 613 mitzvos, and of all of the details concerning their observance. [The Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvos was clearly intended as his introduction to his Mishne Torah. Before each section of the Yad Hachazakah, the Rambam mentions which particular mitzvos will be covered, before he proceeds to elaborate on all the details of their observance.]

The rabbis of the Talmud derived from the Tanach that the correct approach to study of Talmud must be to first cover all the information transmitted from the previous generations, and only then to begin to analyze. Many will have the attitude that from the very start, when opening a new Gemorah, they are only interested in seeing what original insights (chiddushim) they can come up with. The Chasam Sofer pointed out that in the opening chapter of Sefer Tehilim, King David says that a truly religious Jew should have a great desire to learn "G-d's Torah", and only later will that individual have the fortune to come up with some of "his own" (original) Torah. This last point, apparently, has been a problem in many generations.

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[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rhab\\_naso.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/parsha/rhab_naso.html) [From last year]

RABBI YAAKOV HABER  
THE NAZIR, N'SI'IM, AND NUANCES

The first part of Chumash B'midbar speaks of events directly related to the Hashra'as Hash'china -- the dwelling of the Divine presence -- in the Mishkan. The counting of the L'viyim (Levites), which began in last week's portion and finished in our parsha, was designed to enumerate those working in the Mishkan. Similarly, the count of the rest of the tribes was, amongst other reasons, to facilitate Hashra'as Hash'china, since Hashem's presence would only rest on K'lal Yisrael after they had proved their lineage and divided themselves into sh'vatim (tribes). Our parsha also includes the rules of sending the various t'maim -- ritually impure individuals -- outside the camps just created: the Mishkan in the center, surrounded by the camp of the l'viyim and then the camp of the rest of the sh'vatim. Our parsha ends with a description of the specific, dedicatory offerings brought by the n'si'im. All of these elements revolve around the Mishkan. Surprising it is then that the Torah seems to interrupt these connected portions with the commandments concerning the Sotah (adulterous woman) and the Nazir.

Perhaps we can suggest a resolution based on a well-known answer to a difficulty in the entire last section our parsha. All of the n'si'im offered exactly the same korbanos; yet, the Torah carefully describes each prince's offerings in detail. Many explain that this repetition teaches us a fundamental principal in Judaism. Although we are all bound by the same 613 mitzvos and are prohibited from seeking out other forms of Divine service -- which only lead to disastrous results as in the case of Nadav and Avihu, the episode of the Golden Calf, Korach's rebellion

and others -- each member of Klal Yisrael brings his unique personality with him in his performance of the mitzvos. The Midrash Rabba elaborates that although each nasi brought the same korbanos, the intended symbolism was different in each case. Similarly, all learn the same Torah; yet, we have our great Poskim, outstanding Torah lecturers, learners of Daf Yomi, those who excel in the study of aggada and hashkafa, and those who learn basic halacha. Rav Z. H. Chajes zt"l even notes that there were two academies in the time of the Talmud: one for Aggada and one for Halacha. This is why, he notes, that certain amora'im (Talmudic sages) are rarely quoted in matters of Halacha but are abundantly quoted in areas of Aggada. Similarly, concerning mitzvos, our tradition allows for varying amounts of time spent on one mitzva at the expense of another and vice-versa depending on the individual, all within the system of Halacha. Already in the times of the Talmud, amora'im had different approaches to the proper balance of time devoted to prayer versus study (see Shabbos 10a). A prominent, contemporary Rav once noted that these diverse positions seem to have carried over to some extent in the different approaches of the Lithuanian Yeshiva world and their disciples as opposed to the Chassidic world.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson zt"l, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, noted that this dialectic of diversity within sameness is indicated by the two prime celestial bodies which govern the structure of the Jewish calendar. Whereas the months are lunar, the year is solar (hence the need for "leap months" to keep the calendar synchronized with the solar seasons). The moon constantly changes; the sun is constant. The mission of the Jew is to merge both qualities: within the solar-like sameness of the mitzvos, to carve out his unique lunar-like niche. Partaking of the physical pleasures of the world within moderation for the purpose of nurturing the body and providing the necessary physical happiness to serve as the backdrop for 'avodas Hashem is the approach the Torah advocates for most. Indeed, R. Elazar HaKapar teaches us that the Nazir is referred to as having sinned because he abstained from wine (see Rashi 6:11). But yet, the Nazir is referred to as a "Kadosh" (holy one) (6:8)! The resolution seems to be found in Rashi's comment (6:2) from the Talmud explaining the juxtaposition of the parsha of Sotah with that of Nazir. One who sees the humiliation of a sotah in the Mikdash should become a nazir. This statement seems to be teaching us that one who discovers that he is prone to misuse physicality for the wrong ends, leading to immorality should separate temporarily from some of the generally permissible pleasures of the world until his attitude can be modified. This is similar to the approach the Rambam outlines in Hilchos Dei'os for one who finds himself weak in a particular characteristic. His cure is to temporarily adopt the other extreme of the quality in question. The Kli Yakar notes that the passuk that criticizes the nazir for "sinning" is in the context of one who became tamei in the middle of the nazirite period and must restart it. Therefore his abstention was in vain. A nazir who utilizes his period of rest from 'olam hazeh for a spiritual goal is called a kadosh. Here too, we find diversity within the basic structure of the Torah. Perhaps this is why the Torah places this parsha before that of the n'si'im. The natural desire to be unique should never be used to distance oneself from normative, Halachic practice. Rather, it must be channeled to find one's unique role within the inherent diversity present within the same 613 mitzvos.

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From: listmaster [listmaster@shemayisrael.com]  
 Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM  
 PARSHAS NASO

So you shall bless Bnei Yisrael. (6:23)

The heart breaks to listen to the sad stories related by the many who are not financially solvent. We are not referring to those who are too lazy to work, but to those who work long and hard to eke out a living to support their family -with little success. Some of us find it difficult to empathize. I think it is because one must experience this problem in order to be sensitive to another's financial woes. Someone who has no problem paying his bills every month, simply cannot understand the

meaning of juggling bills to determine who is fortunate enough to be paid this month.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, gives a practical eitzah, bit of advice, for those whose financial straits overwhelm them: Listen to the Birkas Kohanim, apply yourself to the blessing of Yevarechecha, concentrate upon its meaning and message. The Chida, zl, writes that the Kohanim are Divinely inspired to be the individuals through whom the blessing of financial success flows forth to Klal Yisrael.

The Chida adds that the members of Shevet Levi are appropriately suited to be the individuals through whom the Divine blessing of financial stability should flow. He cites the Shach, who writes in his commentary to the Torah that when Klal Yisrael was instructed to divest the Egyptians of their gold, silver, and fine garments, Shevet Levi assembled together and decided that they should not be included. They felt that the dispensation for this activity was based on the fact that Klal Yisrael had been subject to demeaning, back-breaking labor in Egypt, so they had a right to the treasures. But Shevet Levi was not included in the decree. They, therefore, felt that they had no claim to the Egyptian fortune.

Hashem responded to this incredible strength of character by deeming Shevet Levi to be a catalyst in material blessing for the Jewish People for generations to come. We may add that to receive blessing one should be a kli machazik brachah, vessel/receptacle, that is predisposed to sustaining blessing. It would then make sense that we develop a similar strength of character whereby material benefits do not control our lives.

There is yet another area in which inner fortitude plays a dominant role - satisfaction. Rashi explains the concept of v'yishmerecha, "and guard you," as an assurance that robbers will not steal the gift that Hashem bestows upon you. Horav Elyakim Schlesinger, Shlita, explains that the term "robbers" can have another meaning. One may have an item and not enjoy it due to a deficient character trait. He is never happy, never satisfied, always complaining. Whatever he accumulates is not enough. Whatever he has is insufficient. Such a person is being robbed by his own poisoned personality. "Who is a wealthy man? He who rejoices with his lot." One who lacks this character trait leads a miserable life. What good is all of his wealth if he does not enjoy it, if he is never satisfied?

When Hashem bestows blessing He also adds a safeguard that we will not lose it to ourselves. This is true blessing!

So shall you bless Bnei Yisrael...Let them place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael, and I shall bless them. (6:23, 27)

The Kohanim are instructed to bless Klal Yisrael at specific intervals. If one peruses the above pesukim, we find an apparent contradiction. The pasuk begins by saying that the Kohanim shall bless the people, and ends by saying, "and I shall bless them." Is Hashem blessing Klal Yisrael, or does the blessing emanate from the Kohanim? The Chasam Sofer gives the following explanation of Bircas Kohanim, its application to us, and Hashem's "involvement" in the blessing.

By its very nature, Bircas Kohanim is a brachah gashmis, physical blessing, pertaining to the wealth one accumulates in this world. Yevarechecha Hashem: "May Hashem bless you and safeguard you." He shall bless you with material abundance and safeguard you from any evil.

Ya'er Hashem: "May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you." Ordinarily, one who is successful in the field of commerce, who has achieved material success, is envied. This form of jealousy can be most damaging. We are herein blessed that we will find favor in the eyes of our friends and neighbors and that they will rejoice in our success. Yisa Hashem: "May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you." One who is wealthy, who has achieved material success, will quite often be weighed down by various worries. One may exhibit anxiety over losing what he has amassed, and he may manifest the drive to accumulate even more. He may never be satisfied. Regrettably, without the unique blessing of peace, the individual who is wealthy has very little peace. He is driven by fear and anxiety. He is hereby blessed with satisfaction.

One would think that he has it all. He has achieved the ultimate blessing. But wait! Something is missing - something which can suddenly transform the brachah into a klalah, curse. A person must have a sheifah, ambition, a desire to grow, to achieve, to accomplish specific goals. One who has no ambition, who is complacent, who has no worries, who leads a carefree, smug life, is really not blessed. In fact, I am not sure if we can call this living! Quite possibly, one can breeze through life without realizing that he is missing its essence. He arises in the morning, takes his time getting dressed in his finery, goes to shul and davens, followed by a nice, leisurely breakfast. He goes to work in a comfortable car, puts in his few hours and goes home to complete his uneventful and meaningless day. Is this living? One might agree that, indeed, this person has attained success. He has raised a family and imbued another generation with values. He has the wonderful nachas of seeing grandchildren, of sharing in their joy and watching them grow up. Is this really blessing? Has he taught his children to follow in his footsteps and live a vacuous, unfulfilled life? If this is so, our query surfaces again: What is the meaning of the blessing of the Kohanim?

The Chasam Sofer explains that the Torah has sort of "sandwiched" Bircas Kohanim between two pesukim. The lesson implied is that only through the fulfillment of the terms of this context does the real blessing apply. First, the blessing begins, "So shall you bless Bnei Yisrael." You, the Kohanim, the spiritual mentors and standard of the Jewish People, should bless Bnei Yisrael with this brachah. When the people see who it is that is blessing them, they will understand that this blessing is basically the precursor for the real treasure, the true blessing: the ability to serve Hashem and study His Torah. When one takes his material abundance and uses it to enhance his ability to serve Hashem, to elevate his spiritual relationship with the Almighty, then the blessing is truly a blessing - and not a curse. The difference between the blessing of wealth and the curse of wealth is how one utilizes his gift. If it furthers his spiritual development - it is a blessing. If it does not - it is not a blessing and, regrettably, he has failed the test. The Torah closes with, "Let them place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael." If the Kohanim understand the compelling significance of infusing Klal Yisrael with the Shechinah, Divine Presence, catalyzing the name Yisrael to become synonymous with the Name of Hashem, then I (Hashem) will bless them. Klal Yisrael will be the recipients of an added blessing - the Divine blessing in conjunction with the Kohanim's blessing.

Indeed, this is what we pray for daily, V'chayei olam nota b'socheinu, "and (and He, Hashem has) implanted eternal life within us." After Hashem has granted us the blessing of life, we entreat Him, "May He open our heart through His Torah and imbue our heart with love and awe of Him." We are acutely aware that without Torah and fear of Heaven, all of our toil on this world is for naught. Furthermore, if we have no Torah, can we expect any better from our offspring? L'maan ol niga larik, "So that we do not struggle in vain or produce for futility." Sponsored in loving memory of our dear father and zaidy on his third yahrtzeit Rabbi Shlomo Silverberg Zev Aryeh & Miriam Solomon & Family

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ [jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu] Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2002 3:02 PM To: internetchaburah@yahoo.com Subject: [internetchaburah] Internet chaburah -- Parshas Naso

Prologue: At the end of Parshat Nasso, we read of the offerings that each Nasi (leader of each tribe) brought to the Mishkan during the dedication ceremonies. The various Korbanot of each leader is defined and repeated even though the leaders all brought the same offering. The Midrash explains that this was done to offer each Nasi his proper respect. Each one had arrived at the proper Korban on his own, thus each deserved special mention of his Korban. However, at the end of the repetition, the Torah totals the sum of all the offerings of the Nesiim together. Rashi explains that this was done to demonstrate that the values were equal whether individualized or lumped together. But this lesson is clear. What then is the Torah trying to convey? Rav

Moshe Feinstein explained that the Torah is trying to show us that whether we are alone or collective, we must remain consistent. There are those who feel a sense of obligation to strengthen their character when they are alone but feel that they can be more lax when they are in a group. Others feel that when they are in public they must strive to maintain a certain image they do not strive for when in private. The value of a person's character, like the Nesiim's offerings, must be equal when we are in public or in private and thus the Torah's stress on the total value of the Korbanot HaNesiim, equal to the same of the component Korbanot of each individual Nasi.

\*\*\*\*\* Singing Sensations: Birkat Kohanim Tunes \*\*\*\*\*

The Talmud (Sotah 38a) notes that when the Torah commanded the Kohanim about Birkat Kohanim, they were instructed with the words "Koh Tivarchu". Those words imply that the Birkas Kohanim must be recited aloud. The Yirushalmi (cited by the Tur in Orach Chaim 128) notes that the voice need not be loud, rather it should be the best of all voices which refers to recitation with a tune. The Bach explains that the reason for the tune is that the Koh Tivarechu refers not to Kol Gadol (a loud voice) but Kol Rom (a superior voice). Eliyahu Rabba adds that the concept of Rom comes from the Hebrew Romeimut which refers to a sense of dignity, the type that comes through melody. Based on this, Orchos Chaim (Nesius Kapayim 6) feels that each word of Birkas Kohanim should be recited with a tune. The Meiri (Sotah 39a) concurs.

(See Sefer Iyehi HaYam to Teshuvot HaGeonim <p. 68b> where Rav Yisrael Yosef Chazan notes the old custom in Portugal which was to have someone other than the Chazan lead Birkat Kohanim on special times when many Pizmonim were added to the services and the Chazan's tunes might have been off. Rav Chaim Palagi <Shut Lev Chaim III:8> opposed the appointing of anyone other than the Chazan to lead Birkat Kohanim. However he too, seemed to feel that tunes were so important that if they could not be recited by the Chazan, Birkat Kohanim could be led by another <Kaf HaChaim 15:65>. For further clarification about the appointing of another to lead Birkat Kohanim, see Shut Yichaveh Daas 4:10).

The tunes used during the Duchaning seem to be a matter of discussion in Halacha. Maharam (cited by Mordechai to Megilla 415) was very concerned about Chazanim using more than one tune. He felt that alternating tunes would lead to the Chazan's loss of concentration and ultimately his loss of his place during the Birkat Kohanim. The Terumas HaDeshen (26) agrees, adding that change causes the person to have to concentrate on the music. While concentrating on the music, he is not concentrating on the place of Birkat Kohanim. Thus, only one tune should be used.

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 128:21) notes that a Kohein should only sing one tune when he Duchans so that the kohanim not become confused or forgetful as to where they are up to. The Mishnah Berurah (83) citing the Taz adds that the same is true for the Chazan who leads them who should not change the tune. He clarifies further (84) that Kohanim reciting the Birkat Kohanim at the same time should not change their tunes from one another so that they too, not become confused with one another (perhaps this would include not harmonizing by them or by the Chazan leading them as well). But if the tunes are so confusing, why bother with any of them? The Aruch HaShulchan (128:35) explains that a musical tune adds to the spirit of the moment and will help the people make the Beracha with the proper Kavanna as we find in Novi when Elisha utilized violin music to receive Ruach HaKodesh.

Still, the Leket HaKemach HaChodosh (94) decried the tune many Chazanim used on Simchas Torah when they would sing all the tunes of all year long during the Birkat Kohanim. He felt this was in violation of the Halacha of Chashash for Tiruf HaDaas. He added that perhaps the multi-tuned Simchas Torah, due to its use EVERY Simchas Torah could explain Minhag Yisroel and will not lead Kohanim astray. Still, he did not recommend its use.

Where does one sing and is the singing a Hefsek? Rav Yakov Zriyan (Shut Beis Yaakov, 24) noted that if one wishes to sing, let him stress the last syllable of the word in tune, so that the whole word can be pronounced and heard. Rav Ovadiah Yosef agrees (See Shut Yabia

Omer VI: O.C. 7). But is the Niggun a Hefsek? The Shulchan Aruch (124:8) notes that when one recites a Beracha he should not elongate it too much (aka on Rosh Hashanna night when he adds the Niggun) lest the Amen recited be recited before the end of the Beracha and be Chatufa. Shevet Mussar (34) urges the recitation of Amen at the end of the Niggun. However, the Mogen Avraham (124:14) felt that it was a Hefsek. Hence, in Birkat Kohanim, the elaborate tunes should be kept reasonable so as not to lose the concentration of the Kohein or the people expected to recite Amen.

\*\* Hear internet chaburah live!!! This coming Tuesday Evening 5/28 @ 8:30 pm. Next week's "Live!!" topic: Positions for Kiddush and Havdala. For more information call Fifth Avenue Synagogue at (212) 838-2122. \*\*

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From: Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2002 2:31 PM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Naso BEING MISERABLE IN COMFORT

"...and I shall bless them" (6:27)

I once heard a cynic remark, "Money can't buy you happiness – but I don't mind being miserable in comfort."

Sometimes a person can have all the physical blessings and still be miserable. Recognizing our blessings is a blessing in itself.

"May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and give you peace." (6:24-26) You couldn't really ask for a better bunch of blessings than blessings of the kohanim.

Why then, in the very next verse, does Hashem say 'Let them (the kohanim) place My Name upon the Children of Israel and I shall bless them?' What possible blessing could be left after that catalog of kohanic blessings in the previous three verses?

The blessing that only Hashem can give us is to recognize all the blessing that surround us - without that it's all too easy to be miserable in comfort.

GOING UP!

"...A man or a woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow..." (6:2)

The sequence of subjects in the Torah is never random. The juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated topics teaches us hidden ideas. In this week's Torah portion there occurs the following sequence: The Nazirite, the Kohanic Blessings and then the Korbanot (sacrifices). What is the message behind this linkage?

The first level on the spiritual ladder is separation from the physical. The Nazirite takes upon himself stringencies to bring himself closer to G-d. He refrains from wine, from cutting his hair and from contact with death. The Nazirite removes himself from physicality.

However, this separation is only the first level on the spiritual ladder. A higher level is that which is represented by the kohanic blessings: "May Hashem bless you and guard you!" Despite the blessing of physical well-being, Hashem will guard you from the negative effects of physicality.

The third and highest level is the level of the sacrificial offering. The ultimate success of man in this world is to take the physical and turn it into the spiritual. The korban sacrifice is a physical object - an animal, fine flour or wine. However, when it ascends on the altar it is transformed into something completely metaphysical.

The highest level that man can achieve in this world is not the rejection of the physical, nor an insurance policy to guard him from it, but the transformation and elevation of the physical world into something completely spiritual.

Sources: "Being Miserable In Comfort" - Shir Ma'on as heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter "Going Up!" - Nesivat Shalom as heard from Rabbi C. Z. Senter

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From: elaine@jewishdestiny.com Parsha Archive May 24 2002 RABBI BEREL WEIN

The tribe of Levi was counted independently in the desert of Sinai, apart from fellow Israelites. Almost from its onset, the tribe of Levi was deemed to be special. Even though it had a violent start in its history, as Levi himself was one of the chief instigators of the rift between Joseph and the brothers as well as being a destroyer of the city of Shchem, the tribe of Levi, already in Egypt, began to redefine itself almost exclusively in terms of pious leadership and service within Israel. It became the miniature "kingdom of priests and holy nation," the prototype for all of the other tribes and individual families of the Jewish people. Therefore, after the debacle of the Golden Calf in the desert, the first-born Jews forfeited their original priestly role and the tribe of Levi was then designated as their successors "for the [holy] work and the burden [of public service]."

The tribe of Levi was "given over" to G-d's service, to engage in the holy work of the Temple, and perhaps even more importantly, to become the teachers of Torah and the role-models of life-behavior and values for their fellow Jews. As such, the tribe of Levi was separated from ordinary life. It owned no property in the Land of Israel, it was freed from most taxes and national service burdens, it was supported by the tithes and contributions of its fellow Jews, and it devoted itself exclusively to the fulfillment of its G-dly charge of spiritual example, education and inspiration in the midst of the Jewish people. Being a Levite was thus a distinction and an honor but it carried with it grave responsibilities, high expectations and constant demands. In the eyes of the rest of Israel, a Levi had to behave as a Levi. Failure to do so was deemed to be a desecration of the holy name of G-d itself.

After the destruction of the Temple, the tribe of Levi lost much of its unique role in the Jewish world, though vestiges of its preferred status were retained as a reminder of its chosen standing. But the task of the Levites in being the nucleus of Torah knowledge and moral inspiration for the Jewish world still remained. Even though there was no longer a Temple, a Levi still had to behave as a Levi. Perhaps even more now than ever, in a "Templeless" exile, the Jewish people required spiritual teachers and role-models, people who operated above the mundane problems and requirements of every day life, and who therefore would introduce the spark and color of holy behavior into the drab and depressing world of Jewish exile.

Apparently, in the new and more difficult Jewish world of exile, just the tribe of Levi alone would not be sufficient for the task. Therefore, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, in his monumental Mishne Torah, states that every human being can now become a Levi. In his golden words: "Every person who enters this world, whose spirit moves him and his intellect instructs him, to separate himself [from the pettiness of the world] in order to stand before G-d, to truly serve Him, to be responsible to Him, to know Him, and to walk upright and straight in His paths as G-d created him; and he has freed himself from the yoke of petty human considerations that other people pursue - such a person has sanctified himself as being holy of holies, and the Lord is his share and inheritance for all time and all worlds, and he will receive in the World to Come his proper and fulfilling [reward] as G-d has given such to the Priests and the Levites."

Let us be on the lookout therefore to discern the true Levites in the Jewish and general world. Let us be aware of the Levi who behaves as a Levi, and give that exalted person due honor, recognition and emulation. Let us count those Levites separately from the whole nation and extend to them our appreciation and blessing.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein rtorahstone.org.il>

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From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Monday, May 20, 2002 11:41 AM To: weekly-halachah@torah.org Subject: Parshas Naso WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5762

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

#### HEARING HAVDALAH OVER THE TELEPHONE: IS IT VALID?

QUESTION: Can one fulfill a mitzvah which involves hearing something recited or read, e.g., hearing Havdalah or the reading of Megillas Esther, by hearing the words over a telephone or from the loudspeaker of a public address system?

DISCUSSION: The answer to this question, extensively debated by the poskim, depends on the halachic interpretation of certain technical facts. Both the telephone and the public address system "transform" sound waves in air, e.g., spoken words, into an electrical current within the instrument, and, ultimately, back into sound waves. It is debatable, though, how the halachah views these sound waves: 1) Are they an extension of the speaker's voice, merely amplified or carried to a distance that the unassisted human voice cannot reach; or are they 2) distinct from the speaker's voice, since the loudspeaker or receiver "creates" new sound waves from something - an electrical current, which is not sound? Translated from technical into halachic terms, the question is whether the mitzvah in question can be fulfilled only with the authentic, original voice of the speaker, or also by means of sounds generated by electrical impulses derived from the original voice and occurring simultaneously with it. Some earlier authorities(1) were of the opinion that the sound heard over the telephone or from the loudspeaker is the original speaker's voice. It is permitted, therefore, in their opinion(2) to listen to the megillah read over a public address system or to Havdalah over the telephone. Other authorities(3) maintained that the halachic view of amplified sounds is difficult to resolve and cannot be clearly decided. Thus in their opinion it remains questionable if mitzvos can be performed by means of a public address system or telephone. It follows, therefore, that only under extenuating circumstances - when no other possibility exists - is it permitted to fulfill a mitzvah by means of a loudspeaker or telephone(4). However, the majority of the authorities(5) who have studied this issue, including Harav S.Z. Auerbach(6) who researched it extensively with the aid of a team of technical experts(7), have ruled conclusively that the sound waves emitted by a loudspeaker or telephone receiver are definitely not the speaker's original, authentic voice. In addition, they rule unequivocally that one's obligation cannot be discharged by hearing an electrically generated sound even if the original speaker's voice is heard simultaneously. Accordingly, one cannot, under any circumstances,(8) fulfill a mitzvah by listening to sound waves from a microphone or a telephone(9). In practice, therefore, it is clear that when another possibility exists, mechanical voice amplifiers should not be used to fulfill a mitzvah. For example, a woman who is home alone and has no one to make Havdalah for her, should rather recite Havdalah herself(10) than listen to it being recited by someone else over the telephone. Even if she cannot or will not drink wine, grape juice, or beer, it is better for her to recite Havdalah over coffee(11), tea [with or without milk](12), or milk alone(13) [and, according to some poskim(14), grapefruit, orange or apple juice] than to listen to Havdalah recited over the phone(15). If one finds himself in a situation where otherwise he cannot recite Havdalah or hear the megillah at all, e.g. in a hospital, and there is no one who can come until Tuesday evening(16) to make Havdalah for him, he may have to rely on the poskim who permit listening to blessings, etc., over the telephone(17). But in a situation where someone could come and recite Havdalah for him before Tuesday evening, the correct procedure is to wait until then for Havdalah to be recited(18). If he is weak, he may eat before hearing Havdalah. If he is not, he should not eat until Sunday at chatzos(19). A related issue is whether or not it is permitted to answer amen to a blessing or Kaddish heard over a microphone, telephone, or during a live telecast transmitted by satellite. Some poskim(20) permit this and do not consider the answering of amen etc., to be *l'vatalah* ("for nothing"), since they remain undecided about the halachic status of amplified sound waves, as explained above. In addition, some poskim(21) permit it, based on the ancient precedent set in the great synagogue in Alexandria(22), where most people did not hear the blessings being recited because of its vast size, but were

nevertheless permitted to answer amen when signaled to do so by the waving of a flag. Harav Auerbach, though, rejects this comparison and rules clearly that it is prohibited to answer amen upon hearing a blessing in this manner. He agrees, however, that one who is in the vicinity of the speaker, even though he hears the speaker's voice only over a microphone, etc., is permitted to answer amen, as was the case in Alexandria where everyone was inside the shul and part of the tzibbur that was davening.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Minchas Elazar 2:72; Minchas Aharon 18 (quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 8:11). 2 Their argument is based partially on the fact that sound waves - even without being mechanically transmitted - are carried through the air before they are heard by the listener. The fact that the microphone amplifies those sounds and furthers their distance should not be considered halachically problematic. 3 Harav T. P. Frank (Mikraei Kodesh, Purim 11 and in Minchas Yitzchak 2:113); Igros Moshe O.C. 2:108; O.C. 4:126. [See, however, Igros Moshe E.H. 1:33 and O.C. 4:84.] Harav Y.Y. Henkin (Eidus Yisrael, pg. 122) also does not render a clear decision on this issue. See also Minchas Shelomo 9 quoting an oral conversation with the Chazon Ish. 4 Tzitz Eliezer 8:11. See also Shevet ha-Levi 5:84. 5 Da'as Torah O.C. 689:2; Gilyonei ha-Shas, Berachos 25a; Eretz Tzvi 1:23; Kol Mevasser 2:25; Mishpatei Uziel 1:5; Minchas Yitzchak 1:37, 3:38; She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 129:25; 193:6; Kinyan Torah 1:75; Yechaveh Da'as 3:54; Moadim u'Zemanim 6:105. See also Teshuvos P'eas Sadcha 126 who quotes such a ruling from Reb Chayim Soloveitchik. 6 Minchas Shelomo 9. 7 Harav Auerbach and Yechaveh Da'as add that those who dissented were not familiar with the relevant technology. 8 See Hebrew Notes, pg. 563, concerning using a microphone when the speaker's voice would be heard even without it. 9 Harav Auerbach makes clear that the same ruling applies to hearing-impaired individuals who cannot hear without a hearing aid. Igros Moshe O.C. 4:85 is hesitant over whether a hearing aid works exactly like a microphone. 10 Women are obligated to recite Havdalah and may recite it themselves. Although there is a well-established custom that women do not drink the wine from the Havdalah cup, this custom is discounted when a woman needs to fulfill her obligation of Havdalah; Mishnah Berurah 296:35; Aruch ha-Shulchan 296:5. 11 Instant or brewed (Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 60 note 18). 12 The tea or coffee should be cooled enough to drink at least 1.6 fl. oz. within three minutes. 13 Aruch ha-Shulchan 272:14; Igros Moshe O.C. 2:75. 14 Tzitz Eliezer 8:16; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 60:5. 15 If a woman refuses to recite Havdalah on her own and there is no one available to recite it for her, her husband [or another man] may repeat it for her, even if he has already fulfilled his obligation earlier; see Mishnah Berurah 296:36; Aruch ha-Shulchan 296:5; Da'as Torah 296:8; Ben Ish Chai, Vayeitzei 22. The blessing over the candle, though, should be omitted, in the opinion of some poskim. 16 O.C. 299:5. 17 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:91-4; Tzitz Eliezer 8:11. 18 In this case, one should specifically not listen to Havdalah over the phone, since then it may not be repeated for him when the visitor comes. 19 Mishnah Berurah 296:21. Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, too, is quoted (Yad le-Yoledes, pg. 135) as ruling that it is better to eat before Havdalah than to listen to it over the telephone. 20 Igros Moshe, *ibid.* 21 Yechaveh Da'as 3:54. 22 See Succah 51b and Tosfos, *ibid.*

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From: Shlomo Katz [skatz@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2002 9:41 AM To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Naso Edited by Shlomo Katz

This week's parashah continues the census of the Levi'im begun in last week's parashah: In last week's parashah, the sons of Kehat, son of Levi, were counted. Now, our parashah opens, "take a census of the sons of Gershon, also, according to their fathers' households, according to their families."

The Midrash on the above verse cites Mishlei (3:15), "It is more precious than pearls." Says the Midrash: The Torah is more precious than anything. Therefore, although Gershon was older than Kehat, and the Torah usually accords honor to a firstborn, here the Torah mentioned Kehat before Gershon because the sons of Kehat carried the Holy Ark, which contained the Torah.

R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (died 1986) observes that a similar lesson regarding the Torah's honor is learned from the Gemara (Eruvin 28b), which relates that when Rabbi Zera was too tired to study Torah, he would sit in a place where he knew Torah scholars would pass. He

said, "Let me rise for them and earn reward that way." From this story we can learn how our predecessors loved the Torah, says R' Kaminetsky. Surely the exhausted Rabbi Zera could have found a mitzvah to perform that did not involve physical exertion. Nevertheless, he chose to exert himself to honor Torah students, for this is part of the mitzvah of Torah study.

The Gemara continues, relating that as Rabbi Zera was sitting and waiting for scholars to pass, he entered into a Torah discussion with a young child. Moreover, that child taught Rabbi Zera a halachah regarding which Rabbi Zera had had a mistaken understanding. A true scholar, observes R' Kaminetsky, is one who is prepared to learn from every person, young or old, wise or simple. Such a willingness to learn from one's "inferiors" is a barometer of how much one loves the Torah. (Emet Le'Yaakov)

"May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you." (6:24-26) R' Shmuel Tayib z"l (Djerba, Tunisia; 20th century) explains the verses of Birkat Kohanim / the priestly blessing as follows: These verses include the three primary things that people desire - sustenance, children and long-life. The first verse, "May Hashem bless you and safeguard you," refers to sustenance, as it is written (Devarim 15:18), "Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all that you do." The latter part of the blessing ("and safeguard you") is a blessing that the wealth that you amass as a result of the first part of the blessing will remain in your hands.

The second verse, "May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you," refers to the blessing of children, as it is written (Bereishit 33:5), "The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant."

Finally, the third verse, "May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you," refers to long-life, which is the result of physical and mental health. This is called "peace" because it comes about when all the parts of the mind and body work harmoniously together. Thus the Torah (Bemidbar 25:12) refers to Pinchas' reward of long-life as the "covenant of peace." Afapei Shachar)

"It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle . . . The Princes of Yisrael, the heads of their fathers' household, brought offerings . . ." (7:1-2) R' Shmuel Wosner shlita (rabbi of the Zichron Meir neighborhood of Bnei Brak and a prominent posek) asks: Why did the Princes start bringing offerings after the dedication was finished? Also, our parashah states (verse 89): "When Moshe came to the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him . . ." We read in Shmot (40:35), "Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." How can these verse be reconciled? If they happened at different times, when? R' Wosner explains: Each tribe has a slightly different way of serving Hashem. These differences are represented by the twelve different stones of the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, and they are part of the reason that we have different versions of the Siddur. The purpose of the Princes' offerings was to dedicate the Tabernacle to each tribe. Although the Princes brought outwardly identical offerings, the inner thoughts of each were different, thus distinguishing them. When the dedication of the Mishkan was first completed, the Mishkan was indeed too holy for even Moshe to enter to receive prophecy. Only after each tribe drew G-d's presence into the Mishkan through its own mode of service could Moshe receive prophecy there, for Moshe received prophecy only through the merit of the Jewish people. Thus, before the Princes' offerings, "Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting." After, "Moshe came to the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him." (Derashot Ve'sichot Shevet Halevi)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives are available starting with Rosh HaShanah 5758 (1997) at <http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/> .

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